

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – May 13, 2005

Good News for WA's Military Bases

WA BASES SPARED - On Friday, the Dept. of Defense (DOD) released its recommendations to the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC). BRAC is charged with evaluating the efficiency of the nation's military bases and making recommendations to Congress and the president on which bases should be closed in order to save money. DOD's overall recommendation was to protect bases across Washington state. This is a tribute to the strength of our installations and the commitment of our communities.

As a member of the Military Construction and Veterans' Appropriations Subcommittee, I have consistently advocated for Washington state bases. I've helped secure over \$1.3 billion in funding for Washington's military bases in fiscal years 1998-2005. The announcement shows that those investments top-notch, efficient facilities have paid off.

Today, each one of our bases is part of a Northwest network of military assets that is flexible and responsive. They are located in a strategic region with immediate access to the Pacific Theater. Unlike other regions in the Pacific, this Northwest Network provides for the dispersal of our assets, allowing our military to protect itself and the coastline against a wide range of threats and attacks. Our bases have a number of additional strategic advantages, including:

- **Tremendous surge capacity**, allowing our women and men to mobilize more quickly;
- **Superior training and operating environment** for land, sea and air operations;
- **An exceptional quality of life** for our men and women in uniform.

MORE WORK TO DO - The closure process is not over. We cannot declare victory today. The list also includes reorganization recommendations that will impact our state, and we will work together to minimize the effect on our military, local communities and businesses. We must also continue to work together to ensure that the Commission agrees with the Pentagon's assessment of our bases.

FDA Must Use Sound Science

LETTER TO FDA - I'm very troubled that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is ignoring sound science and blocking over-the-counter approval of the emergency contraceptive, Plan B. So, this week, along with Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY), I wrote a letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael Leavitt about the matter. The letter is the latest in a series of actions we have taken to ensure that FDA's decision-making process is not being driven by personal beliefs and ideology over science.

In the letter, we urged an investigation into a memo sent by Dr. David Hager, a member of FDA's advisory panel, to acting commissioner Lester Crawford. That memo may have played a role in delaying FDA's decision on Plan B, which is also known as the "morning after pill." This important drug has been scientifically shown to safely prevent unintended pregnancies.

Although approved for prescription use, Plan B is not approved for nationwide over-the-counter use. FDA's expert advisory committee – whose opinion is usually the key to whether approvals are granted – voted overwhelmingly in favor of approval. But FDA has not responded to the application in the nearly two years since it was filed, a highly unusual delay.

"HOLD" ON CONFIRMATION – Because of that delay, on April 7, Senator Clinton and I placed a "hold" on Dr. Crawford's confirmation as FDA head, preventing a vote on his

confirmation by the full Senate. We decided to do so after a private briefing with him in my office. I requested the briefing at a hearing of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee in March, during which Dr. Crawford refused to give a time frame for consideration of Plan B. So, I insisted that the committee needed a specific briefing on how to get this application approved as soon as possible, and I told him that this private meeting must take place prior to his confirmation.

I have always supported a strong and independent FDA. By ignoring sound science, FDA is jeopardizing public confidence and the health of American women. This memo is a disturbing revelation, and I am even more deeply concerned that the approval process around Plan B is based on ideological battles instead of sound science.

Read my letter to Secretary Leavitt:

<http://www.murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=237569>

Supplemental Should Have Been Better

This week, I continued my strong support for our men and women in uniform by voting for the \$82 billion supplemental aid bill to fund military operations and reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan. The measure passed the full Senate 100-0. I believe we must provide the necessary equipment and support for our military personnel.

NO ADDED SUPPORT FOR VETERANS' HEALTHCARE - I also believe that part of taking care of them is providing them with the healthcare and benefits they were promised as part of their service. That's why, throughout the budget and supplemental appropriations process, I fought to increase funding to care for our nation's veterans. I introduced an amendment to the supplemental bill to provide for our troops by providing them with healthcare services and benefits when they return home. Unfortunately, my amendment failed multiple times on party-line votes.

UNRELATED IMMIGRATION PROVISION - I am also very troubled that far-reaching and unrelated immigration rules got attached to this bill without a vote and without an opportunity for debate. The so-called Real ID provision has ramifications for privacy, states' rights and immigration policy. I'm disappointed that it has been attached to desperately needed funding for our troops.

Read my statement on the supplemental war funding bill:

<http://www.murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=237369>

Preserving Our Intercity Rail Service

SUPPORTING AMTRAK - For years, I've been a strong supporter of Amtrak. I believe Washingtonians should get the full rail service they've paid for with their tax dollars. We rely on our rail system to get where we're going and to move our freight and agricultural goods. While I think it's necessary to reform our railroads to make them more efficient, I believe we must keep them strong.

Unfortunately, for several years, the Bush administration and some Republicans in Congress have been attempting to derail Amtrak. This year, President Bush's budget requested zero dollars in funding for Amtrak. This will force Amtrak into bankruptcy, resulting in fewer transportation options for residents of our state.

BANKRUPTCY IS WRONG POLICY - This week, during a hearing of the Senate Transportation, Treasury, and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations (TTHUD) Subcommittee, I strongly voiced my disappointment at repeated failures to provide Amtrak with the funding necessary to keep it from going under. Not only did Republican leaders in the Senate uphold the administration's request of zero dollars for Amtrak; an amendment that would have provided \$1.4 billion to allow Amtrak to avoid bankruptcy was also rejected.

Passenger rail service costs money. I believe any plan for true reform of our rail system should combine streamlining Amtrak with providing better service and more travel options, and I'm going to continue to fight to keep our intercity rail service.

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