

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington May 23, 2003

TANKER DEAL REACHED

Today, after eighteen months of work, we have reached an agreement for the Air Force to lease 100 new Boeing 767 tankers. This deal will benefit Washington state, Boeing, and above all – the brave men and women of our Air Force.

With our economy shaky and our peace and prosperity threatened, this tanker deal is more important than ever. These 100 new airplanes will be a shot in the arm to Washington state's economy and to the thousands of Boeing workers who will build the planes that strengthen our Air Force.

I've met with some of our brave tanker pilots who fly with the 92nd Air Refueling Wing based at Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane. I'm proud to be able to bring this deal home not only for our workers, but also for our tanker crews who truly are the backbone of America's air power and who deserve the best equipment.

Despite the best efforts of the Air Force to maintain the current tanker fleet, those planes are outdated, unreliable, and cost billions to maintain.

I'm proud of the hard work of the Senate, and of so many in the Air Force and Department of Defense, who know that these Boeing planes will help our airmen and women to protect our nation.

Any Boeing worker who's been laid off, any pilot who flies or relies on these planes and anyone who looks at our state's economy can see this is a great deal for our military, our economy and our taxpayers.

PROTECTING PATIENTS

Scientists have recently completed the historic task of deciphering the entire DNA sequence of the human genetic code. This new knowledge is already allowing doctors in Washington state and across the country to develop better ways to diagnose, prevent and treat diseases. But for genetic research to fulfill its promise, patients need to be free of the fear that genetic information will be used as a basis for discrimination in health insurance or employment.

For that reason, I support the bipartisan Genetic Information Act. This legislation will establish strong protections to prevent employers and health insurers from discriminating based on genetic information. This week, the Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee came to an agreement on this important legislation. I am hopeful that Congress will now give all Americans the comprehensive protections they need so we can make progress against diseases.

WORKING TO BAN ASBESTOS

This was a big week for asbestos victims and advocates. I re-introduced my Ban Asbestos in America Act. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a public awareness campaign to inform people of the dangers of asbestos-tainted insulation. And, an EPA-commissioned report urged a ban on asbestos. I believe that we are finally on the road to protecting Americans from this dangerous substance.

I first became interested in the issue of asbestos because, like most people, I thought asbestos had been banned. But in 1999, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* ran stories about a disturbing trend in the small mining town of Libby, Mont., a small mining town 160 miles from Spokane. Libby residents suffer from high rates of asbestosis, lung cancer and mesothelioma. Many have come to Spokane to seek treatment.

This disturbing trend led me to introduce my Ban Asbestos in America Act last year in Congress. Yesterday, I was joined by Senate colleagues, activists and asbestos victims to introduce this important bill again.

While more than 30 other countries have banned asbestos and protected their citizens, our country still has not.

In fact, the *New York Times* recently reported that more than 26 million pounds of asbestos were added to brakes, roofing materials and other common products in 2001. According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, an estimated 1.3 million employees in construction and general industry still face significant asbestos exposure on the job.

The time for the United States to ban asbestos is long overdue.

My legislation:

- Bans the 6 regulated forms of asbestos (which EPA tried to do in 1989)
- Requires an EPA Blue Ribbon Panel and National Academy of Science Study of issues beyond the 6 regulated forms of asbestos
- Requires a public education campaign about the dangers of asbestos products
- Requires a study to determine which products consumed in the United States have been made with asbestos
- Invests in research into asbestos-related diseases, requires the creation of a registry to track Mesothelioma, and authorizes funding for 10 treatment centers nationwide to improve treatments for this fatal cancer.

I hope that through my legislation and the positive steps we've seen by the EPA in the past few days, we will build support for the ban of asbestos in America and we will get this important bill passed this year. Details: <http://murray.senate.gov/asbestos>