

PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW

U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington January 17, 2003

COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE

Last session, as a member of the Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, I helped author a spending bill that included \$120 million for the Community Access Program (CAP). CAP is a community-based program that supports health care providers who serve patients regardless of their ability to pay. It has been successful in Washington state, where 3 CAP grantees provide health care for those without health insurance.

Unfortunately, the new Senate leadership eliminated funding for CAP. Because this health care initiative is so important to Washington state, I introduced an amendment to restore the CAP funding. At a time when 156,000 Washingtonians have lost their health care, we cannot afford to put more families in jeopardy.

I will continue to work to save this important health care initiative, and I hope that we can save it.

WORKING TO SAVE PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

Amtrak is the nation's passenger rail service, and operates an important line from Vancouver, BC to Portland Oregon with stops throughout Western Washington. To keep the trains running, Amtrak needs \$1.2 billion in federal funding. Last year, when I wrote the Senate's transportation bill, I provided full funding for Amtrak, but when the "Omnibus" Appropriations bill came to the Senate floor, Amtrak funding had been cut to the point that Amtrak's President said the agency would go bankrupt by Spring.

On Thursday night, I introduced an amendment to restore the Amtrak cut. I am pleased that the bipartisan effort paid off, and the Senate approved my amendment unanimously.

Passage of my amendment provides stability for Amtrak and security to the millions of Amtrak riders and commuter rail passengers across the country who depend on its service.

GOOD NEWS FOR LIGHT RAIL

Yesterday, the Department of Transportation notified me that it will release the \$50 million that Senator Gorton and I secured in the 2001 Transportation spending bill to build link light rail in the Puget Sound. This is great news for commuters and shows that Sound Transit really has turned a corner. Sound Transit now has a workable business plan and the financial support to build a desperately needed transit system for the Puget Sound.

PROTECTING WASHINGTON'S TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES

Last year, as Chair of the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee, I wrote and passed a Transportation spending bill that funded many Washington state transportation priorities. Unfortunately, the bill was one of eleven spending bills that did not pass the full Congress last year because of problems with some of the House spending bills.

This week, the Senate began work on an "Omnibus" bill that compiled the eleven remaining appropriations bills. This new bill cuts \$10 billion in funds approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee last year, affecting education, homeland security, community health care, and other priorities.

I worked closely with my Republican Senate colleagues to preserve the funding for our state's urgent transportation needs. I am pleased to announce that, despite the cutbacks, I succeeded in protecting funding for all of our state's transportation projects.

This federal support will help ease congestion and improve safety by investing in public transportation, highways and other critical transportation infrastructure across Washington state. It will improve the quality of life and increase economic prosperity for our state.

In addition to the earmarked funding, Washington state will also receive hundreds of millions of dollars in federal highway and transit formula funding. We will receive \$503.6 million in Federal Highway Administration grants and \$101 million in Federal Transit Administration grants to address transportation issues throughout the state.

Key Projects Include:

- **Wenatchee:** \$1.5 million for Pangborn Memorial Airport to improve the air traffic control system.
- **Puget Sound:** \$1.6 million for Oil Spill Prevention in the Puget Sound, to be used by the Coast Guard to possibly fund the Neah Bay tug.
- **Spokane:** \$5 million for the North Spokane Corridor project to create a 10.4 mile link between I-90, US 2 and US 395. The project will help relieve congestion, reduce emissions and increase safety in the area. The project also includes pedestrian/bicycle trails, high-occupancy vehicle lanes and park-and-ride lots.
- **Walla Walla:** \$2.5 million for US Highway 12 between Burbank and Walla Walla. This money will build a railroad bridge over the highway to allow for expansion to a four-lane highway.

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