

# ***PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW***

**U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington January 10, 2003**

## **TAKING STEPS TO MOVE OUR ECONOMY FORWARD**

### **EXTENDING UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

This week the Senate passed, and the President signed, an extension of unemployment benefits for out of work Americans. For the thousands of workers in our state who are struggling to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads, it is the right thing to do, and not a moment too soon. Extending unemployment insurance will provide an economic lifeline and an important economic stimulus.

Unfortunately, Washington state is among the hardest hit by our ailing economy. The bursting of the technology bubble, the struggling of the aerospace industry, and the loss of manufacturing jobs have compounded the problems in our state.

Extending unemployment insurance is an important first step that will help our unemployed workers provide for themselves and their families while trying to find work in this economy.

### **ECONOMIC STIMULUS**

On Tuesday, President Bush unveiled his plan to try to lift our economy out of its current decline. While I applaud the President for finally supporting unemployment assistance, I disagree with both the price tag and time frame of his stimulus plan.

Residents in our state understand the urgent need for help. Unemployment is high. Job growth is low. Small businesses are struggling. Holes are growing in our safety nets. And the state faces more than a \$2 billion budget shortfall. It is high time that more attention is paid to getting America working again.

But, unfortunately, the President's plan will exacerbate the debt rather than stimulate the economy. It targets limited resources to those who need help the least.

I believe a short-term economic plan needs to do four things:

1. Get the economy moving.
2. Restore unemployment benefits.
3. Help states like Washington with their budget crises.
4. Not break the federal bank.

Despite the bad news, I am optimistic. In Washington state, people are fighting to improve opportunity and maintain our high quality of life. I know our state will weather this storm and emerge stronger than ever.

## **FULFILLING OUR PROMISE TO LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND**

This Wednesday marked the one year anniversary of the No Child Left Behind legislation. One of the great tests of 'No Child Left Behind' will be whether we can make the law work for children, rather than penalizing them. Without adequate funding, 'No Child Left Behind' will fail, and schools will struggle to meet the new regulations.

I joined forty-one Senators in a letter to President Bush to share our concerns that without a substantial increase in resources, the law in an unfunded mandate. In the letter, we ask President Bush to endorse a \$7.7 billion increase in federal education funding.

The Administration's current budget proposal falls \$7 billion short of the resources promised in the Act, and it cuts funding for 'No Child Left Behind' initiatives by \$90 million. In addition, the President's budget request will propose a \$300 million cut to rural education initiatives that are so important to many Washington state communities.

Congress came together in a bipartisan way to pass 'No Child Left Behind.' Now is the time to come together again to support full funding to give every child the opportunity to succeed.

## **ASBESTOS: A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY**

In the last Congressional session, I introduced a bill to ban asbestos in the United States and require an education campaign about Zonolite insulation. Zonolite is a brand of insulation produced from ore mined in Libby, Montana that contains a particularly lethal form of asbestos. In Washington state alone, over 53,000 homes contain Zonolite insulation.

Last month, an investigative report by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch concluded that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had planned to issue a warning to the American public about the dangers of Zonolite. Unfortunately, due to intervention by the White House, the announcement was never made.

We must end this failure to protect public health from the dangers of asbestos. I sent letters to the heads of the White House OMB and EPA demanding answers to why the Administration would ignore this public health emergency.

I will continue my work to make the dangers of asbestos known to members of Congress and I will reintroduce my legislation to ban asbestos this year. I would hope this Administration shares my commitment to ending the shameful legacy of inadequate protections against dangers posed by asbestos.

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