

# PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – January 23, 2004

## CRITICAL FUNDING NOW ON ITS WAY TO OUR STATE

Over the past seven weeks, I traveled across our state talking with Washingtonians about the challenges they are facing today and listening to their hopes for the future.

I met with students at Pasco High School, visited a farm where they are turning agricultural waste into renewable energy in Spokane, and spent time at a local fire department in Aberdeen. From Whidbey to Wenatchee to Kennewick, the message was loud and clear: Washington state communities want to move forward.

That's why, when Congress returned to D.C. this week, I worked hard to move ahead with the Senate Omnibus spending bill. The Omnibus bill funds seven appropriations bills for fiscal year 2004 – including \$370 million in federal funds for Washington state.

Like many of my colleagues, I had serious reservations about several provisions in this bill. But providing critical funds and jobs to our workers today does not mean that we will give up the fight for overtime protections and other critical safeguards.

I know what's at stake for our state, and that's why I voted twice this week to move ahead and deliver the funding our state needs for education, health care, job training and veterans. With \$245 million in transportation funds that I secured, I know this bill will help our state as we seek to move forward with job creation and economic development.

The fight to protect workers is not over. The fight to enact strong legislation to protect consumers and ranchers from unanswered questions over food safety will continue. I remain committed to the issues that are important to our state – worker rights, accessible health care, education, job creation and a strong economy.

To see how this funding will help your community, visit the links below:

### Transportation Funding:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=217325>

### Agriculture:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=217405>

### Environment, Economic Development & Public Safety:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=217411>

### Workforce Training:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=217392>

## I CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR OVERTIME PROTECTIONS

For the past year, I've been fighting an attempt by the Administration to undermine overtime protections for millions of American workers. Ever since this anti-worker proposal came out, I've written letters, cosponsored legislation, questioned Administration officials, and spoken out for workers on the Senate floor.

On Tuesday, I again raised my concerns directly with the U.S. Labor Secretary, Elaine Chao. At a Senate hearing I urged the Secretary to abandon this pay-cut for 8 million American workers. I made it clear that our fight is not over. I know we can beat this overtime proposal because we've done it before.

Back in September, I helped pass the Harkin Amendment, which blocked the Administration from carrying out its overtime scheme. Unfortunately, the Congressional Majority removed our ban from the Omnibus Appropriations bill. The Omnibus bill, a must-pass bill that is four-months overdue, funds every government program in areas like education, transportation, housing, veterans, agriculture, and the environment. I've worked hard to get the funding our state needs into that bill – including more than \$245 million for transportation projects throughout Washington.

So, when the Omnibus was voted on this week, I had to make a decision – either vote for it even though it has things in it that I abhor, or vote against it and put every dollar I've fought for at risk. There was no way to simply remove the bad provision from the bill. Under Senate rules, an Omnibus bill cannot be amended. I knew that voting against the Omnibus would not eliminate the overtime proposal. I also knew that voting against the Omnibus would put all the funding that Washington state needs in jeopardy. That's because the Majority Leader announced that if the Omnibus failed – all of its earmarks for Washington would be dropped.

Voting against the Omnibus would not have done anything to protect workers – but voting against it would have made it unlikely that our state would get the funding I've fought for. So this week, I voted for the Omnibus and for the jobs, funding, security and certainly that our state needs. And I'm going to keep fighting – as I did with the Labor Secretary on Tuesday – to protect workers from this anti-worker scheme.

### More about what I'm doing to protect overtime:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=217218>

## SUPPORTING WASHINGTON'S FIRST LATINO DISTRICT JUDGE

On Thursday, I continued my work to confirm Ricardo Martinez as a U.S. District Court Judge for Western Washington. He is currently a U.S. Magistrate Judge in Seattle. If confirmed by the Senate, he would become the first Latino district judge in Washington state's history.

Last year, I worked with Senator Cantwell and President Bush to select Judge Martinez for nomination. This week, I introduced him before the Senate Judiciary Committee, which will consider his nomination. I told the committee about Martinez's journey from his childhood harvesting strawberries with his family in the Skagit Valley to becoming a leading judicial figure in Washington state.

His fairness, thoughtfulness and compassion set a great example for so many people in our state. I will continue to push for his confirmation before the committee and the full senate.

For pictures, video & my remarks, see:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=217397>

To get updates on Hispanic issues, see:

<http://murray.senate.gov/hispanic/update>

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