

# **PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW**

**U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – December 16, 2005**

## **The USA Patriot Act**

Today, the United States Senate sent a strong message that we cannot undermine the rights of our residents as we work to protect our nation. By a vote of 52-47, a bipartisan coalition of Senators voted to uphold a filibuster of the renewal of the USA Patriot Act.

Since its enactment, the USA Patriot Act has played an important role in protecting our country from potential harm. I voted for the Act in the days following September 11th with the knowledge that some of its powers would expire after four years, giving Congress an opportunity to re-evaluate the law.

Because serious questions have come to light regarding the use of the Patriot Act, we need to proceed with caution. That's why, along with a strong, bipartisan coalition of Senators, I voted against moving forward until American liberties are protected.

In July, I voted for the Senate version of the bill because it struck the right balance. Unfortunately, the version that emerged last week from a House-Senate conference went too far in undermining the rights of the American people. We must do better.

We need to do all that we can to protect the American people from harm, but we must also protect the very rights and principles for which America stands.

## **Across-the-Board Cuts Would Hurt Us**

### **Sweeping Republican Cuts Will Endanger Lives, Economy**

Yesterday, I warned my colleagues in the Senate that a proposed across-the-board budget cut would hurt our nation. In a Senate floor speech, I said that a Republican plan to cut several spending bills for Fiscal Year 2006 reflects the wrong priorities for our country. This plan, if adopted, will weaken airline safety, impose new transportation costs on American businesses, cost 34,000 U.S. construction jobs, and deny housing to 35,000 vulnerable families.

In my speech, I focused specifically on how the proposed cut would affect public housing, transportation and aviation safety. I pointed out that many airlines have moved their maintenance work to foreign countries, but that the FAA now has 290 fewer safety personnel. I also warned that a cut will reverse efforts to hire an adequate number of air traffic controllers. Any further cuts would put aviation safety at risk.

Members of the Republican majorities in the House and Senate are justifying the cuts by saying they're necessary if we want to help victims of Hurricane Katrina. But I believe this is a false choice. We can provide the help and support that hurricane victims need without endangering vital safety measures, without threatening the well being of many struggling Americans, and without jeopardizing the long-term growth of our nation's economy.

*Read my floor speech:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=249799>

## **Iraqi Elections - An Important Step**

This week's elections in Iraq are an important step forward for the Iraqi people. We applaud their bravery and the hard work and sacrifice of our troops as we all move towards the collective goal of a free and self-sustaining nation.

All of us want to see Iraq succeed. While the elections symbolize progress, there is still much work to be done. I have been to Iraq and have met with our troops. They are doing a great job on behalf of our grateful nation. But it is time to give them a plan for when their mission will be completed.

The President gave several speeches leading up to the vote, but he has not yet provided the American people with an honest assessment of the costs of the war, a time frame for our presence, or the benchmarks for success in Iraq. As we applaud the Iraqi people for this step towards democracy, it is our democratic duty to continue to ask questions and demand answers about our future presence in Iraq.

## **Fighting Methamphetamine**

**SEATTLE: Unveiling First Federal Anti-Meth TV Ads** – On Monday, at a press conference at the Seattle Drug & Narcotic Center, I joined federal, state and local officials to unveil a series of new anti-meth TV ads and to announce the launch of a new anti-meth initiative. For years, I've been fighting to get this terrible drug the attention it deserves within the War on Drugs. I hope these ads are the start of a new federal commitment to fighting meth - one that will finally match what our local communities have been doing for so many years.

The ads mark the first time the White House has dedicated part of its national media campaign to meth ads. An initiative also announced Monday, the Methamphetamine Demand Reduction Program, is an effort by the Partnership for a Drug Free America to combat ever-growing demand for the drug.

This year, I succeeded in helping to block an attempt by the Bush Administration to cut by 56 percent funding for High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas. These cuts would have severely hindered efforts to fight production and distribution of meth. Over the past five years, I've helped secure \$15 million for the Washington State Meth Initiative. As one of the Senators responsible for overseeing the budget of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, I'll keep working to see that our law enforcement personnel have the resources they need to battle this problem.

*Read my remarks:*

<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=249636>

## **Good News for Our Cattle Producers**

### **Resumption of U.S. Beef Exports Will Help WA Producers**

On Monday, Japan and the United States announced that Japan will reopen its market to U.S. beef exports. I have repeatedly urged the Bush Administration to take a more aggressive stance with Japan on the beef ban, and this announcement is a positive step in our efforts to keep our cattle industry strong. Japan's ban hurt our state's producers because it closed one quarter of their market.

Japan closed its market to U.S. beef in December 2003. In letters to President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, I urged the Bush Administration to make reopening Japan's market the highest priority in the U.S.-Japan trade relationship. I also opposed opening the Canadian border until export markets, including Japan, opened so that Washington state producers were not undercut by Canadian producers.

**Now We Must Focus on Opening Other Markets** – This week's announcement is great news and long overdue, and now we need to keep working to open other markets that still remain closed like Korea and China.

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