

# **PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW**

**U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – February 6, 2004**

## **PRESIDENT'S BUDGET A MIXED BAG FOR WASHINGTON STATE**

On Monday, President Bush delivered his fiscal year 2005 budget to Congress.

Unfortunately, on issue after issue, this budget comes up short on the things that matter most to our state. I am particularly disappointed that this budget does not provide enough to fulfill the federal commitment to protect our ports, care for our veterans and move our families and communities forward.

On Thursday, I asked Budget Director Josh Bolten about these inadequacies. I told Mr. Bolten that Washington state residents are worried about the cost of health care, jobs, investment in transportation, and security and that this budget fails their priorities.

Here are some of the details of the President's budget and how it will affect our state:

### **Port Security**

- Eliminates Operation Safe Commerce, a program I created to help track cargo entering the U.S. through our busiest seaports.
- Turns our first responder training program into an unfunded mandate leaving state and local governments holding the bag.

### **Veterans**

- Imposes new user fees and increased co-pays for prescription drugs.
- Requires the VA to eliminate up to 1,000 jobs which would increase delays in processing disability claims and longer wait-times for medical appointments.

### **Health Care**

- Cuts funding to Rural Health Outreach by 25 percent and eliminates the Rural Health Flexibility Grants Program.
- Cuts the Community Access Program (CAP) by \$94 million. I have continually fought to save the CAP program from cuts by this Administration.

### **Transportation**

- Fails our transportation needs from our highways and airports to AMTRAK and beyond.
- In a bit of good news, the budget includes \$80 million for the Sound Transit Link Light Rail Project.

### **Hanford**

- Holds up \$350 million -- \$64 million of which would go to Hanford. These dollars would be released for cleanup efforts only when the issue of high-level waste reclassification is resolved to the Administration's satisfaction.

### **Mad Cow/Food Safety**

- Falls short of providing our farmers and ranchers with the funding necessary to restore consumer confidence and assure our trading partners that our beef is safe.
- Fails to adequately expand our nation's testing, monitoring and research capabilities.
- Cuts more than \$220 million for agricultural research.

### **Education**

- Falls at least \$9 billion short of what students and teachers need to fulfill the requirements set out under No Child Left Behind. This shortfall will deny nearly 28,000 Washington state students Title I services.

### **Labor**

- Cuts investments in worker training at a time when our state and nation are facing both a jobs and skills crisis.

I will continue to work with my colleagues in the Senate to restore funding for these important Washington state priorities.

## **GROWING SUPPORT FOR FERRY FUNDING**

Ferry transportation is critical to our state, and I'm pleased to report new progress in boosting our nation's commitment to ferries. Last June, I wrote a bill to quadruple federal funding for ferries. My bill, S.1345, would boost funding and coordination for our nation's ferry systems.

Our state operates the largest ferry system in country, transporting 26 million passengers and 11 million vehicles each year. Unfortunately, the federal investment in ferries is only one-tenth of one percent of all federal transportation spending, and there is virtually no federal coordination to encourage and promote ferry transportation.

When I introduced my bill last June, 10 other Senators joined me as cosponsors. I'm pleased to report that in the past few months, another 5 Senators have signed on as cosponsors – including three Republicans – giving the bill new, bipartisan support. The newest supporters are Senators John Kerry (D-MA), Susan Collins (R-ME), Thad Cochran (R-MS), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). Next week, as the Senate debates transportation funding the next 6 years, I plan to offer my ferry bill as an amendment on the Senate floor.

For a bill summary, see:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=205576>

## **KEEPING OUR BRIGADE SAFE**

Today I sent a letter to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld asking that he ensure that the men and women of the 81<sup>st</sup> Armor Brigade at Fort Lewis have the equipment they need before deploying to Iraq next month. It is imperative that our soldiers have the life-saving equipment and supplies they need to complete their missions safely and successfully.

In January, I visited Fort Lewis and Camp Murray and met with family members of the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade and heard about their concerns for their loved ones. Having the proper gear should not be one of those worries.

Next week the 5,000 member brigade will move to Fort Irwin, CA for final training before being deployed to Iraq in March.

In my letter, I asked Secretary Rumsfeld to give me his personal assurance that all members of the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade will be provided with new body armor prior to their deployment. I also asked that he update me on the status of the 81<sup>st</sup> Brigade's requisition orders. Our Guard and Reserve troops deserve the full support of our government, including the tools necessary to accomplish their missions safely.

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