

## **SENATORS REQUEST FUNDING FOR MESOTHELIOMA RESEARCH**

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More than a dozen senators have voiced their support to fund mesothelioma research in the 2009 defense appropriations bill.

In a letter sent last month to the Senate Appropriations Defense panel, senators including Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Patty Murray (D-Wash.) asked that money be set aside to study the condition.

"Funding (for mesothelioma) through the Department of Defense appropriations bill is an important demonstration of our nation's commitment to addressing the tragedy of mesothelioma and its disproportionate impact on those who serve our country."

Baucus and Murray have been vocal supporters of mesothelioma research especially since their home states have been severely affected by the disease. Hundreds of people in Libby, Montana have developed health problems as a result of asbestos contamination at a vermiculite mine while Bremerton, Washington has one of the nation's highest rates of asbestos related cancer. In addition, Senator Murray has been a longtime supporter of asbestos regulation and recently sponsored legislation to ban the use of asbestos containing materials.

Their main goal is to get mesothelioma listed as a priority under the Pentagon's medical research program. It would spur research by encouraging scientists to apply for study grants and last year the Pentagon awarded more than \$50 million to fund medical studies.

Supporters claim that at least one-third of mesothelioma cases can be traced to people who were members of the navy or worked in navy shipyards when it was primarily used as a fire retardant.

An estimated 100,000 people from the Navy submarine base in Groton, Conn. are believed to have been exposed to asbestos. Many Navy exposure cases occurred during WWII and Vietnam.

Among the 15 senators who signed the letter: Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), and John Ensign (R-Nev.).