

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington April 11, 2003

AVIATION WORKERS WIN IN LAST MINUTE FIGHT

I have good news for the thousands of Boeing workers and others who have lost their jobs because of the downturn in the airline industry. Today Congress finalized a bill that includes my amendment to provide 26 weeks of unemployment assistance for thousands workers in the aviation industry.

More than 110,000 airline industry workers, including 35,000 Boeing workers, have lost their jobs because of 9/11, the War in Iraq, and the economic slowdown.

Congress was preparing give \$3 billion in aid to the airlines, but nothing for laid-off workers. I pushed for an amendment to provide unemployment assistance for workers at airlines, at airports, and for aircraft manufacturers and producers.

Today, members of the House and Senate met to negotiate the final provisions of the bill. But at the last minute, the White House pressured lawmakers to cut back the worker assistance to 13 weeks and to deny Boeing workers any assistance.

But I did not give up. I went back to my Republican and Democratic colleagues and insisted that Congress restore the full 26 weeks of benefits and cover Boeing workers. I am happy to report that my persistence paid off, and as soon as the President signs the bill, our workers will be eligible for assistance.

A BOOST FOR CONSERVATION BONDS

This week, the Senate passed my amendment to create a new forest conservation tool called Community Forestry Bonds. This legislation empowers communities in Washington State and across America to protect our forests, jobs, and quality of life from suburban sprawl. My amendment allows local governments across the country to issue community forestry bonds on behalf of non-profit organizations, like the Evergreen Forest Trust, to purchase working forestland.

I passed this legislation through the Senate several times, and in 2001 it was included as part of the tax cut legislation. But, because of opposition in the House of Representatives, my amendment was removed during the House-Senate conference. Had my amendment remained in the bill, it would have enabled the Evergreen Forest Trust to purchase and protect the 104,000-acre Snoqualmie Tree Farm when Evergreen and Weyerhaeuser reached a conditional agreement in January 2002. But without Congressional action, the Evergreen Forest Trust could not purchase the tree farm, and Weyerhaeuser instead sold the land to a Boston-based timber company.

It's time to give our communities the opportunity to curb suburban sprawl, protect their quality of life, and maintain timber jobs. I want to commend the strong coalition of labor, environmental, and forestry industry leaders who believe, as I do, that we need this bill. I hope that the conferees and the President agree too.

HOMELAND SECURITY MONEY FOR SEATTLE

This week the Department of Homeland Security announced that the City of Seattle will receive \$11.29 million to help local officials like police and firefighters prepare for and respond to possible terrorist threats.

This money is great news for the residents of Seattle. With local budgets being squeezed, our police and firefighters need these resources to help protect residents.

Seven cities across the country were selected to receive the Urban Area Security Initiative funds. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I supported these funds in the Omnibus Spending bill, which passed the Senate in January.

FINAL BUDGET FAILS FAMILIES

Today the House and Senate approved a budget resolution that sets the nation's spending guidelines for the next 10 years. Over the past few weeks, I've worked to improve the budget resolution by offering several amendments. My amendments to increase funding for education and transportation passed the full Senate.

Unfortunately, during negotiations between the House and Senate, most of those gains were erased. As a result, the final budget proposal does not address our nation's priorities. Here are just a few problems with this budget:

DEFICITS: It drives us toward record deficits to pay for a tax cut for the few.

SCHOOLS: It fails to give our schools the funding they need to carry out the No Child Left Behind Act.

TRANSPORTATION: It does not provide the transportation investments we need to create jobs today and to lay the foundation for our future economic growth.

MEDICARE: It provides too little money for a comprehensive, affordable Medicare prescription drug benefit.

MEDICAID: It would allow for the block granting of Medicaid and the elimination of the entitlement that low income people rely on. And, as our state faces a possible \$2 billion Medicaid shortfall, it offers no long term increase in the Federal Medicaid Match, which could hurt access to health care for all Washingtonians.

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