

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – January 9, 2004

SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS AND MILITARY FAMILIES

Everyday, our soldiers make us proud. As they fight for us overseas, we have to fight for them here at home by making sure they come back to an economy that offers jobs and better opportunities for our veterans and their families. I wanted to make sure that our soldiers who are coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan are getting the support they need. That's why today I visited Camp Murray in Tacoma to tour the Family Support Services Center. It provides counseling, employment and financial assistance to returning guardsmen and their families.

Today, I also toured the training facilities at Fort Lewis and met with 30 guardsmen from the 81st Armored Brigade who will soon be deployed to Iraq. I shared with them our gratitude for their brave service and my promise to give them the support and resources they need to complete their mission safely and successfully.

You Can Help: The Washington National Guard Family Program lets people and organizations "adopt" a military family. To help, call (253) 512-7534 or 1-800-364-7492 or visit <http://familysupport.washingtonguard.com>

IMPROVING "NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND"

This week marked the second anniversary of the No Child Left Behind Act. We've always known that reforms like this would only succeed if they were adequately funded. Unfortunately, two years later the funding still isn't there.

On Monday, I visited Pasco High School to hear directly from students and teachers about the impact the law is having and to find ways to improve it.

One of my top priorities this year is to help high school students by passing the PASS Act, a bill I recently introduced. The PASS Act will provide literacy coaches, academic counselors and targeted funding for the schools that need the most help. It's a positive step we can take to improve No Child Left Behind and ensure a brighter future for America's high school students.

SEATTLE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL EXPANDS

Today I spoke at the dedication of a new patient building at the Seattle Children's Hospital and Research Center. Over the last 20 years, the hospital's admissions have increased by 51 percent. The new *Janet Sinegal Patient Care Building* is the first expansion of inpatient beds at the hospital in 25 years. I have a special place in my heart for Children's Hospital because I know what it's like to drive a sick child there in the middle of the night.

Over the years, I've been proud to support the live-saving work done at Children's – whether it was securing \$3 million for Children's Telemedicine project or creating the Children's Graduate Medical Education program in 2000, which today

provides more than \$10 million to help Children's Hospital train the next generation of pediatric specialists.

Children's Hospital is a true jewel in our community and enjoys broad support from thousands of volunteers. I was proud today to help expand and strengthen this community asset. **Read my remarks:** <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=217037>

MIXED NEWS FOR VETERANS

Since July 2003, I have been fighting an effort by the Department of Veterans Affairs to shut down three VA facilities in our state. The VA's CARES Commission was looking at closing VA hospitals in Tacoma, Vancouver and Walla Walla. I immediately raised the issue with the VA Secretary. He promised me that the Tacoma VA hospital would not be closed and agreed to hear testimony from our local veterans before making any decisions about the Vancouver and Walla Walla facilities.

I'm proud to report that on December 18th, the CARES Commission announced that it would not shut down the Vancouver VA hospital, which serves 13,000 veterans. In fact, the Commission may even recommend expanding services in Southwest Washington.

Details: <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=216771>

Unfortunately, the Commission indicated it will recommend closing inpatient beds at Walla Walla and contracting out acute medical care and inpatient psychiatry. I sent a letter with Senator Cantwell to the VA's Undersecretary for Health opposing the closure, which could jeopardize care for 69,000 veterans. If the VA proceeds, I will insist that it provide a detailed plan and funding commitment for veterans health care.

Details: <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=216785>

TRAVELS THROUGHOUT WASHINGTON

Over the past few weeks, I've been traveling throughout our state attending a host of events, including –

Meeting with: community leaders in Kittitas, Douglas & Island Counties, farmers in the Skagit Valley, high school students in Pasco, and the Farm Worker Housing Trust Board in Ellensburg.

Speaking to: the Washington PUD Association, the Washington Ports Association, the Northwest Girls Coalition, Commercial Real Estate Women, the Washington State Horticultural Convention, and seniors at the Northwest Senior Center.

Celebrating: our victory in landing the 7E7, the start of Sounder commuter rail service to Everett, MADD's annual Red Ribbon campaign, Gonzaga University's Inland Research Center, and the Hanford Reach Interpretive Center.

I also met with veterans from Douglas, Chelan, Grant and Okanogan counties, spoke with WSU's Beachwatchers at Fort Casey State Park, visited the Straw-to-Energy demonstration project near Spokane, and toured CombiMatrix, a Mukilteo company that is developing equipment to protect our troops from chemical and biological hazards.

I've posted some pictures from my travels at <http://murray.senate.gov/photos> and will post more photos and speeches in the coming weeks.

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