

# PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – March 5, 2007

## ASBESTOS: My Renewed Effort to Ban Asbestos in the United States

Many Americans assume – as I once did – that asbestos is already banned in the United States. In fact, in 1989, the EPA tried to ban asbestos, but most of those regulations were overturned in court in 1991. As a result, while new applications for asbestos have been banned, asbestos is still being used in every day products including automotive brakes, floor tiles, roofing material, cement pipes, and even hair dryers. Tragically, up to 10,000 Americans lose their lives to asbestos exposure each year. Many of these deaths can be avoided.

Last Thursday I took two critical steps in what has been a six year effort to heighten asbestos awareness and ban asbestos in the U.S.

First, I introduced legislation that will:

- **Ban the importation, manufacture, processing and distribution of all products containing asbestos.**
- **Dramatically expand asbestos research and treatment.**
- **Launch a public education campaign to protect Americans from the dangers of asbestos.**

Second, I chaired a hearing of the Workplace and Employment Safety Subcommittee of the Senate HELP Committee to discuss the dangers asbestos presents, the people who have suffered from exposure, and the legislation I have proposed to ban it.

At the hearing, I discussed how asbestos is so dangerous that there is no known safe level of exposure. I also discussed the deadly cancers it can cause, such as mesothelioma.

The Committee then heard from a panel that included Sue Vento, the widow of Congressman Bruce Vento of Minnesota who died from asbestos exposure, and John Thayer, who leads a tunnel crew in the U.S. Capitol where asbestos is present. Their testimony spoke to the urgent need to ban asbestos and increase awareness of the dangers of exposure.

My bill has garnered support from many major health, labor and occupational safety organizations. It has also been supported by many of my colleagues. More than 40 other countries have banned asbestos. It is time that we join them. We cannot allow more Americans to suffer and die from asbestos exposure.

**To listen to testimony, view my opening statement, or learn more about my bill visit:**

<http://murray.senate.gov/asbestos/update5.html>

## VETERANS HEALTH CARE: Firings Not Enough

Last week, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates took action to remove those military officials who were directly connected to the deplorable treatment of our brave soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. While I commend Secretary Gates' action to rid the Bush Administration of those who've failed our troops and veterans, our troops need more than

personnel changes. They need a comprehensive plan and decisive action to fix the problems at Walter Reed and the scores more plaguing the Administration's health care system.

## WOMEN'S HEALTH: Calling on FDA Commissioner to Stop Efforts to Raid Funding

Last Wednesday, I joined Senators Clinton, Mikulski, and Snowe to call on FDA Commissioner Andrew Von Eschenbach to stop reported efforts to raid funding from the Office of Women's Health (OWH) According to news reports, the FDA intends to reallocate \$1.2 million in funding from the FY 2007 budget of the Office of Women's Health to other uses.

*In our letter we wrote:*

For the past sixteen years, the OWH has performed vital work to improve the health and well-being of women across the United States. The OWH looks out for the day to day needs of women and promotes and monitors the progress of women's health initiatives at the FDA. Slashing funding for the OWH would pull the rug out from under these efforts and shortchange promising efforts to improve women's health. We will pursue every course to make certain that this funding is restored.

**To read the full text of our letter to FDA Commissioner Von Eschenbach visit:**

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=269802>

## AMTRAK

Last Tuesday, I chaired a hearing of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development to discuss the President's Fiscal Year 2008 budget request for Amtrak. At the hearing we discussed Amtrak's successes, some needed reforms, and what can be done to keep Amtrak alive for the growing number of Americans who depend on it.

**To view my opening statement at the hearing visit:**

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=269844>

## IRAQ: Speaking Out on Traumatic Brain Injury

Last Wednesday, I spoke on the floor of the Senate about the need to better screen and treat Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), which has emerged as a signature injury of the Iraq War. TBI is often an unseen wound and is being routinely misdiagnosed. In many cases, unless a service member involved in an IED incident is bleeding, he or she won't be documented as having been involved in an explosion.

In a special broadcast that aired last Tuesday, ABC news anchor Bob Woodruff detailed his experience with a Traumatic Brain Injury. The special chronicled Bob's struggle with his injury, his family's unrelenting hope for recovery, and their ongoing work toward triumph over this horrible situation. I fear that the care he received has not been duplicated for thousands of other troops, and I been pushing for the VA to take steps to better address TBI.

**To read my speech visit:**

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=269800>

