

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – April 7, 2006

Cargo Security Gets a Boost

On Wednesday we awoke to the news that 22 Chinese nationals were found on the docks of the Port of Seattle after having been smuggled into the country in a cargo container. What keeps me up at night is the thought that next time it could be terrorists or deadly weapons that reach our shores. It is far past time to put in place a strong security regime to protect our residents and our economy and the GreenLane Maritime Security Act that I wrote with Senator Collins (R-Maine), does exactly that.

The same day that we learned of the incident involving Chinese nationals at the Port of Seattle, I testified at a hearing of the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee - of which Senator Collins is the Chairman - to urge the Committee and Congress to pass our bill.

By using cargo containers, terrorists can deliver a deadly one-two punch to our country. The first punch would create an untold number of American casualties. The second punch would bring our economy, but they can also carry the deadly tools of a terror attack. Today, we are not doing enough to keep America safe.

Two months ago, the sale of a number of our seaports to a foreign, government-owned company sparked a critical debate across the country. Now, we need to set up a security regime that will actually make us safer. Until we do so, none of us can really feel secure. I applaud Senator Collins and the ranking Democrat on her Committee, Senator Joe Lieberman (D-Conn.), for holding this weeks hearing which will help us to move the GreenLane bill through Congress and help protect the American public with real security reform.

To read my testimony from the hearing:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=253575>

Better Security for SW Washington

At a hearing of the Senate's Commerce, Justice and Science Appropriations Subcommittee this week, I had the opportunity to ask U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez about the lack of federal agents stationed in Southwest Washington to help cut down on crime and drug trafficking. The region's local law enforcement officials need better access to their federal counterparts. I consistently hear from law enforcement officials that criminals are exploiting this lack of federal agents and that they need more help.

I raised these concerns directly with Attorney General Gonzales and he told me that of the hundreds of federal agents in Washington state only two are stationed in Vancouver. He then agreed to work with me on the issue. Our local police are left to seek help more than 100 miles away in Tacoma, and they deserve more federal support closer to home. I will continue to work with the AG and others at the federal level to help our hardworking local officials to keep our communities safe and secure. *For more on this issue:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=253604>

War Supplemental Bill Moves Ahead

On Tuesday, my Senate Appropriations Committee passed the Emergency Supplemental Spending bill which pays for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and which this year will also provides funding for the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast. In the three years since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, our country and Congress have stood together in staunch support of our men and women in uniform.

Our troops are sacrificing every day on behalf of a grateful nation and the least we can provide are the resources they need to do their jobs safely and effectively. We all want to succeed in our mission in Iraq. We want to achieve our military and policy goals and to bring our troops home safely. We know that this will require sacrifice and that a U.S. presence will be required for some period of time. But despite these obvious facts, the Administration continues to operate from the pretense that the cost of this ongoing war is unknowable and thus requires emergency spending. It is disingenuous to continue to ask for "emergency" spending to pay for military action that has been ongoing for years. The continued adherence to this policy deliberately misleads the American people about the real costs of war. While we provide for our men and women fighting overseas, we also need to invest in the things that make us strong here at home.

Transportation Infrastructure

I am glad that the Committee agreed to adopt my amendment to take the next step toward fulfilling our federal commitment to states along the Gulf Coast and around the country that are waiting on reimbursements to rebuild transportation infrastructure after natural disasters. Strong, safe roads, rails and bridges are critical to our economic growth and the productivity of our communities.

A Win for NW Ratepayers

I am pleased to announce that an amendment introduced by Senator Larry Craig (R-Idaho), which I supported, to halt a Bush Administration plan to force the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to raise Northwest electricity rates was approved by the Committee. This is good news for businesses and families across our state and is a tribute to the cohesive efforts of the entire Pacific Northwest Congressional delegation.

Good News for Farmers and Producers

I have met with farmers across Washington state and time and time again I hear about how they are reeling from high fuel and fertilizer costs. That's why I was pleased to offer and pass an amendment to this bill that provides \$3.9 billion in Agriculture Disaster Relief to fund equivalent to 30 percent of their direct payment to farmers and ranchers nationwide who have born the brunt of increased costs due to the impact of Katrina. It also includes \$100 million to fruit, vegetable and livestock producers through programs like marketing and promotion assistance.

Immigration Reform Stalls

I am disappointed to report that today the Republican majority voted against moving ahead with comprehensive immigration reform. While I was concerned with several measures in the bill, I hoped that by bringing it to the floor of the Senate we could amend and improve the Act. Washington state has a lot at stake in the debate over immigration reform. I believe we need a holistic approach which should do 7 things:

1. It should improve enforcement.
2. It should treat the Northern border fairly.
3. It should include a guest worker plan, which includes a path to citizenship.
4. It should provide a path forward so that people who are here have an opportunity to become citizens and realize the American Dream.
5. It should protect the rights of victims and refugees.
6. It should not turn into criminals those compassionate souls who care for their wounds, teach their children or feed their families.
7. And finally, it should provide the resources to help families rise above their circumstances through education and training.

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