

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – May 21, 2004

Working for Guard and Reservists

Thousands of National Guard troops and Reservists are sacrificing for us overseas. I believe it is our nation's responsibility to repay their continuing sacrifice by helping them in every way we can. Over the past few months, I've met with many members of the Guard and the Reserve, and their families, to learn about the challenges they face during these long deployments.

On Wednesday, as part of an ongoing effort to provide increased assistance to families of the tens of thousands of troops serving on active duty, I held a press conference with Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle and Senator Bill Nelson. At the press conference, we proposed comprehensive aid to improve family assistance, health care, education and retirement benefits for troops, veterans, and their families back home.

I intend to offer these provisions as an amendment to the Department of Defense Authorization bill currently being debated in the Senate. I believe it's crucial that at a time when we're asking so much of these brave men and women, we should reciprocate. So I look forward to the passage of this important measure.

Read the statement I submitted for the record:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=221743>

Listen to the audio of my statement:

<http://murray.senate.gov/images/audio.jpg>

Fighting to Clean Up Hanford

This week I joined with Senator Maria Cantwell to demand that the Administration work with all the states and all of Congress to clean up the Hanford Nuclear Facility. The White House wants Washington families to accept a lower clean-up standard, and they are holding our funding hostage, fighting us in court, and pushing misguided legislation on the Senate floor. If the White House wins this attempt to leave more nuclear waste untreated, then Washington families will lose.

For more than a year, the Department of Energy has been trying to change the ground rules so it can leave more waste untreated, declare victory, and walk away from our nation's most contaminated nuclear sites. They tried to do it in the courts, and they lost. Senator Cantwell and I agree that the fastest, most effective way to clean up America's contaminated nuclear sites is for the DOE to work as a partner with the states. But sadly today we are seeing a new attempt by the White House to overreach its authority, circumvent a court case it lost, blackmail Washington state into accepting a lower clean up standard. That threatens the families I represent, and I'm not going to stand for it.

Time and again, I've used my position on the Budget Committee and the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee to protect Washington state, and I've gone toe-to-toe with this Administration over nuclear clean up. In February of 2002, I sharply questioned the President's Budget Director on their plans to shortchange Hanford. In April 2002, I chaired a hearing of the Energy and Water Appropriations Subcommittee to review the Bush administration's work at Hanford and other sites. I don't want them to think for a minute that we in Washington state are just going to accept these attacks on our ability to get a fast and thorough clean up of the nuclear waste at Hanford.

The Hanford Nuclear Reservation in the Tri-Cities houses over 50 million tons of nuclear waste. It's where we developed the plutonium that helped our country win World War II and the Cold War. My grandfather settled in the Tri-Cities in 1916, and my dad grew up there. My dad saw how much those communities sacrificed to help our nation have a strong military. Our country has an obligation to make those communities whole -- not leave them with high-level nuclear waste that has leaked from underground tanks.

Anytime someone has threatened our clean up efforts, I have taken them on -- and it doesn't matter if they're Democrats or Republicans. In the 1990's, when the Clinton Administration proposed inadequate budgets for the Hanford clean up, I took them on and used my position in committee and on the Senate floor to get my state the funding it needed. And every time the Bush Administration has tried to cut Hanford funding, they've had a fight on their hands from me. It's one of the reasons I joined with my colleagues in 2001 to create the Senate Nuclear Cleanup Caucus -- so that all the communities across the country who are dealing with nuclear waste will have a strong, bipartisan voice in the Senate.

I'm going to continue to fight for the cleanup of Hanford when the Senate resumes consideration of the DoD Authorization bill in early June. This is too important to let politics and misguided priorities get in the way.

For more information about my efforts on this issue:

http://murray.senate.gov/hanford_nuclear_cleanup

Celebrating Hispanic Scholarships

Tomorrow evening, before 1,200 teachers, parents, activists, and community leaders, I will deliver the keynote address at a banquet honoring Latino students for academic excellence in Yakima. I will also present scholarships totaling \$20,000 to 23 Hispanic high school seniors. The annual event is hosted by the Yakima Hispanic Academic Achievers Program (HAAP), an organization founded in 1992 to recognize successful middle and high school students. The banquet honors Latino students from the Yakima and Union Gap school districts who have achieved and maintained a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA.

Get more on my work with the Hispanic community:

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

Following up for Aerospace Workers

This week, I followed up on my recent aerospace speech by meeting with the United States Trade Representative, Ambassador Bob Zoellick, to discuss ongoing concerns with trade in commercial aircraft and specifically my interest in challenging the many market distorting practices utilized by Airbus to gain market share at the expense of Boeing and its Washington state employees. We have discussed this issue on several occasions and vowed to continue to stay in close contact.

Ambassador Zoellick was great. He understands the Airbus issues and he knows the competitive balance in aircraft trade no longer exists. He's working hard to help me raise the profile of the Airbus issue.

Get more on my work to protect U.S. Aerospace jobs:

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

Read the text of a major speech regarding aerospace that I recently gave on the Senate floor:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=221196#last>

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