

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington –February 22, 2007

AGRICULTURE: Working for the Needs of Snohomish County Farmers

On Tuesday, I sat down with Snohomish County community leaders, local growers, and producers to hear about the unique agricultural challenges they are facing. The assembled panel shared with me their stories and challenges which I will bring back to Washington D.C. to help fight for them. Among the issues we discussed were:

- the consequences of last year's Election Day floods,
- the inclusion of their needs in the upcoming Farm Bill,
- the dwindling amount of farm land in the area due to population growth and development,
- the needs of specialty crop growers,
- and the great need for farm labor and how immigration reform is affecting that need.

Currently, I am working to help Snohomish farmers by:

- co-sponsoring the Emergency Farm Relief Act of 2007 which provides agriculture disaster assistance,
- co-sponsoring the AgJobs bill that sets up a responsible guest worker program to give Snohomish County farmers the access to labor they desperately need,
- and working to ensure that Snohomish County priorities are addressed in the Farm Bill. Including assistance for specialty crop farmers and help for local farmers to get their crops to local market.

I know that there is far more work to do to protect farm land, ensure a stable farming labor force, and provide for those who have been devastated by disaster. I will work to keep open lines of communication between farmers and my office. I am very grateful to all of the farmers, residents, and local leaders who took the time on Tuesday to share their concerns. Their participation and knowledge will allow me to be a strong advocate for their concerns.

To sign up to receive my Agriculture Update please visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/agupdates>

[Around Our State](#)

COWLITZ COUNTY: Sediment Dredging Briefing

On Wednesday, I took part in a briefing I had requested for myself and members of the Cowlitz County community on the progress of Mt. St. Helens sediment dredging in the Cowlitz River. I know how important this project is to Cowlitz County, and I am pleased that the Army Corp of Engineers is working hand-in-hand with the state to make progress. I have worked to support this effort by pushing the Bush administration to fund this project in the federal budget. This year the administration has included \$10.2 million to continue sediment monitoring and dredging in the Cowlitz River.

COWLITZ COUNTY: Discussing Federal Needs with Cowlitz County Leaders

On Wednesday, I also got the opportunity to meet with Cowlitz County Commissioners, port officials, and business and community leaders to discuss the major issues facing the County. I heard about the community's top concerns including Cowlitz river dredging, cuts to federal law

enforcement grants, cuts to Community Development Block Grants, and housing concerns. I will be working to address their concerns on the federal level.

EAST KING COUNTY: Meeting With Area Police Chiefs

Today, I led a roundtable discussion with East King County Law Enforcement officials about the challenges that they are facing including the spread of Meth and gangs, and cuts to COPS and Byrne Grants that were included in the President's budget. I discussed with the Police Chiefs how I am working to restore the President's cuts, support the Washington State Meth Initiative, and bring a National Meth Center to Washington State.

VETERANS: Demanding Investigation into Deplorable Conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

On Tuesday, I wrote to Defense Secretary Robert Gates, urging him to launch an Inspector General's investigation into the deplorable living conditions facing returning Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans at the Army's flagship military hospital, Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

The conditions were recently revealed in series of Washington Post articles. The articles cited substandard living conditions, bureaucratic delays, and inadequate benefits for seriously injured service members. I joined Senator Barbara Mikulski in writing to Secretary Gates. In our letter we asked that if conditions at Walter Reed, the crown jewel of military health care facilities, have degraded to this point, how can we be confident about the care and transition assistance being provided at any other facility across the country?

Specifically, we asked Secretary Gates for:

- an inspection of each outpatient facility to assess their quality and safety,
- a report on the number of caseworkers available to recovering soldiers,
- a review of the paperwork requirements for recovering soldiers,
- a report on the accessibility and quality of psychological counseling for Soldiers and their families,
- and, a timeline and description of the steps the Department of Defense will take to improve outpatient care.

In the upcoming weeks I will be taking further steps to ensure that veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are being guaranteed the best in medical care and transition assistance.

Please sign up here to receive my Veterans update:

<http://murray.senate.gov/vetupdates/index.cfm>

To read our letter to Secretary Gates visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=269545>

To read the Washington Post Articles visit:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/17/AR2007021701172.html>

IRAQ: Republican Obstruction Defies America's Interests

Last Saturday, I voted to pass a resolution opposing the President's surge in Iraq, but for the second time in two weeks Republicans blocked the resolution from even coming up for a vote.

Please read my statement on this important vote:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=269494>

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