

# PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – June 25, 2004

## Boosting Defense – And WA Jobs

On Thursday, I joined my Senate colleagues in unanimously passing the FY2005 Defense Appropriations Bill. The bill includes more than \$100 million that I secured for Washington state companies as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. These contracts will create good jobs for hundreds of Washington families and will support our nation's military. The bill now goes to a joint House-Senate conference committee before moving to the President for his signature.

This is a win-win for our state's economy and our men and women in uniform. The bill will support state-of-the-art technologies to protect and equip our troops, and it will support at least 450 high-skill, high-wage jobs around Washington.

I'm proud to partner with great companies working to bring the best technologies to our men and women in uniform. Washington state companies are already seeing their technologies save lives in Iraq and Afghanistan, and with this funding, we can do even more to see that more of our brave men and women return home safely. Some of the earmarks included in the bill are:

### Puget Sound Region

- Fuel Cell Hybrid Generating System Using Ramgen Technology  
Ramgen, Bellevue - \$5 million
- Point of Maintenance/Combat Ammunition System (POMX/CAS) Initiative  
Intermec, Everett - \$8 million
- Serial Number Tracking System (SNTS)  
Intermec, Everett - \$8 million

### Southwest Washington Region

- SEALION Cascading Vehicles  
Oregon Iron Works, Vancouver - \$13 million
- Locating Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) with Low-Cost Long-Endurance Unmanned Aerial Vehicles  
Insitu, Bingen - \$5 million
- Wafer Integrated Semiconductor Laser  
nLight, Vancouver - \$4 million

### Eastern Washington

- Washington State University  
Pullman - \$3 million

In addition to the earmarks I secured for Washington state, the bill includes funding for increased pay for soldiers, improved intelligence operations, the Air Force Tanker Modernization Program, Impact Aid, Army Stryker vehicles, upgrades of EA-6 Prowlers, medical research to assist military personnel injured in Iraq and Afghanistan, and better equipment for our National Guard troops.

I'm proud to support our nation's troops in every way possible. We've long had the best military in the world, and I'm grateful for the opportunity in the Senate to provide them with the resources to complete their missions safely and successfully.

*Get the full details on this bill and jobs in our state:*

**<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=223023>**

## Senate Rejects Veterans' Funding

**Veterans' Health Care Has Been Under-funded:** For years, veterans' healthcare has been under-funded, and has been subject to budget games and politicians' whims. I've been fighting to change that by making it mandatory. This week, the Senate had a historic opportunity to do just that

when we considered an amendment to the \$447 billion Defense Authorization bill. The Amendment was proposed by Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD), and co-sponsored by me, and would have ensured that VA prescription drugs and health services are available to all veterans.

**The Senate Passed Up a Historic Opportunity:** Senator Daschle's amendment offered us a chance to expand access and services by removing veterans' health care from the annual politics of the appropriations process. It would instead have been funded like other vital programs, including military retirement, Social Security, and Medicare. Additionally, this amendment would have provided a 30-percent increase in funding for fiscal year 2005 and would have assured adequate funding levels in subsequent years to meet the growing health care needs of veterans.

In fact, the VA's enrolled population has grown 134 percent since 1996, while appropriations have only increased 44 percent. The President's Task Force to Improve Health Care Delivery for Our Nation's Veterans - created by President Bush through an executive order - reported "a significant mismatch in VA between demand and available funding." The approach taken by Sen. Daschle's bill has been endorsed by veterans' groups - and the President's task force.

Unfortunately, instead of taking this historic opportunity to do what's right for the men and women who have sacrificed for our nation, 48 of my Senate colleagues shockingly voted against funding veterans' health care.

### **The Administration Should Support Veterans' Health Care:**

And, in spite of the findings of its own panel, the Bush Administration's policies continue to shortchange veterans. The Administration has put forward a policy they call "demand management," which aims to reduce the number of veterans treated at the VA. This has included lengthy waiting lists for hundreds of thousands of veterans, a six-fold increase in out-of-pocket payments by veterans since President Bush took office, and restrictions on enrollment.

It is unfortunate that the Administration has pursued these policies. In fact, a few weeks ago we learned that, if reelected, they plan to slash the VA budget.

**I Will Continue to Fight for Veterans:** As the daughter of a World War II veteran and the first woman on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I've been fighting for better health care for veterans for years. I've worked with VA Secretary Anthony Principi to keep three VA medical centers open over the past year because I know that closing these facilities at a time when demand for services is higher than ever simply wouldn't have made sense.

Our veterans deserve more, and from providing health care to family assistance to keeping VA facilities open in Washington state, I will continue to fight for them against these bad policies.

*Get more information on my work for veterans:*

**<http://murray.senate.gov/veterans>**

## Supporting WA Wine Producers

On Sunday, I will meet with wine makers, growers, and researchers to hear about the needs and priorities of this important Washington state industry. I will tour the WSU Prosser facility, will convene a wine roundtable, and will host a luncheon to discuss research and education, infrastructure, and marketing. Since I toured Washington vineyards two years ago, the wine industry has grown by leaps and bounds, and Washington wines are rapidly gaining an international reputation. I want to do all I can to keep our wine industry growing.

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