

# **PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW**

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – February 10, 2006

## **The Bush Budget: Wrong Priorities for Washington**

On Monday, President Bush delivered his fiscal year 2007 budget to Congress. The Federal Budget is a statement of our priorities as a nation. It should be a moral, thoughtful document. It should carefully consider its impact on all of our communities.

We need a government that reflects our values and provides real incentives to encourage job creation. We can do that best by investing in our infrastructure, providing affordable, accessible healthcare, supporting energy independence, providing education for all of our children, and protecting our ports and borders. Unfortunately, the President's latest budget falls short in critical areas.

### **Don't Raise Our Energy Rates**

The President's budget proposes increasing Northwest electricity rates by up to 10 percent. This shortsighted plan would reverse the Bonneville Power Administration's long-standing policy of using revenue from the sale of surplus power to lower electricity rates for Northwest consumers. Last year, Energy Secretary Sam Bodman promised not to unravel BPA's system of cost-based rates without Congressional approval. Monday's proposal ignores this promise and would place an extra burden on a Northwest economy already struggling under sky-high energy rates.

We are just beginning to pull out of the economic damages left by the energy crisis of the past five years, and I will not stand by and allow the Administration to drag our economy down. An increase in the cost of heating our homes and providing electricity to businesses would cripple the economy of our region. Northwest members of Congress are united in our determination to defeat this plan.

### **Education – Largest CUT in 26 Years**

At a time when schools are facing increasing requirements under No Child Left Behind and families are facing rising college tuition, this is no time to shortchange education. Unfortunately, the President's budget proposes the largest cut to education in 26 years. At a time when our global economy is becoming more competitive every day, we should be tearing down barriers to education and building a stronger, more competitive economy; unfortunately the President's budget does just the opposite.

### **Port Security**

Four years ago, the Commandant of the Coast Guard told Congress that it would take \$7.3 billion over 10 years to properly secure the 361 port facilities across the country – including two of our largest cargo ports – Seattle and Tacoma. Unfortunately, once again, President Bush's budget falls far short of the needed funding. In fact, the President's request would eliminate the Port Security Grant Program entirely. We need a budget that reflects America's priorities and makes our communities strong and secure. That means reducing the risk that our ports - vital engines of our economy - are vulnerable to terrorist attack. The President's budget doesn't even get us close to that goal.

*For more on Senator Murray's response to the President's budget:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=251260>

## **Victory! Veterans to Get New Clinic in North Central Washington**

I am pleased to announce that after years of dragging their feet, the Department of Veterans' Affairs announced on Thursday that it has approved the establishment of a new Community Based Outpatient Clinic in North Central Washington.

I first brought the need for this clinic to the VA's attention nearly four years ago. And as a member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, I included language in the Veterans' Health Care, Capital Asset, and Business Improvement Act of 2003 mandating that the VA develop a plan for meeting the health care needs of North Central Veterans. When the VA failed to come back with a plan, I threatened to hold up one of the President's nominees until they did.

The veterans of North Central Washington have waited far too long for access to the care they were promised by our grateful nation. I am pleased that they will now have a clinic located near Wenatchee by the beginning of the new year.

The new clinic will provide primary and mental health care services to the veterans of Chelan, Douglas, Ferry, Grant, Kittitas and Okanogan counties. Currently these veterans are limited to a one day per month mobile clinic visit from the Spokane VA Medical Center's motor coach. Local veterans with more serious problems or those who can't wait for mobile clinic visits are forced to drive to either Seattle or Spokane for care.

Our veterans served and sacrificed for our freedom. Now, instead of driving hours just to see a doctor, they will be able to more easily access the care they both need and deserve.

*For more on the new North Central Veterans' Clinic:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=251465>

## **True Commitment to Hanford Needed**

Once, again the President's budget sends mixed messages to the people of the Tri-Cities when it comes to cleaning up dangerous waste at Hanford. While the president's budget request provides additional funding for the vitrification plant, it cuts other aspects of Hanford cleanup efforts significantly—particularly the tank cleanup. That's the wrong message to send. We need a real commitment to clean up the site. *For details, see:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=251292>

## **Asbestos Bill in the Senate**

The Senate is now debating an asbestos trust fund bill. I've been working for the past five years to finally ban asbestos, protect American families, improve research and treatment, and provide critical help for victims. The current bill includes a few positive features:

- My ban on asbestos
- 10 new mesothelioma research and treatment centers and
- a public education campaign.

Unfortunately the trust fund is still too small, does not treat victims fairly and is shrouded in secrecy. For these reasons and others, I cannot support the current asbestos trust fund legislation without significant improvements.

*For details on the bill, see:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/asbestos/update1.html>

*To receive asbestos updates, see:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/asbestos/updates>

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