

# **PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW**

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – February 9, 2007

## **BUSH'S BUDGET: Misplaced Priorities Ignore the Needs of Washington State Families**

On Monday, President Bush unveiled his budget for Fiscal Year 2008. Unfortunately, the budget reflects the same misplaced priorities that we've seen for the past six years. Rather than change course and invest in the areas that we know will make America strong, the President has chosen to favor short-sighted tax cuts and corporate giveaways over the needs of America's hard-working families.

If the budget is a statement of values, this President is out of touch with average Washingtonians. In fact, this budget takes an ax to everything from housing to Medicare to the COPS program in an effort to continue to pay for the fiscally irresponsible policies.

It is unconscionable that at a time of war, the President has attempted to balance his budget on the backs of America's veterans. Charging our heroes a penalty for the care and services they deserve is unacceptable.

It is unseemly that at a time when health care costs are at an all time high that the President would slash programs like Medicare and Medicaid – which so many Washington state residents rely on - by \$80 billion.

And it is simply irresponsible to talk about homeland security risks while eliminating port security funding upon which the ports of Seattle and Tacoma rely on.

We all deserve a government that reflects our priorities and that pays for them in a fiscally responsible way. Rather than give hope to everyday Americans, this budget undermines many of our country's needs and pays for others through fiscally deceptive means. While I am disappointed by much of the President's budget, I look forward to working across the aisle in the Senate to help move our state and country forward.

## **IRAQ: Stop Blocking Debate**

On Tuesday, I delivered a speech on the Senate floor in which I called on Republicans to stop blocking debate on the President's misguided plan to escalate the War in Iraq. I pledged my support to vote for a bipartisan resolution expressing opposition to the President's surge as the first step in changing direction in Iraq. I also spoke about the tremendous sacrifices Washington state families have made during the war.

**To watch my speech visit:**

<http://murray.senate.gov/photos/display.cfm?id=268766>

## **Transportation: Pushing for Safety Progress**

On Thursday I chaired this session's first hearing of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation and Housing and Urban Development & Related Agencies. The witness was U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters, who testified on the President's FY 2008 budget proposal for the Department of Transportation.

**Learn more about this hearing visit:**

<http://www.murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=269003>

## **WILD SKY: Time is Now for New Wilderness area in Washington state**

On Wednesday, Congressman Rick Larsen and I introduced legislation in both the House and Senate that will create the first new Wilderness area in Washington state in over twenty years. After more than five years of preparation, Congressman Larsen and I are optimistic that our Wild Sky legislation will become law this year.

This legislation, which will create a Wild Sky National Wilderness Area, was first introduced on May 29, 2002. In the 107th, the 108th and the 109th Congress, the bill passed the Senate and enjoyed broad bi-partisan support but failed to make it through the House. This year, with a major roadblock that had prevented this legislation from clearing the House no longer a factor, we are excited that the legislation will pass both houses.

The Wild Sky Wilderness Act of 2007 will designate 106,577 acres of national forest in east Snohomish County as wilderness. In the past, wilderness has consisted solely of old growth forest at higher elevations. Wild Sky protects thousands of acres of low-elevation old growth and 25 miles of salmon streams to make the land accessible for recreational use. The area is located within 90 minutes of 2.5 million people.

We have a great tradition of preserving the places that make Washington unique, and this bill continues that tradition. I'm thrilled that we will finally have a real opportunity to protect this remarkable area. It's the right thing to do for our environment, our economy, and future generations.

**To read my remarks on Wild Sky in the Congressional Record visit:**

<http://www.murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=268853>

## **NEW VET CENTER COMING TO EVERETT**

On Wednesday, I learned that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has selected Everett, WA as the site for a new Vet Center. VA Vet Centers provide a range of services to combat veterans including counseling on mental health, bereavement, and employment. The Everett Vet Center is scheduled to open in 2008.

Especially now, with the War in Iraq producing more and more veterans who are struggling with PTSD and other mental health issues, it is imperative that veterans have a support system that is close at hand. This center will be a place where veterans can get help finding a job or accessing the support services they have earned.

Veterans who served in combat are eligible for care at a VA vet center at no cost, as are their families for military-related issues. Also eligible are veterans who were sexually assaulted or harassed while on active duty and the families of veterans and service members lost during the war.

I visited with veterans in Everett on August 18th of last year to hold a roundtable discussion with Everett area vets. I heard about their frustrations in accessing services in the area. As a senior member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, I have worked hand-in-hand with Congressmen Rick Larsen to improve VA access in Northwest Washington. Just last week, the VA agreed to open a health clinic in Northwest Washington to serve veterans in a five-county area. That clinic, which will be located in the Mount Vernon area, will also serve the Everett veterans community.

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