

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington –October 6, 2006,

On The Road

Linking Washington D.C with the People of Washington State

All this month, I'm traveling in our state in order to speak with residents about the priorities I am fighting for in Washington D.C. I will be attending meetings with local leaders to hear their concerns, I will be speaking out about the need for greater investments in our state, and I will be discussing the things I have been able to accomplish for our state. I look forward to seeing Washingtonians out on the road, and I hope that I can get a greater understanding of the problems that communities are facing. Listening to all of you will allow me to continue to work for the right federal investments here at home. I began traveling this week in Snohomish and Thurston Counties.

EVERETT: PROTECTING OUR PORTS

On Thursday, I visited the Port of Everett to discuss the important victory that was achieved when my GreenLane Port Security legislation passed the House and Senate last week. That final passage means that this landmark bill is now on its way to President Bush to be signed into law.

In Everett, I discussed how GreenLane will push our nation's security borders out, forcing potentially harmful materials to be inspected before they ever reach our state's port communities. I also discussed how GreenLane will bring substantial new grants to Port Security programs, and how, after this legislation is implemented, the Port will benefit from new security protections. I was joined at the port by local leaders, Congressman Rick Larsen, and Port of Everett officials.

SNOHOMISH COUNTY: LISTENING TO LOCAL LEADERS

As people from Seattle and all throughout King County continue to pour into the many wonderful communities in Snohomish County, the region has experienced some growing pains. Many of those problems have stemmed from increased traffic congestion. I, like most residents in the area, have experienced this when commuting on I-5. On Thursday, I sat down with about 20 mayors in the Snohomish County area and discussed ways that the federal government can help to ease the problems caused by expansion in the region.

The mayors who joined me described many transportation problems in the region including backups on I-5, needed improvements to U.S. 2, and speeding up construction of new rail-bus-ferry terminals. They also described for me some of their concerns on education and housing.

The input of all of these local leaders will help me as I begin work on a new federal budget in just a few short weeks. I will be working to make sure that the local concerns of Washington state's many growing regions are supported with federal funding.

OLYMPIA: A MILESTONE IN PROTECTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

On Friday I spoke at the 25th anniversary celebration of the SafePlace domestic violence shelter in Olympia. SafePlace offers victims of domestic violence a place to recuperate, live without fear, and get the counseling and information they need to get on with their lives.

I spoke to the group about my work to support their efforts in Washington D.C. Specifically, I discussed last year's reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which I helped to support. I also discussed my Security and Financial Empowerment (SAFE) Act which helps give domestic violence victims the financial security they need to avoid being trapped in dangerous situations.

THURSTON COUNTY: FIGHTING DRUGS

On Friday, I heard from a panel of law enforcement officials, educators, and community activists about local efforts to fight drug abuse in Thurston County. They described to me the rise in the use of alcohol, cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines in the area. I discussed my efforts, as the top Democrat on the Senate subcommittee which oversees funding for the National Office of Drug Control Policy, to fund drug prevention efforts, support local meth initiatives, and locate a national meth center in Washington state.

MASON COUNTY: LISTENING TO VETERANS' CONCERNS

Also on Friday I visited Mason County to hear from local vets about the challenges they are facing accessing healthcare, services and benefits. Many of the veterans who attended the meeting shared with me their concerns about long term VA care. I updated them on how I am working to invest in the healthcare and support they have earned.

Improving the Lives of Seniors

Washington state Seniors will Receive Improved Services after Renewal of Older Americans Act

Last Friday as the 109th Congress drew to a close I supported the reauthorization of the Older American's Act (OAA). It unanimously passed the Senate and is now on its way to the President for his signature. For Washington state's older residents, the reauthorization of this critical legislation means that the current programs they rely on will be strengthened, and new programs that address the changing needs of this country's elderly population will be implemented. The OAA supports programs such as:

- Information and Referral Services
- Senior Nutrition Programs
- Elderly Abuse Programs
- Senior Emergency Preparedness Programs
- Community Service Employment Programs, and
- Education Programs

Existing national programs like Meals on Wheels, which serves 2.75 million seniors, including thousands of Washington state seniors, is included in the OAA reauthorization. Additionally, new programs that are tailored toward Baby Boomers have been created. For example, the Area Agencies on Aging will be able to institute a new program that will be responsible for advising local government officials on how communities can prepare to meet the needs of a growing population of older adults. This program and the many other resources funded in this bill are essential to helping all seniors meet the many new challenges they face.

In 2005 the White House held a major conference on aging to formulate the top priorities in assisting this country's seniors. It was agreed upon at that time that the number one priority should be re-authorization of the Older Americans Act. I am very pleased to have been able to work toward that re-authorization and I am thrilled to see that it has been accomplished in a relatively quick manner.