

# **PATTY MURRAY'S WASHINGTON VIEW**

**U.S. Senator Patty Murray's Weekly Report to the People of Washington – June 9, 2006**

## **A Week of Misplaced Priorities Instead of Leadership on Issues Americans Care About, Republicans offer Distractions Meant to Divide**

With questions about the war in Iraq, homeland security concerns left unresolved, and our veterans and their families reeling from a VA security lapse, the Senate leadership should be focusing on the real concerns of the American people. Instead, Senate Republicans decided to focus on the issues of gay marriage, flag burning, and tax repeals -- a range of issues meant to divide the American people without addressing their real concerns.

Last week I traveled to communities throughout our state. Everywhere I went, I heard anger and frustration about American troops being wounded and dying in Iraq, and people want to know why. They want to know why there isn't a plan going forward. They want to know why Congress isn't standing up and demanding answers from the Bush Administration and the Pentagon.

There is a huge disconnect between the average American family and the leadership in Washington D.C. On the Senate floor this week I spoke up in the hopes of bridging that disconnect. I spoke about the need to give our troops our full support and a real plan. I warned the leadership that this is no time to be playing political games. I made it clear that the frustrations that I have with their misplaced priorities are truly the frustrations of the American people.

*To read my speech visit:*  
<http://murray.senate.gov/news.cfm?id=256569>

## **VA Data Theft Affects our Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan**

New information was released this week by the Veterans Administration that shows that data stolen from an employee's computer included personal information on 2.2 million active duty service members, National Guard, and reservists. This revelation is just the latest in a pattern of incompetence that has led many veterans to lose faith in the VA during this critical time.

On Wednesday I called a press conference to demand answers from the VA on behalf of veterans and their families. I spoke about the need to inform those who may be at risk in the fastest, most accessible manner possible. I also discussed the awful situation that the VA has put American military families in. I asked the VA to imagine the plight of a young woman with children, whose spouse is overseas in Iraq, and who finds out her address has been stolen. I implored the VA not wait to contact these individuals.

Military families deserve the peace of mind that every effort is being made to track down their information so that they are safe. This VA has a lot of work to do to win back the trust it has squandered.

## **Working for Responsible Solutions on the Estate Tax**

We need to reform the estate tax in a responsible way long before it expires in 2011. Unfortunately, on Thursday the Senate leadership showed it cares more about political

pandering than developing a real solution. Family farmers and business owners deserve better.

During my time in the Senate, I've looked to reform the estate tax for small businesses and family farms. In fact, I have sponsored and voted for legislation on reform in the past. However, our financial situation has changed dramatically since that time, which means that any current reform must also be fiscally responsible. We need to move forward in a responsible way because our nation faces unmet needs here at home.

However, the Republican leadership turned a blind eye on our fiscal needs and instead insisted on full repeal of the estate tax. I could not support such a fiscally irresponsible proposal. I am confident that a compromise is out there, and I will continue working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to find a fiscally responsible road to estate tax reform before 2011.

## **My Concerns over the Proposed Washington State Pharmacy Regulation Change**

I am deeply troubled and disappointed by the proposed regulation by the Washington state Board of Pharmacy that would allow pharmacists to refuse to fill prescriptions because of their personal moral or religious beliefs. This proposal would directly undermine Washington state's proud tradition of expanding access to care and protecting reproductive choice.

It would not only deny access to female contraceptive products, such as the "Plan B" morning-after pill, but also to anything else that may offend the personal sensibilities of a given pharmacist. No patient should be denied a medically appropriate, safe, legal prescription based on personal, religious, or moral objections of individual pharmacists. The American public should never be at the mercy of their local pharmacists. I urge the Board, during the public comment and hearing period, to carefully consider the ramifications of this proposed regulation and remember that they must work to protect patients first.

## **Opposing an Amendment on Gay Marriage**

Last Tuesday I voted against the so-called 'Marriage Protection Amendment,' just as I did in 2004. I oppose a constitutional amendment that would deny same-sex couples the rights and protections that other Americans enjoy, and I am deeply concerned by this effort to use the Constitution to take away the rights of individuals.

With a war overseas, painful cuts to healthcare and education, veterans being denied healthcare, soaring energy costs and mounting debt here at home, the Republican majority should stop wasting time on these divisive election-year politics and start focusing on the real challenges facing the American people.

## **Death of Terrorist Abu Musab al- Zarqawi**

The death of terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is a testament to the skill and determination of our brave men and women in uniform and the diligence of our intelligence community. This is an important accomplishment for our military and also for the people of Iraq, who have suffered under a deadly insurgency.

*To subscribe, unsubscribe, or change your email address, visit: <http://murray.senate.gov/updates>*