



NEWS from U.S. Senator

PATTY MURRAY

Washington State

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, April 28, 2009

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Senator Murray's Remarks at Press Conference Introducing Major Investment in Ferry Systems

(Washington D.C.) – Today, U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) delivered the following remarks at a press conference introducing the U.S. Ferry Systems Investment Act of 2009.

"Thanks to everyone for joining us today to discuss legislation that is very much needed for my home state of Washington and for many states across the country.

"I'm pleased to be joined by my Senate colleague Senator Lisa Murkowski and my great partner on the House side, Representative Rick Larsen, to introduce our joint bill to dramatically increase federal support for our nation's ferry system.

"And I especially want to thank David Moseley, the Director of Washington State ferries for flying across the country to be here today for this announcement. Few people know as well as David how important this bill is to keeping people and our economy moving back in Washington state.

"In Washington state we are lucky to have a world-class ferry system that millions of riders can depend on every year to get them where they need to go. Ever since the "Mosquito Fleet" of the early 1900s, the ferry system of the Puget Sound has been both an important means of transportation and a part of our cultural identity.

"But, it's not always easy convincing some of our colleagues here in Washington, D.C of the importance of a robust ferry system. They understand investments in roads, highways, and in rail. But many don't realize that for many states, ferries are a crucial link in the transportation chain. And for many Americans, ferries are the only means of travel to jobs, hospitals or places of commerce.

"But ferries are used in 38 states- and more than 100 million passenger trips are taken each year on systems nationwide. Ferries also provide emergency evacuation support in times of crisis- we saw this clearly on 9/11 and following the collapse of the San Francisco Bay Bridge.

"As a weekly ferry rider myself, investing in ferries has been a priority of mine for years. But at a time when our states are struggling with budget cuts and families are looking for ways to lower costs, it is more important than ever that we make the investment to create jobs, increase productivity, and give a much needed boost to regional economies.

"We have made progress - but we need to do more. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, a quarter of our ferry systems are 40 years or older, and five percent are at least 60 years old. That's why today

we are proposing that the federal government commit to spending \$200 million a year through 2015 to ensure that our ferries remain strong.

"We also improve the way the money is distributed. Our change would ensure that half of the ferry funding - 100 million dollars a year- is distributed according to a formula based on ridership, vehicles carried and a system's route miles.

"This change ensures that the systems that the most Americans depend on can count on federal support. This also gives our cash-strapped states the ability to make long-term financial plans with the knowledge that they have a partner in the federal government, and allows them to avoid passing on the cost of uncertainty to commuters in the form of fare increases. An additional 100 million dollars a year would be made available through a competitive DOT process and allow states working to grow a smaller system, the ability to compete for these dollars.

"And our bill provides incentives to be more environmentally friendly by allowing ferry systems to compete for funding under the Clean Fuel Grants Program.

"We also establish a Ferry Joint Program Office within the Department of Transportation to coordinate federal programs and promote ferry transportation and require D.O.T. to ensure the National Ferry Database is consistent with the database maintained by the Federal Transit Administration.

"We authorize funding to create a National Ferry Transportation Institute to conduct research and training and develop models and recommendations to improve the operation and safety of ferry systems across the country.

"As someone who takes the ferry home every weekend, I know just how critical this mode of transportation is to families in Washington state and across the country. And our bill provides the resources our states need to improve these systems and boost our economy.

"I want to thank all of the people here with me today who have been strong partners in putting this plan together And I will now turn it over to my colleague, Senator Murkowski."

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