

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – July 8, 2005

Caring for Our Veterans

FROM THE BATTLEFRONT TO THE HOMEFRONT

Caring for our service men and women is a fundamental cost of war. In my ongoing fight to care for these brave men and women after they complete their service, this week I held a roundtable discussion with Guard and Reserve veterans in Everett to discuss their experiences and hear about the challenges they face in transitioning back to civilian life.

I know this transition is a very difficult time for our veterans, and I want to find ways to make the transition from the battlefield to the homefront easier for them and their families. I've been using the information I gather at these roundtable meetings to inform my work on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Next month, I will also hold an official field hearing of the Veterans' Affairs Committee. I've held several such hearings over the past few years, and they've proved extremely successful and helping me get, firsthand, the stories that persuade my colleagues in Washington, D.C., to make sure we support our veterans when they come home.

BIG VICTORY FOR VETERANS

Over the past few weeks we've made tremendous progress in the fight to get our veterans – including those returning from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – the quality, dependable care they need and deserve. I was thrilled – and relieved – when, last week, the Senate passed my amendment to immediately add \$1.5 billion for veterans' health care.

My amendment passed the Senate on a vote of 96-0, and I'm proud that we did right by our veterans. But there is still more work to do. We must ensure that the Senate funding level is maintained in negotiations with the House, and that the President signs this bill into law. Caring for our nation's veterans is not a Republican or Democratic issue – it is an American responsibility.

See video of my speech on vets' health care funding:
<http://murray.senate.gov/video/050628-vets.ram>

Sign up to get periodic updates on my work for veterans:
<http://murray.senate.gov/vetupdates/index.cfm>

Keeping Our Coast Guard Strong

Today, I spoke at the groundbreaking for the new Coast Guard Operations and Administration building in Seattle. The facility will allow the Coast Guard to house critical elements of its District 13 operations and provide state-of-the-art technology to those operations – all under one roof. It will also accommodate other federal and state agencies, allowing better coordination of critical efforts to keep our state safe.

The United States Coast Guard is our state's first line of defense against terrorists, drugs, and polluters. Whether it is aiding a stranded fisherman, responding to an oil spill, or securing our ports against terrorist attacks, we rely on the men and women of the Coast Guard to respond promptly.

That's why I believe it's crucial that we provide these valiant men and women with the best equipment and facilities we possibly can. As part of that effort, I've secured a total of \$28 million to completely renovate the Coast Guard's Puget Sound headquarters -- \$12 million to renovate Pier 36 and \$16 million to construct this brand new building.

This new Operations Center will provide another tool to allow the Coast Guard to remain responsive – just as it's always been. And that's why I'm so proud to have been a strong supporter of this project.

Competitive Economy, Safe Ports

This week, I spoke at the Washington Council on International Trade's (WCIT) annual conference in Seattle. International trade is crucial to Washington's economy and way of life, from high-tech companies to family farms.

In my speech, I updated community and business leaders on my work to keep our state competitive in the global economy. I also emphasized how important it is that we stay at the international trade negotiating table. Now is not the time for the US to stop actively participating in discussions that will shape the future of trade between nations.

In addition, I talked about my ongoing concerns about the safety of the cargo entering our nation's ports. This continues to be one of our greatest national security vulnerabilities, and I'm working with industry and community leaders to come up with ways to protect our ports from potential terror attacks while keeping cargo flowing smoothly, swiftly, and safely. In 2002, I authored Operation Safe Commerce, a pilot cargo security program, and in upcoming months I'll be working to take the next step toward keeping our nation safe and our economy strong.

I also updated attendees on my fight to keep the American aerospace industry strong and keep aerospace jobs here at home. For the past year, I've been fighting to maintain American leadership in the aerospace industry and keep American aerospace jobs here at home. I have a three-pronged strategy when it comes to fighting European aircraft manufacturer Airbus's unfair competition. I'm working to:

- Stop the subsidies that European governments give Airbus;
- Debunk Airbus's false claims that it creates American jobs and that it is an American company; and
- Show that Airbus does not care about American workers or American security.

Keeping WA Moving

SHORELINE – AURORA AVE. GROUNDBREAKING

On Tuesday, I joined Shoreline residents and community leaders to celebrate the groundbreaking for the Aurora Corridor Project. This important project will allow for the safe, efficient flow of daily traffic. It will also unite local communities by building a bridge that will connect the Interurban Trail between Seattle and Edmonds, and providing access to transit centers in Aurora and Shoreline. This project will help make it an even better place to live and raise a family. I'm glad to have secured \$400,000 for the Interurban Trail in 2002, and I'll continue to support this project.

KIRKLAND – TOTEM LAKE GROUNDBREAKING

On Friday, I spoke at the groundbreaking for the Totem Lake Freeway Station in Kirkland. I've secured \$2.8 million for the project, which will improve east/west mobility across I-405, and will add to the efficient movement of transit and carpools entering and exiting Kirkland. By encouraging carpooling and greater use of mass transit, this station will help us keep cars off the road, meaning that it will be easier for people and goods to move up and down a critical transportation corridor.

Protecting the Northwest's Salmon

This week, I spoke at a luncheon in support of Shared Strategies for Puget Sound. Shared Strategies is a community-based effort, engaging local citizens, tribes, technical experts, and policy makers to build a practical, cost-effective salmon recovery plan. I'm proud to have secured \$25 million this year for salmon recovery in our state. Salmon is a way of life in our state, and through efforts of groups like Shared Strategies, it will continue to be for future generations.