

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – December 2, 2005

Better Healthcare Access for Vets

This week, I held two roundtables with veterans to address the challenges they face in getting access to VA healthcare. Over several years, a lack of federal funding for veterans' healthcare has contributed to problems with veterans getting care.

CLALLAM COUNTY – On Monday, in Port Angeles, I heard about the challenges facing the more than 14,000 veterans living in Clallam County. Currently, veterans travel to Seattle for healthcare assistance. For many, this means a 12-hour round-trip two or more times per month. It's even harder for disabled vets and those in more rural areas of Clallam County.

I'm working with the VA and with local leaders to improve access. One solution that was discussed would be to have a "virtual clinic" that would have the VA contract with local hospitals to provide vets in Port Townsend with care.

ISLAND COUNTY – On Wednesday, I met with veterans in Oak Harbor. Currently, veterans in Island County must also travel to the Seattle VA, a trip of several hours. I let them know that I understand how difficult this is for them and their families, and I assured them that I'm working hard to get a VA medical facility built in Bellingham that serves the Northwest Washington region. *Get periodic updates on my work for vets:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/vetupdates>

Supporting WA's Maritime Industries

PORT TOWNSEND: NW MARITIME CENTER – On Monday, I visited the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend to announce \$500,000 for the Port Townsend Streetscape and other Transportation improvements that I secured as the top Democrat on the Senate Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee. I'm proud to provide funding that will preserve the region's rich maritime history for generations to come.

BALLARD: SAVING THE BALLARD LOCKS – Today, I visited Ballard to announce \$6.5 million in funding that I secured to save the Ballard Locks. I was joined by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, and leaders from the maritime business community. For decades, the people of the Puget Sound have relied on the Locks as a part of the economy and way of life.

Unfortunately, earlier this year, the president's budget proposed cutting operations and maintenance funding at the Locks by \$2.1 million, and the House endorsed that cut. This led the Army Corps to consider reducing hours of service at the Locks. That budget put the Locks at serious risk.

I used my position on the Senate Appropriations Committee to restore that cut and provide the full funding needed to operate the Locks without reductions in service.

Preserving Our Natural Heritage

SEQUIM: DEDICATING THE DISCOVERY TRAIL - As a Washington state resident, a hiker, a mother, a grandmother and a United States Senator, I have been a long time supporter of the Olympic Discovery Trail. On Monday, in Sequim, I joined local leaders and members of the community to celebrate and dedicate over 30 miles of the trail from Port Townsend to the Ocean. As both Chair, and now as Ranking Democrat, on the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee, I've secured over \$3 million to protect, preserve, and grow this important public resource.

Investing in the protection and preservation of our natural treasures – and making them more accessible to our communities - is one of the things that makes our quality of life here in Washington state and the Pacific Northwest so great, and I'll continue to support those investments.

Rx Help for Our Most Vulnerable

BELLEVUE, ANACORTES, SPOKANE: MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG ROUNDTABLES - This week I held three roundtable discussions on the new Medicare drug plan. Many seniors are confused by, and worried about, this new law. At the discussions, I spoke with seniors to hear concerns and help them understand what is at stake and how they can find the right resources to help them make the best choices.

BAD FOR ALL SENIORS - I voted against this legislation in 2003 because it is harmful to all seniors. The law is too complicated, it does not give seniors enough time to make the best decision, and it penalizes those who don't sign up right away. For those who do sign up, the plans have large gaps and don't cover all prescriptions.

ESPECIALLY HURTS OUR MOST VULNERABLE - The new law also hurts our most vulnerable citizens – those with low incomes, disabilities, and chronic diseases such as AIDS. For over 118,000 of these citizens in Washington State, the plans will charge them higher prices, not cover all of their drugs, and penalize states for trying to fill these gaps.

I have written a bill, the Medicare HEALS Act, to address these problems and protect our most vulnerable. Unfortunately, many of my colleagues do not realize the real impact of this legislation. But I will keep fighting, and take the stories of seniors from my roundtable discussions back to Washington, D.C., where together we will try to make Congress do the right thing. *Learn more:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/rx>

Protecting Our Airmen

IMPORTANT FUNDING FOR FAIRCHILD AFB - On Thursday, I visited Fairchild Air Force Base to see part of the Survival School, where Air Force members from across the country are trained to survive if they are captured or separated from their units.

One important asset of the Survival School is the Resistance Training Facility. That facility, however, is old and outdated. Fairchild leaders asked me to help them create a new, modern facility. It wasn't easy because neither the President's budget nor the House budget provided any funding for the Fairchild upgrade. But I know we must give our military men and women the training, equipment and support they need when we send them on dangerous missions, so I used my position on the Military Construction Appropriations subcommittee to secure \$8.2 million for Fairchild's Resistance Training Facility. This is an investment in the men and women who serve us and in the future of Fairchild Air Force Base.

Supporting WA Defense Businesses

This week, I visited two Washington-based companies for which I secured funding in the 2006 Senate Defense Appropriations bill. The bill is currently in negotiations with the House.

BOTHELL: MICROVISION – On Tuesday, I met with employees, and received a tour and demonstration of some of the technology being created by this Bothell-based defense company. I was able to secure \$11.2 million in the Senate version of the Defense bill. This funding will help Microvision provide Stryker Brigade Combat Teams with helmets with a day- and night-readable, see-through, display of battlefield information on their eye-shield.

SEATTLE: OUTDOOR RESEARCH – On Wednesday, I met with employees and received a tour of Outdoor Research. I was proud to secure \$3 million to allow the company to provide the U.S. Marine Corps with a new cold-weather glove that offers greatly improved performance over current gloves, most of which are based on 1960s technology.

To subscribe, unsubscribe, or change your email address, visit: <http://murray.senate.gov/updates>