

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – June 16, 2006

Administration Continues to Hide the Cost of War

Emergency Spending Measure Should Include Emergencies at Home

Over the past month, the Senate has been debating an Emergency Supplemental Bill to fund the war in Iraq and the Gulf Coast recovery. On Wednesday I voted to pass the legislation because it provides the support that our troops need, but I did so with serious concerns about the bill and how the Administration is funding the war.

Burdening Future Generations with Debt

As I have said since the beginning of this conflict in Iraq, I support wholeheartedly our men and women in uniform. I admire their heroism, and I will continue to do all that I can to provide them with the resources they need.

By continuing to fund the war in Iraq as an "emergency" spending measure, the Bush Administration and the Republican majority in Congress are burdening future generations with debt and are failing to level with the American people about the true costs of war.

Our Needs at Home Go Unnoticed

This supplemental spending measure has also ceded authority for emergency funding to the Executive branch. We have emergencies here in our own backyard, but the Republican leadership simply rolled over and agreed to the President's arbitrary spending cap at the expense of critical needs here at home.

This short-sighted agenda is being paid for on the backs of our veterans, our farmers, the transportation and housing needs of the residents of the Gulf Coast, and the security of our ports. Millions of dollars in critical emergency aid for these priorities were cut out of the Senate version of the bill. The measure also included budget ceilings that will tie our hands as we seek to help our communities.

Despite my concerns, I voted for the measure because I know that our troops need the funding.

I am deeply disappointed at the missed opportunities represented in this bill. We can do better. It's time to end the political games and fund the priorities of our nation. Our troops, our country and our future depend on it.

To read more visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=257215>

Federal Funding for Emergency Highway Repairs Secured

After a year that included harsh winter storms, flooding, and rock slides, the federal highways in Washington took a significant beating, and the state was left to pick up the tab for repairs. Over the past month as the emergency supplemental bill has been considered I have fought to include \$19.4 million to reimburse our state for its costs. This meant standing up to restrictions placed on the Senate by the Bush Administration and Republican Leaders. Fortunately, this week we received the funding.

Miner's Safety Issues at the Forefront of My Agenda

On January, 2nd, 2006 in Sago, West Virginia, during the first mining shift of the new year, 13 miners traveled into a mine shaft to begin their work for the day. At approximately 6:30 a.m., an explosion occurred that trapped the miners for nearly two days. Only one of the 13 miners survived the accident. It was the worst mining disaster since 2001, and the worst in West Virginia since 1968. It was followed by other mining incidents across the country. These tragic situations made it abundantly clear that significant steps needed to be taken to improve mine safety.

This week I took two actions that I believe will make a difference in the way we deal with ensuring the safety of America's miners.

Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response Act

On Thursday, I joined a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers at the White House where President Bush sign the Mine Improvement and New Emergency Response (MINER) Act of 2006 into law.

I was proud to be a co-sponsor of this legislation which moves mine safety into the 21st Century. The bill uses new technology, oversight, and enforcement tools to provide a new set of safety standards to keep our miners safe. This bill is an important step in fulfilling our commitment to the families of the victims of mine tragedies like Sago.

Opposing "Business As Usual" Mine Safety Nominee

In addition to safety legislation, we need a leader at the Mine Safety and Health Administration who will not accept the status quo that has cost miners their lives.

Unfortunately, the Bush Administration has decided that it would be best to turn the enforcement of our mine safety laws over to Richard Stickler, a former coal company executive who has no background in miner health and safety.

I spoke out against the nomination on the Senate Floor on Tuesday. During my speech, I implored the Administration to withdraw his nomination and send us a more suitable nominee. I asked the President to send the Senate a nominee with a strong background in mine safety and a strong commitment to aggressively protect America's mine workers.

To read the full text of my floor speech visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=256907>

Supporting New Safeguards for Personal Data

I was proud to join Senator Daniel Akaka this week in offering legislation that aims to avoid a repeat of the Department of Veterans Affairs security data theft. Our bill would prevent employees from knowingly compromising personal security information held in federal databases. I also joined with Democratic colleagues to call on the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to initiate a full and independent investigation into the security lapse at the VA.

To read more visit:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=257060>

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