

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – June 23, 2006

Time for the President to Define Our Mission in Iraq

Last Thursday, on the floor of the U.S. Senate I urged President Bush to define our current mission in Iraq and how it serves our national security interests. I also lent my support for the Levin-Reed amendment, which calls on the Administration to begin the phased redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq by the end of 2006. While that Amendment failed, it is still my desire to bring our troops home safely and quickly.

The men and women of our military have done everything we've asked of them. We looked for WMD's and found none. We got rid of Saddam Hussein. We helped the Iraqis hold elections and set up their own government and security forces. So what is our mission today? Right now, our nation's policy on Iraq is adrift, and our troops are paying the price.

Instead of being honest with the American people about the costs of our efforts and the sacrifice necessary to support them, Congress continues to hand a blank check to the Administration to continue the status quo. Continuing in this manner is unacceptable. We need the President to tell us what the mission in Iraq is, so we -- as a Congress and as a country -- can decide if it's worth the continued price we are paying.

I do appreciate those who ask for a date certain deadline. However, I believe that an arbitrary date could force us to ignore facts on the ground – facts that could have a direct impact on the security of our troops, or the interests of our nation. We are all frustrated with where we find ourselves today. What we need is change. What we need is leadership. What we need is a defined mission. What we need is a plan for success.

To read my full remarks visit:
<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=257576>

Teaming Up for a Change

"Women for Change" Initiative will Focus On American's Real Concerns

On Wednesday I joined with my eight fellow Democratic female Senators on Capitol Hill to announce the "Democratic Women for Change" initiative. The initiative calls on the Senate Republican leadership to focus on an agenda that reflects the actual priorities of average Americans during the final 50 days of the current legislative session. We are asking that they take up those issues that constituents have consistently cited as real concerns in their daily lives.

A Disconnect in D.C.

When I talk to people in our state, I hear about the price of gas and college, I hear about critical environmental concerns and the war in Iraq. But, when I come back to Washington, D.C., I hear about gay marriage, flag burning and tax breaks. Our message to the Republican leadership is that it is not too late to take up the concerns of the people, and start moving the country forward.

A Checklist for Change

During our announcement event and later that night on Larry King Live, we laid out our "Checklist for Change" which features nine challenges that Congress should take up. The checklist was also sent to Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist.

The checklist of priorities includes:

- Safeguarding America's pensions,
- Keeping good jobs in America,
- Making college affordable for all,
- Protecting America and its military families,
- Preparing for future disasters,
- Making America energy independent,
- Making small business healthcare affordable,
- Investing in life-saving science, and
- Protecting our, land, air and water.

To find out more about "Women for Change" visit:
<http://democrats.senate.gov/checklistforchange/>

Making Sure Veterans Get More Services, Not More Cuts

On Thursday, I succeeded in passing emergency funding through the Senate Appropriations Committee to ensure that veterans healthcare and benefits are not raided as the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) responds to last month's data security breach. The amendment passed 15-13 and garnered the support of two Republican members of the Committee.

The VA's announcement that they will provide free credit monitoring for those whose personal information was put in jeopardy is a first step in taking responsibility for this breach. But, we need to ensure that veterans and military personnel don't pay twice for the VA's mistakes. By passing this emergency amendment, we sent a clear message to the VA that they need to pay for their breach and they cannot pay for it out of funds that are for veterans' services and care.

To read more visit:
<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=257678>

OTHER NEWS THIS WEEK:

Minimum Wage Amendment- This week I voted to raise the minimum federal minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour from its current level of \$5.15. The amendment would have been the first raise since 1997, however it fell eight votes short of passing.
<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=257574>

Ag Disaster Assistance – In the Senate Appropriations Committee this week I helped pass \$3.9 billion in disaster assistance which will help farmers and ranchers by providing emergency aid for the 2005 crop year.
<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=257714>

\$20 Million in Agricultural Appropriation Secured – Senator Maria Cantwell and I successfully secured more than \$20 million for Washington State's agriculture priorities in the fiscal year 2007 Agriculture Appropriations bill this week.
<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=257690>

Aerospace: Calling on President Bush Fight Airbus Subsidies -

On the eve of President Bush's meetings with European leaders, I wrote to the President urging him to speak out against further subsidies to Airbus and its parent company, EADS.
<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=257403>

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