

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – April 15, 2005

Fighting for American Aerospace Jobs

For years, I've been working to ensure fair competition in the aerospace industry. I've spoken out about the need to stop unfair subsidies by the European Union to Airbus because these subsidies hurt American workers. Last July, I called for the United States to withdraw from the outdated 1992 US-EU Agreement on Large Commercial Aircraft, and I introduced legislation to form a Senate Select Committee on Aerospace to study the issue.

These efforts paid off with the announcement, on October 6, 2004, 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 agreed to a three-month negotiation period to end subsidies for large commercial aircraft. Monday marked the end of that period, and, unfortunately, the talks have produced no real progress.

So, on Monday, I spoke on the Senate floor in support of a resolution that calls on European governments to reject launch aid for Airbus and supports the president's authority to take any action necessary to protect American aerospace jobs. The Senate passed the resolution by a vote of 96-0. Though I'm disappointed that the talks have not been more productive, I believe we must do whatever is necessary to ensure America's continued leadership in the aerospace industry, and I will continue to work to protect aerospace jobs in Washington state.

Get more on my work to protect American aerospace jobs:
<http://www.murray.senate.gov/aerospace>

Getting Back King Co. Housing Funds

On Thursday, I pressed Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso Jackson to restore King County Public Housing Authority funds that were improperly cut due to an error on the part of HUD. At a hearing of the Transportation, Treasury, the Judiciary, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations subcommittee, on which I'm the highest ranking Democrat, I pointed out that nearly \$800,000 in critical Section 8 funding has been denied to King County as a result of errors made by HUD.

I'm very pleased to say that HUD reported back later that day, and the money will be returned to the King County Housing Authority. These funds will be critical in providing housing vouchers to seniors, disabled, single parents and refugees in the Seattle area.

More Funding for Port Security

Unfortunately over three years after 9/11, our nation's ports remain among our greatest areas of vulnerability to attack by terrorists. As many as ten million cargo containers will enter our nation's ports next year. The majority of these containers go uninspected.

For years, I have been fighting for increased funding for security at our ports, particularly for screening of these containers. After the September 11 attacks, I authored Operation Safe Commerce (OSC), a program that greatly enhances our ability to screen cargo from its origin overseas to its arrival at our ports.

Since that time, I have secured \$75 million in funding for the program, winning Congressional approval of \$28 million in July 2002 and another \$30 million in February, 2003. And, on Monday, I announced the third installment of more than \$17 million in grants to OSC. OSC is a pilot program that's being tested at our nation's three busiest load centers. Previously, in early rounds of OSC, only a small number of containers were

inspected; given the program's success, this new funding will be used to test it under real-world conditions with greatly increased container flow. The grants included in Monday's announcement fund OSC operations at the three OSC ports, as follows:

- **Ports of Seattle and Tacoma - \$5.2 million,**
- Port Authority of New York and New Jersey - \$5.2 million, and
- Port of Los Angeles and Long Beach - \$6.7 million.

I'm thrilled to have secured this funding. I look forward to completion of OSC testing so it can be implemented nationwide.

Learn more about my work to secure our nation's ports:
<http://www.murray.senate.gov/portsecurity>

Partisan Vote Hurts Our Veterans

This week, our veterans experienced a serious setback in the fight to get quality healthcare at VA hospitals across the country. All but one of my Republican colleagues in the Senate have turned their backs on the needs of our brave men and women in uniform by voting down a veterans' healthcare amendment I proposed on Tuesday. My amendment would have added \$2 billion to President Bush's supplemental funding request for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In a speech on the Senate floor, I made it clear that the VA is headed for a train wreck, with significant shortfalls at every regional veterans' healthcare network, and with thousands of veterans returning home.

- In Tacoma, at the American Lake VA – only those who are 50 percent or more service-connected disabled get appointments.
- In the Puget Sound as of January, there was an \$11 million deficit.
- As a result, there are about 16 new vacancies every month – and those positions will remain empty. They hope to reduce the workforce by 160 full time equivalents by the end of this year.
- As of this month, the next appointment at the Seattle VA Urology Clinic isn't available until August.

Conditions like this are unacceptable and preventable. But many of our veterans will continue to be denied the care they've earned because Congress is not providing the money. To me, this constitutes an emergency. To address this emergency, my amendment would have enabled the VA to absorb the influx of new veterans and reverse critical budget shortfalls, while still maintaining the quality of care for current veterans.

My amendment took common-sense measures that would have resulted in an increase of less than 1% over the president's request. Yet that small increase would have made a big difference for our veterans. In fact, six national veterans' service organizations called on the U.S. Senate to pass the amendment. But my Republican colleagues, turning a blind eye to the problem, first stripped my amendment of language designating it an emergency, and then rejected my funding package outright.

This is the third time these critical veterans' healthcare measures have been rejected. Last month, as a member of the Senate Budget Committee, I inserted a similar package in the Senate's budget resolution for fiscal year 2006, and later introduced the measures on the Senate floor. Each time, the measures were rejected.

I am extremely disappointed at this latest rejection of quality healthcare for our veterans. As Americans, we made a promise to the men and women who sacrifice their lives for our freedom. We told them we'd take care of them during their missions and after they return home. To me, funding their care at home is part of the cost of war, and I'm saddened that we've now missed two opportunities to keep our promise to them.

Sign up to get my veterans' updates:
<http://www.murray.senate.gov/vetupdates/index.cfm>
Learn more about my veterans' healthcare amendment:
<http://www.murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=236276>

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