

## Timeline of Senator Murray's Actions To Save Washington's VA Facilities

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**06/30/03:** Senator Murray [visits veterans](#) in Walla Walla at VFW Grant Farmer Post 992 to discuss a variety of issues including CARES.



**07/24/03:** Senator Murray [writes to VA Secretary](#) Anthony Principi expressing extreme concern about the CARES process and proposed closures to the American Lake, Vancouver and Walla Walla facilities.

**07/24/03:** Senator Murray cosponsors S.1283, legislation which requires the VA to provide 60-day advance notification to the Congress of any hospital closures under the CARES initiative.

**07/29/03:** Senator Murray [aggressively questions VA Chief Counsel](#) Tim McClain about the directive to VISN 20 leaders to consider closing the American Lake, Vancouver and Walla Walla facilities.



**07/30/03:** Senator Murray [receives a call from Secretary Principi](#) informing her that American Lake is no longer under consideration for closure. Murray uses the opportunity to once again express her strong opposition to the proposed closure of the Walla Walla facility.

**08/04/03:** Senator Murray meets with representatives from Washington Veteran's Service Organizations including the American Legion, VFW and Disabled American Veterans regarding the CARES process.

- 08/06/03:** Senator Murray meets with Tim Williams, director of the American Lake, Seattle and Walla Walla VA Medical Centers and Dr. Les Burger, director of VISN 20, appointed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to discuss veterans health care.
- 08/07/03:** Senator Murray visits with veterans and staff at the American Lake VA.
- 08/13/03:** Senator Murray meets with veterans service organizations, veterans leaders and employees in Vancouver.
- 09/03/03:** Senator Murray meets with local elected leaders from Walla Walla to discuss the potential closure of veterans hospitals.
- 09/11/03:** Senator Murray questions Secretary Principi at a Senate Veterans Affairs Committee hearing regarding the ongoing CARES process.
- 09/17/03:** Senator Murray [holds a press conference](#) to discuss the Administration's lack of funding for our veterans here at home. The National Commander of the American Legion John A. Brieden III shares Sen. Murray's concern that veterans need more support.
- 09/26/03:** Senator Murray [provides testimony](#) to the CARES Commission at Vancouver and Walla Walla and signs a joint WA, OR delegation letter to the Commission in support of the facilities.
- 10/17/03:** Senator Murray [requests the VA](#) to expedite the process to allow Clark County to build an enhanced-use healthcare facility on the Vancouver VA campus.
- 11/11/03:** At a Veterans' Day press conference, Senator Murray [discusses the clear need](#) for funding to improve veterans' health care in Washington state.



**11/17/03:** Senator Murray [includes language in the VA benefits bill](#), requiring the Secretary to either open a VA facility in North Central Washington or contract with local hospitals.

**12/01/03:** Senator Murray [visits with veterans in Wenatchee](#) at a town hall meeting of veterans from surrounding counties.

**12/18/03:** At a public hearing, the CARES Commission indicates it will remove the Vancouver facility from the chopping block, but retains the Walla Walla VA on its list of proposed closures. [Murray calls on Secretary Principi](#) to “to reject the plan to close the Walla Walla VA facility and to engage the Washington delegation and the Walla Walla area veterans community in a real dialogue over the future of the facility.”

**12/19/03:** Senator Murray [co-authors a letter with Senator Cantwell](#) to VA Undersecretary for Health, Robert Roswell, opposing any closures in Washington.

**02/10/04:** Senator Murray [again questions Secretary Principi](#) and Undersecretary Roswell at a Veterans Affairs Committee hearing on the lack of funding for veterans health care.



**02/13/04:** The CARES Commission sends its report to Secretary Principi – included are recommendations to [expand services in Vancouver](#) and [close the Walla Walla VA Medical Center](#).

**02/26/04:** Senator Murray [co-authors a letter with Senator Cantwell](#) urging Secretary Principi to reject the CARES Commission’s recommendation to close the Walla Walla VA facility.

**03/02/04:** Senator Murray questions Under Secretary Roswell during a Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee hearing and announces a Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee Field Hearing to be held in Walla Walla.

**03/16/04:** Senator Murray sends her lead legislative staff member for veterans’ issues to Walla Walla for meetings with veterans, community leaders and VA employees.

**04/12/04:** Senator Murray holds [a U.S. Senate Veterans' Affairs Field Hearing](#) in Walla Walla.



**04/19/04:** Senator Murray [forwards comments from dozens of Washington veterans](#) collected at the hearing to VA Secretary Principi and again calls on the Secretary to reject the CARES Commission recommendation and keep the Walla Walla facility open.

**04/28/04:** Senator Murray [makes a personal plea to President Bush](#) to save Walla Walla VA Medical Center on eve of White House meeting on CARES Commission recommendations

**05/06/04:** Senator Murray [meets with VA Secretary Principi](#), receives news that Walla Walla facility will remain open.

**05/06/04:** Senator Murray meets with Walla Walla community leaders in her Washington DC office to discuss the decision and the future of veterans' health care in the southeastern Washington.

**05/07/04:** Senator Murray sends [letter to VISN-20 director](#) requesting a meeting to begin the master planning process with local leaders.

***"I will continue to fight for those who have served our country—in war and in peace—ensuring they are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. This fight is clearly not over."***

**-- Patty Murray, United States Senator**