

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington - June 13, 2003

SECURING OUR PORTS, PROTECTING OUR STATE

As those of us in the Pacific Northwest understand, our ports are the lifeblood of our region's economy. But, they are also the potential target of terrorist attacks. While the majority of post-September 11th security improvements have focused on our airports and borders, an incident at one of our ports would have terrible consequences. That is why I have been working so hard to secure critical funding to help improve port security in Washington state and across the country.

Imagine my shock when the Bush Administration announced it was going to divert funding from a port security initiative that I authored last year. "Operation Safe Commerce" was designed to help monitor and track container cargo entering our nation's three largest seaports, including Seattle/Tacoma. Congress approved - and the President signed -- \$58 million for the program. But last month, I was told that the Administration planned to 'redirect' \$28 million from this container security initiative and spend it elsewhere.

To register my protest against the Administration's plan to divert money from our ports I placed a "hold" on a senior Administration budget nominee. Unless the Administration backed down from its plan to shortchange our ports, I would not allow a Senate vote to confirm its nominee for a Budget position.

Fortunately, my persistence paid off because on Wednesday, I received a letter from Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge announcing that the funds would be released.

I am also pleased to announce that \$22.2 million to improve port security infrastructure will soon be reaching Washington's ports. The funds will allow our ports to secure their perimeters, purchase new equipment, upgrade communications technology and protect the safety and security of our port communities. I helped to secure these critical dollars in two Appropriations bills that Congress passed earlier this year, and the release of the funds comes not a moment too soon. Terrorists may target our weaknesses, which is why it is so important to strengthen security at ports in our state and around the country. I will continue to stand up for our state and make sure that our ports and communities are safe and secure.

Port Security Funds for Washington state include:

Tesoro Refining and Marketing , Anacortes	\$160,000
Port of Port Angeles , Port Angeles	\$100,000
Washington State Ferries , Seattle	\$9,420,124
Port of Seattle , Seattle, Tacoma, Everett	\$10,037,507
Clipper Navigation, Inc. , Seattle	\$117,300
Total Terminals International , Seattle	\$392,000
City of Tacoma Police Department , Tacoma	\$258,234
Tidewater Barge Lines , Vancouver	\$8,598
SSA Pacific Terminals , Seattle, LA/LongBeach	\$1,699,579
Pacific Cruises Northwest, Inc. , Bellingham	\$9,617

\$22,202,959

MAKING PRESCRIPTION DRUGS MORE AFFORDABLE

After working closely with my Republican and Democratic colleagues on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, I am pleased to announce that on Wednesday the Committee reached an agreement that will help put generic drugs on the market and into the hands of patients more quickly.

The bill, which still must be approved by the full Senate, is a big win for consumers and for continued innovation. The legislation closes a legal loophole from 1984 that allows brand-name drug makers to prevent a generic alternative from being produced for 30 more months each time the brand-name companies sue for patent infringement. Under our agreement, brand-name companies can only delay marketing for one 30-month stay.

The HELP Committee legislation provides the right incentives for companies to develop and market new life-improving - and in some cases - life-saving medicines. I am proud to have worked closely on this bill, which will help to reduce health care costs for patients and dramatically improve the quality of life of millions of Americans who depend on prescription drugs. I will continue to work to ensure that all Americans have timely access to affordable prescription drugs.

ENDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Not long ago, domestic violence was considered a family problem. It was something people didn't talk about. That climate made it difficult for victims to seek help. It prevented friends and neighbors from getting involved in what was considered "someone else's business." I'm glad to say that times have changed.

On Wednesday, I had the honor of speaking to a gathering of the National Network to End Domestic Violence in Washington, D.C. Advocates for domestic violence programs, including Grace Huang of the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, came to the Capitol to teach Congress about the importance of domestic violence prevention programs, shelters and services around the country.

Many of these programs are struggling. Last year, one of our largest shelter service providers in Seattle had to turn away 3,659 individuals. That means that thousands of women and children were forced back into a violent home or onto the streets. This is not just sad; it's unacceptable. Especially at a time when budgets are tight at the state and local levels, the federal government has the responsibility to step up and support these important programs.

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