

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – June 3, 2005

Back Home from the Battlefield

On Tuesday at the Port Orchard Armory, I sat down with Guard and Reserve veterans to hear about the challenges they are facing returning home from the battlefield. I wanted to hear directly from them so I can share their stories – and push for the resources they need – in Washington, D.C.

All of the participants stressed the importance of healthcare for returning troops and the need for family and transition resources.

Some noted the challenges of returning to work after a 14-month deployment. One said that Guard members often fall behind in workplace technology after such a long deployment, putting them behind their coworkers for promotions. They also discussed the need for job training.

Other veterans talked about the challenges facing families, especially the spouses who stay behind and have to take on new responsibilities – like paying the bills or caring for the children.

One of the biggest challenges discussed was how to help Guard and Reserve members who often don't live near a base or other support center. Some communities are doing a remarkable job of reaching out to Guard and Reserve members. For example, Kitsap County (where our discussion took place) created a foundation to provide support and other services. Several panelists said that support for Guard and Reserve members should be more universal and should not have to rely on the awareness and efforts of local communities.

I'll share more details about this discussion in an upcoming **Veterans Update** – which you can sign up for here:

<http://murray.senate.gov/vetupdates/index.cfm>

Spokane Launches New Disaster Response Center

On Thursday, I attended the groundbreaking of a new facility in Spokane that will house the Washington National Guard and local first responders, including fire, police and emergency management. The Spokane Combined Readiness Center will help improve the community's ability to respond to terrorist incidents, emergencies and natural disasters. The center also gives our National Guard members a modern facility. I was pleased to secure \$11 million for the project in the Senate.

Helping Rural Residents Get Prescription Drugs

On Thursday, I got see how technology is helping patients in Eastern Washington get access to high-quality healthcare. Many rural areas in Eastern Washington have a shortage of pharmacists. Using a project I funded, nurses in places like Pullman and Othello can consult a pharmacist at Spokane's Sacred Heart Medical Center. The pharmacist can then remotely activate a drug-dispensing machine that accurately fills the prescription for the patient in Pullman or Othello. I secured \$750,000 for the project because it gives people in rural areas better access to quality healthcare.

A Touching Purple Heart Ceremony

On Wednesday night in a crowded high school gymnasium, I was honored to present a Purple Heart to Rory Dunn, a young

Renton-area veteran who was severely injured by a bomb blast in Iraq last year. The ceremony took place in the gym of Liberty High School, where Rory graduated in 2000. Several hundred friends and supporters came out to honor Rory's courage, strength and service. We heard touching stories by his family, commanders and platoon members. Rory was injured in Fallujah last year when his Humvee was hit by improvised bomb.

Helping Students from Military Families

On Wednesday at Woodbrook Middle School in Lakewood, I announced a new proposal to help schoolchildren of military personnel. I was joined by the Mayor of Lakewood, students, teachers, parents, counselors, and the superintendents from Clover Park, Central Kitsap and Bethel school districts.

As Washington's military bases gain and lose personnel due to deployments and the Pentagon's new realignment plan, schools near military bases -- and the children of military personnel -- are being impacted. Some school districts (including Bethel and Central Kitsap) will have to cope with a dramatic and rapid increase in enrollment. They will need to hire new teachers and find new classroom space quickly – under tight budgets and without any additional federal support. Other school districts, such as Clover Park, will lose hundreds of students and be forced to close schools, greatly disrupting local communities.

In addition, studies show that children of military personnel often struggle academically while their parents are deployed overseas. These students need additional counseling and support, but many schools are not equipped to provide that support.

To address those challenges, I've written a plan to minimize the impact of these military changes on local schools and students. My plan will also ensure that children of military personnel get the monitoring, support and counseling they need so they don't fall behind. I unveiled my proposal on Wednesday and plan to introduce it as an amendment to the Department of Defense appropriations bill, which the Senate is expected to take up shortly.

New Housing Options in King County

On Wednesday, I joined community leaders in King County to break ground on the Greenbridge redevelopment, a major housing project that will replace subsidized rental housing in White Center. In 2001, the King County Housing Authority received a federal HOPE VI grant to improve public housing at the site. The new development will offer community services and provide housing for residents of varied incomes and ages. The development will include parks, trails, a library, a Head Start program and other services. Greenbridge will offer affordable housing for working families, expanded social services, recreational activities, and economic development opportunities. It's an example of how federal funding can make a community stronger.

Unfortunately, the Bush Administration is seeking to kill the Hope VI housing program – the very program that is making this local revitalization possible. At Senate hearings this year, I have pressed the President's housing secretary about the Administration's plan to abandon this successful housing option.

Memorial Day Tribute

On Monday, I took part in a Memorial Day ceremony at Evergreen-Washelli Cemetery in Seattle to honor America's fallen soldiers from all wars. The keynote speaker was Brigadier General Oscar Hilman, commander of the 81st Brigade. A Liberty Bell was rung to honor the American military personnel from Washington state who have been killed in Iraq.

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