

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – November 14, 2003

HONORING OUR VETERANS

This week my colleagues and I traveled to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. to visit with some of the brave soldiers who have recently returned from Iraq. All of these men and women had been injured while serving our country. In a week when we all paused to honor our nation's veterans, it is especially important to remember that although we can't predict how long the war on terrorism will last, we do know that more soldiers will be called to duty.

With a new generation of combat veterans deployed around the world, our government must meet its obligations to veterans. Unfortunately, the House of Representatives has cut nearly \$2 billion from Veterans' health care funding. That is why I support the *Veterans' Health Care Funding Guarantee Act*, which would protect veterans' health care from the changing priorities of politicians. It would end the annual fights in Congress over how much health care to provide our veterans year-to-year.

We must also make sure that the Department of Veterans Affairs doesn't close the doors to critical medical facilities at a time when more are seeking VA health care. In July, the VA headquarters in Washington, D.C. directed its regional office in Clark County to study the closure of facilities in Vancouver and Walla Walla. This could force our state's veterans to travel even farther to seek the medical care they need and deserve. This is the wrong message to send to our veterans.

I am pleased to announce that vets in Clark County did receive some good news this week when the VA Secretary signed-off on a one-stop center that will provide convenient access to quality health care services for veterans and others with special health needs throughout Clark County. Congress will now have 30 days to study the agreement.

We need to be doing more for our veterans – opening more one-stop centers, making sure our vets can get in to see a doctor without waiting six months for an appointment – and not shutting down services. I will continue to work on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee to ensure that our veterans get the services and honor they deserve.

TRANSPORTATION FUNDS SECURED

I am proud to announce a record amount of federal funding for transportation priorities across Washington state which was approved by a House-Senate conference committee this week. The bill, which will now go back to both chambers for final passage includes \$234 million for projects like road construction, buses, airports, trails and transit facilities across our state.

As the senior Democrat on the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee, I am proud to have included these dollars in addition to the more than \$600 million in Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration grants that Washington state is set to receive.

This money will get people back to work by provide good-paying construction jobs across our state, and it will pave the way for future growth by investing in the infrastructure needs that attract new businesses.

For all the transportation projects in your area, please visit:
[Puget](#) | [Central](#) | [Eastern](#) | [NW](#) | [SW](#) | [Olympic](#) | [Statewide](#)

OUR NATIONAL PRIORITIES

Rather than discussing employment, health care or any of the other critical needs facing our nation, this week the majority party decided the Senate would spend 40 hours debating just four judicial nominations. While the confirmation of judges by the United States Senate is not in crisis – we have confirmed 168 of the President's 172 nominees, a 98 percent approval rating – America does have a jobs crisis.

By spending this precious time talking about four judges who already have jobs, the Senate missed an opportunity to help the 3 million Americans who do not. I think that our time would have been much better spent helping laid-off workers by passing my bill to extend unemployment benefits before the holiday season. I tried to bring up my bill for consideration by the Senate this week, but it was blocked in favor of discussing judges.

My bill will help Washington residents by doing three important things:

- It will help families as they try to get back on their feet. These benefits will help them buy groceries, pay the mortgage, and keep their kids in college.
- It will help stimulate the economy of every state. People will be spending that money on things they need everyday, and that will be a shot in the arm for hard-hit states.
- It will help stimulate our nation's economy. Every dollar invested in UI benefits generates another \$1.73 for our economy.

Laid-off workers deserve a vote on this bill. They need help. I will do everything in my power to ensure that Congress does not leave town without providing a lifeline to unemployed workers.

HOMELAND SECURITY GRANTS FOR SEATTLE METRO AREA

I am proud to announce that our state is set to receive over \$17 million in Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grants to help police and firefighters in the Seattle metro area prepare for possible terrorist threats. I supported these funds in the Senate. As a member of the newly formed Homeland Security Subcommittee, I am proud to be able to deliver additional resources to protect the residents of our state. Seattle is eligible for these grants based on a combination of factors including population, critical infrastructure and threat level.

An attack anywhere in our region would be devastating for our community and our economy. Our police and firefighters risk their own security to keep our families and businesses safe, and they deserve every possible resource to help protect them.

Homeland Security is a top priority for me. In just the last two years, I have secured 5 new Coast Guard vessels to beef up patrols in the Puget Sound, and I made sure that the first Coast Guard anti-terror "SWAT Team" was stationed in Seattle, to provide rapid interdiction of maritime threats. I will continue to work to ensure that our communities have the resources to protect themselves against future terror threats.

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