

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – January 28, 2005

First Newsletter of 2005

I'm proud to send you the latest version of my weekly update. You're receiving this update because you signed up on my Web site in the past year. I was unable to send these updates for several months because of the Senate's election-year rules, but I'm pleased to resume with this issue.

Supporting Washington Veterans

In the past few weeks, I've had the opportunity to do three things to support our nation's veterans.

Meeting with Veterans' Affairs Secretary: Last week, I met with Ambassador Jim Nicholson, whom I subsequently voted to confirm as the next Secretary of Veterans' Affairs. During our conversation, I pressed for fair and open consideration of the future of the Walla Walla VA Hospital. I also urged that the VA move forward with efforts to provide healthcare facilities in underserved areas like North Central Washington and Whatcom County. It's crucial that the head of the VA understands that our veterans are facing health care challenges that need to be addressed by this administration. This is exactly what I told Secretary Nicholson, and, as a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I look forward to working with him in support of our state's more than 700,000 veterans.

Proposing Legislation: Also, this past week, I proposed the Fulfilling Our Duty to America's Veterans Act, which provides our nation's veterans with the healthcare and services they've earned. Specifically, this bill will:

- Ensure All Veterans Get the Health Care They Deserve By 2006
- Expand Mental Health Care to All VA Hospitals By 2006
- Make Prescription Drugs Readily Available to Veterans
- Ensure No Veteran Is Forced to Choose Between Disability Compensation and Retirement Pay By 2006
- Create A Seamless Transition From the Military to the VA
- Enact A New G.I. Bill For the 21st Century

I look forward to working with my colleagues in Congress and with the administration to make this bill into law.

Funding Veterans' Healthcare and Benefits: On Tuesday, I announced my intention to add \$2 billion in funding for our nation's veterans to the president's \$80 billion supplemental funding request for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This funding will provide our troops with healthcare services and benefits when they return home. As the daughter of a disabled World War II veteran and the representative for Washington's veterans and military families, I'll fight for every dollar for our troops. The federal government must meet its obligations to our veterans.

For more on the Fulfilling Our Duty to America's Veterans Act:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=231034>

For more on my work for veterans:

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

Following up on WA Priorities

This week I reintroduced several pieces of legislation.

Guard and Reserve: On Monday, I reintroduced legislation to increase services and benefits to members of the National Guard and Reserves when they are called to active duty. I originally introduced the Guard and Reserve Enhanced Benefits Act last year to expand health care, education, financial benefits and family assistance to help ease the burden on Guard members and their families. My bill tells Guard and Reserve members that we are committed to

providing them and their families with the health, financial, and social support services necessary to get through this difficult time. While several pieces of my original legislation were passed as separate amendments by the full Senate last year, they were blocked by the Republican majority in the House of Representatives and not signed into law. Getting the entire package passed and signed into law is one of my top priorities this year.

For more on the Guard and Reserve Enhanced Benefits Act:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=230791>

Wild Sky: On Tuesday, I restarted efforts to designate over 106,000 acres of national forest in east Snohomish County as Wilderness. Originally, I co-authored the legislation with Rep. Rick Larsen in 2002. Since then, I've pushed the bill – the result of bipartisan cooperation and local involvement – through the Senate twice. It still awaits action in the House of Representatives. Wild Sky reflects the great tradition of preserving places that make our state unique, and when passed, it will become the first new wilderness area in Washington state in nearly two decades

For more on Wild Sky:

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

Meeting with Cabinet Nominees

In addition to VA Secretary Nicholson, I also met with other Bush nominees to fill key cabinet posts.

Education: I met with Margaret Spellings, who was later confirmed to the post of Education Secretary. Our discussion centered around reform of our nation's high schools. I let Secretary Spellings know that improving educational quality and opportunity is high on my list of priorities, and that, as a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, I'm eager to work with the administration to help all of our children get the good education they deserve.

Energy: I also met with Dr. Samuel Bodman, the incoming Energy Secretary. During our meeting, we had a broad-ranging discussion about Department of Energy issues important to Washington state, including the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, cleanup and funding issues at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, and several energy issues including the Bonneville Power Administration.

Big News for Boeing Workers

Today, six Chinese Airlines announced the purchase of 60 Boeing 787 Dreamliners. The agreement is worth approximately \$7.2 billion dollars – great news for Boeing and for Washington state. I have long advocated for aggressive action to end direct subsidies to Airbus that continue to undermine the U.S. aerospace industry and American workers.

In the past year, I've led the effort to ensure a level playing field in the aerospace industry. I've given major addresses on the subject and have met with leaders in industry and the Bush administration. Last July, I called for the United States to withdraw from the outdated 1992 US-EU Agreement on Large Commercial Aircraft, and I introduced legislation to form a Senate Select Committee on Aerospace to study this critical industry.

These efforts paid off with the announcement, on October 6, that the U.S. would indeed withdraw from the 1992 treaty. Then, on January 11, 2005, it was announced that the United States and the European Union have agreed to a three-month negotiation period to end subsidies for large commercial aircraft. So, through our direct action, we are beginning to see results. I will continue to fight for fair competition for America's aerospace workers.

For more on my work for the American aerospace industry:

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

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