

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington –February 16, 2007

EDUCATION: Helping Vulnerable High School Students Graduate

PASS Act gives high school students the tools to get their education back on track.

Far too many high school students in Washington state and across the country are falling short of graduation or are wholly unprepared to meet the challenges of college. On Thursday, in an effort to combat this situation, I reintroduced my Pathways for All Students to Succeed (PASS) Act. The PASS Act, which I first introduced four years ago, will help to increase graduation rates by:

- Providing critical resources including literacy and math coaches,
- Funding additional academic counselors, and
- Creating grants to fund innovative reform in high schools across the country.

This legislation gives those high school students teetering on the edge the tools needed to get their education back on track. It makes a high school degree, a college education, and a good job, attainable goals for students who struggle with fundamental skills like reading and math. Most importantly, this bill will help place more high school diplomas in the hands of more young Americans, giving them their most essential tool for a rewarding future.

Recently, the Bush Administration has also indicated that it is interested in investing in strengthening high school education. In the President's 2008 budget, improving the academic achievement of high schools was cited as one of two primary focuses of the Administration's No Child Left Behind reauthorization proposal.

I've been pushing for high school reform for four years, and I'm excited that the White House is finally getting on board in this effort. When you combine the proven strategies in my bill with the Administration's new interest in high school reform, we finally have an opportunity to make the progress our students are counting on.

To learn more about the PASS Act visit:
<http://murray.senate.gov/pass/details.cfm>

BPA: Fighting Proposal to Increase Our Region's Electric Rates

On Monday, I joined with eight other Senators from the Northwest to express my opposition to a proposal in President Bush's budget that could increase electricity rates in our state by an estimated 5.5 to 11 percent. This is a policy change that the Bush Administration has repeatedly attempted to institute in our region and one that I have repeatedly worked to defeat.

I will not allow the President's budget to be balanced on the back of our ratepayers, and will once again work to beat back this shortsighted proposal.

Together, the eight Senator's from our region wrote to express our disapproval. To view our letter visit:
<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=269189>

VETERANS: Questioning VA Secretary Over President's Veterans Budget

On Tuesday, I questioned Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Secretary James Nicholson about President Bush's proposed veterans' budget for fiscal year 2008. I discussed my frustration that once again the VA is seeking to raise user fees and double drug co-payments for some veterans. I also expressed my disbelief that the VA projects to see fewer veterans for inpatient mental healthcare in the coming year.

To hear the hearing or to sign up for my veterans update visit: <http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=269348>

MENTAL HEALTH: Expanding Coverage

On Wednesday, in the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, I voted for a bill that requires larger businesses which already provide mental health care to employees to provide mental health coverage at the same levels as provided for physical illnesses. This bill will be a great help to those who have sought mental health care but who have been crippled by high deductibles and co-payments. It will also benefit those who have been reluctant to seek care because of financial barriers.

To learn more visit:
<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=269350>

JOINT FUNDING RESOLUTION: Keeping Critical Government Programs Running

On Wednesday, I voted for the bi-partisan Fiscal Year 2007 Joint Funding Resolution. The Resolution will fund the vast majority of federal agencies through September 30th.

This Resolution invests in critical national priorities such as health care for our veterans and troops, law enforcement, education, transportation safety, and housing. It also remedies many of the shortfalls that would have forced agencies and departments to cut services and personnel if government was to continue to operate at current spending levels. However, this bill does not solve many of the budgetary challenges we face as a nation. I will be working in this Congress to clean up the government spending process so that emergency measures like this bill are no longer necessary.

To learn more about this Resolution visit:
<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=269351>

INTERNS WANTED: Come Help Me Help the People of Washington State

I am looking for legislative interns in my Washington D.C. and constituent advocacy interns in my Seattle and Spokane offices. I am seeking applicants who are eager to learn more about the federal government, and want to be part of a hardworking team, dedicated to serving the citizens of Washington state.

Qualifications: Applicants must be graduate or undergraduate college students who have completed at least one year of college.

For more information, application procedures, and contact info visit: <http://murray.senate.gov/internship/index.cfm>

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