

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – May 5th, 2006

GreenLane Port Security Bill Advances in House and Senate

I am excited to announce that the GreenLane Maritime Cargo Security Act, which I co-authored with Senator Susan Collins of Maine, recently passed both the full House of Representatives and the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. I am encouraged by this significant progress, and I am working hard with my colleagues to see that this measure is ultimately enacted.

This GreenLane Act would implement much needed security reforms at our nation's seaports including:

- establishing improved cargo screening standards,
- providing incentives to importers to enhance their security measures,
- and ensuring the successful resumption of shipping in the event of a terrorist attack.

I am looking forward to supporting the merits of this bill on the Senate floor in the near future.

Get Port Security Updates:

<http://murray.senate.gov/greenlane/#updates>

Supplemental Spending Bill Passes

On Thursday, after eight days of debate, the Senate passed the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill to provide \$109 billion in emergency funding for the war in Iraq, hurricane relief, avian flu preparedness and other priorities.

For years, I've been troubled that the Bush Administration has tried to hide the cost of war by excluding it from their annual budget proposals.

As a result, Congress has had to pass emergency spending bills to fund the war – and more recently to fund recovery efforts along the Gulf Coast. Because annual budgets have been too low to address many critical priorities, I've worked to improve this Supplemental bill to address important domestic priorities.

The bill we passed includes the funding I co-authored for veterans healthcare and critically-needed disaster aid to farmers (described below).

I do want to note that this funding is not guaranteed. It still has to be reconciled with the House of Representatives, and the President has threatened to veto any bill that is higher than its original proposal.

Help for Washington's Farmers

The emergency spending bill includes \$3.9 billion in emergency aid to farmers, growers and ranchers who have been hurt by natural disasters. I've been working on a disaster aid package for the past eight months and worked hard to include it in the bill we passed this week.

The funding includes \$100 million to help growers of fruits and vegetables, of which our state is a leading producer.

On Wednesday, some senators tried to remove most of that specialty crop funding from the overall bill. I spoke up immediately on the Senate floor in support of our farmers. Fortunately, the full Senate rejected the attempt to remove

the disaster aid from the bill. With 250 fruit and vegetable producers in Washington, the specialty crop industry represents a large segment of our agriculture economy and needs our support.

Get Agriculture Updates:

<http://murray.senate.gov/agriculture/agupdates.cfm>

Agriculture Secretary Has It Wrong . . .

Recently, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Michael Johanns made some comments that are insulting to farmers and growers who have been hurt by natural disasters.

According to press accounts, Secretary Johanns suggested that farmers rely too heavily on emergency disaster grants to "make them whole." I take offense to this suggestion that disaster relief is being used as a crutch rather than a measure of last resort for our nation's hardworking farmers. I firmly believe that disaster assistance is necessary to keep adversely affected farms operating.

So this week, I joined with 18 other Senators in writing to the Secretary. We told the Secretary: "We know of no families in this country who wish to have their crops destroyed or their production costs dramatically increased because they believe as you suggest, the federal government will make them more than whole through assistance programs."

Read our letter:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=255004>

Saying No to Unfair Fees on Washington's Wine Industry

Last year, the Bush Administration tried to impose unfair fees on our growing wine industry. Those fees would have penalized Washington's small wineries. I fought those fees, and we won.

But now they're at it again. The Bush Administration has again proposed imposing unfair fees on the wine industry. That's why this week I met with the administrator of the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau. I told him that the proposed fees are essentially a tax on economic growth for our state and that I will fight them every step of the way.

Washington state vineyards and wineries are providing jobs for communities that have struggled. They are bringing tourists to rural regions of our state and are helping our economy. We need to invest in the tools and resources to help our wine industry grow, not add fees that stifle progress, economic growth and tourism.

Get Wine Updates:

<http://murray.senate.gov/wine/wineupdates.cfm>

Sounding the Alarm on FAA Safety

This week at a Senate hearing with Federal Aviation Administrator (FAA) Marion Blakey, I raised concerns about the FAA's budget and the Bush Administration's leadership on aviation issues.

I addressed the shortage of safety inspectors and air traffic controllers and the critical need for better overall budget management in the FAA.

Details:

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=255197>

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