

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – July 28, 2006

Calling on Senate Leadership to Act Now on Port Security

On Thursday, in a speech on the Senate floor I asked the Senate leadership to dispense with any further delays and bring the GreenLane port security legislation, which I sponsored with Senator Susan Collins of Maine, to the floor for a vote. In my speech, I pointed out that in the awful event that there is an incident at one of our ports the blame for the failure to take preventative measures would lie with this Congress. People will inevitably ask why there was no action taken on a bill that passed the full House and passed the Senate Homeland Security Committee. They will want to know why the Senate refused to institute comprehensive port security when they had the chance.

Each year, six million cargo containers enter U.S. seaports. These cargo containers carry the building blocks of our economy. But without adequate security, they can also provide an opportunity for terrorists to deliver a deadly one-two punch to our country. The first punch would create an untold number of American casualties. The second punch would bring our economy to a halt. Today, we are not doing enough to keep America safe from this terrible scenario. We must act now by passing the GreenLane Maritime Security Act.

To read more about the GreenLane legislation visit:
<http://murray.senate.gov/greenlane/>

To read the full text of my speech on the Senate floor visit:
<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=259762>

Politically Motivated Legislation Puts Young Women in Danger

In yet another attempt to focus on election-year gimmicks instead of on the priorities of the American people, the Senate leadership brought up and passed legislation that will have a dangerous impact on young women.

On Tuesday, the Senate passed legislation that prohibits grandparents, siblings, and friends from accompanying a young woman across state lines to obtain reproductive health services if the woman's home state has a parental-involvement law.

I think that most Americans agree that a young woman facing a crisis pregnancy should be encouraged to talk to her parents. In an ideal world, every young woman would seek help from her parents when grappling with an unwanted pregnancy. But we don't live in an ideal world. The reality is that a young woman cannot always turn to a parent. We are not talking about a young woman who is afraid her parents will be ashamed or shun her. We are talking about serious situations where the young woman may be a victim of incest or abuse. This bill would punish those young women if they seek the support and help of other family members or clergy.

Unfortunately, the only thing this bill does do is ensure that young women who are intent on seeking reproductive health services are left to go it alone. If a young woman thinks that bringing a caring adult or supportive friend will get that

person in trouble, she will make the trip on her own. You wouldn't want your children to drive home from the hospital after having surgery, but this legislation will result in young women driving themselves after having this medical procedure.

Instead of working to reduce teen pregnancies, this Senate is looking for ways to criminalize those who want to help and support teens facing a crisis pregnancy. This passage of this legislation is simply another way for the Republican majority to play to their base in an election year. Women's lives should not be used as pawns in a political debate, and women's rights should not be traded away in a ploy for votes.

To read remarks I delivered on the Senate floor on this issue visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=259519>

Voting Rights: Extending Protections for another 25 Years

Last week the Senate unanimously extended the Voting Rights Act for a 25 year period. I proudly voted for the extension in order to ensure that all Americans can participate freely in the democratic process. I'm pleased that the Senate passed the reauthorization bill with unanimous, bipartisan support.

Since 1965 the Voting Rights Act has protected minority voters from intimidation and discrimination. Enacted at a time when violence and bigotry demanded federal action, it has stood the test of time, and now serves as a safeguard maintaining the progress we have made on civil rights.

Plan B: FDA Nomination to come before Health Committee

The nomination of Dr. Andrew Von Eschenbach as Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner will come before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee on Tuesday of next week.

I have joined with Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-New York) in placing a hold on the nomination of Dr. Von Eschenbach until the FDA issues a yes or no decision on the over the counter contraceptive Plan B. Plan B was overwhelmingly recommended for approval by the FDA's own scientific advisory board over two years ago. Yet, disturbingly, the agency continues to delay a decision on the application's status due to politics and ideology. Senator Clinton and I have made it clear that the American people must be able to trust that the FDA is the gold standard in drug approval, and that every day that goes by without a decision on Plan B is a threat to the integrity of the FDA.

It now appears that the Republican Senate majority will be pushing ahead with Dr. Von Eschenbach's nomination despite our warnings that it will be blocked until the Plan B decision is made. This development sets the stage for a confrontation between those of us who believe in a strong, independent FDA, and those who believe that politics and ideology should be able to dictate future FDA decisions. I will be sure to keep you all updated as this important issue is debated.

For more information on Plan B and other issues that affect the lives of women visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/women/index.cfm>

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