

# PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – July 14, 2006

## Demanding Answers on Walla Walla VA Health Center Plans

On Friday, July 7th with little advance notice, VA Secretary Jim Nicholson flew to Walla Walla where he made a surprise announcement that the VA would build a new outpatient facility to replace the aging Jonathan Wainwright VA Medical Center. The center serves 69,000 veterans in Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

This Thursday, nearly a week after the announcement, with many questions on the VA plan still unanswered, I wrote to the VA Secretary with a series of questions about his announcement.

In my letter I asked the Secretary about his plans for community involvement, about the possibility that some services would be eliminated, and about fully funding this new promise. I reminded the Secretary that veterans, community leaders and local advocates have spent years working their hearts out to protect and enhance veterans healthcare in the Walla Walla region. They deserve detailed answers. I also pointed out that his surprise, secrecy-shrouded announcement fell far short of the open dialogue that they deserve.

I appreciate the VA Secretary's visit to Walla Walla but rather than easing concerns, it has raised new questions. I will continue to stand with the many people whose lives will be deeply affected by the future of this facility, and I will continue to demand specifics from the VA. Our veterans and their families deserve these answers.

To read my letter visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=258664>

## Homeland Security: Funding Washington state Priorities

On Thursday the full Senate passed the Homeland Security Appropriations bill which provides critical funding for security needs in Washington state and across the nation.

As a member of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, I worked hard to include \$1.2 billion in the bill for increased port and border security, and programs ranging from grants for firefighter and law enforcement training to funding staff at local county emergency response call centers.

Some of the important funding that will be directed to our state includes:

- \$24.75 million for the Response Boat Medium program for Kvichak Shipyard in Seattle.
- \$20.6 million for U.S. Coast Guard District 13 in Seattle.
- \$2.1 million for the U.S. Coast Guard's Sector Command building in Seattle.
- \$2 million for the construction of radiological laboratories at PNNL.
- Funding for 20 additional FTEs at the Bellingham Northern Border Air Wing, bringing it to full staffing.
- \$880,000 to finish the breakwater at Neah Bay.

Homeland security is a national issue and one that requires shared sacrifice. I am pleased that the Senate agreed to

improve upon the President's funding numbers and provide our local first responders and border patrol agents with more of the funding, training and resources they need to keep our communities safe.

For more information visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=258682>

## Salmon Restoration: \$25 Million in Washington state Funding Secured

In our state, a healthy, sustainable salmon population means a healthy economy. Salmon are critical to the livelihood of so many Washingtonians as well as an icon of the Northwest. However, over the past decade several species of salmon have been listed as endangered or threatened.

That is why I am very excited that I was able to secure \$25 million in funding for Washington state salmon restoration on Thursday. The funding will go towards restoring endangered and listed stocks of Pacific salmon.

The funding comes as part of the Senate Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) bill. The \$25 million directed to Washington state is the largest portion of salmon restoration funding given to any state. The bill also provides \$10 million to assist fisherman, fish processors, and related businesses who were impacted by the Klamath River basin disaster.

All of this funding will help support our state's coordinated effort to restore salmon runs and preserve our way of life in the Pacific Northwest. This bill will soon move to the Senate floor where it will be voted on by the full Senate.

To read more visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=258652>

## Protecting Northwest Waterways

### *\$1.6 Million Will Support Local Efforts to Protect Washington State's Marine Habitats*

In 1998, I helped found the Northwest Straits Commission in an effort to restore the marine resources of northwest Washington state. This week, I was able to include \$1.6 million in funding for the program as part of the Senate Commerce, Justice and Science (CJS) Appropriations bill. The funding will go towards the Commission's innovative grassroots approach to protecting the vital waterways in the northwest part of Washington from the Strait of Juan de Fuca and Northern Puget Sound to the Canadian border. I helped to form the Northwest Straits Commission because of my belief that there is no substitute for local expertise and experience in conservation efforts. This funding will allow communities to use their own unique ideas to protect the resources they know best.

To read more visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=258660>

## Other News:

**Saving LORAN Navigational System**- Last week I joined in a bi-partisan effort to save the LORAN navigational system which supplements GPS to aid Washington state pilots and fisherman.

To read more visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=258559>

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