



**Interview with  
Patty Murray  
U.S. Senator  
(D-WA)**

***What are the top reasons why you, as U.S. Senator, support Career and Technical Education in public schools?***

Career and Technical Education is important for overall education. We need people with a lot of different expertise in many different fields. We need to make sure each student is given the capability to be the best they can be in whatever field.

So whether it's a welder or nurse practitioner, or whether it's somebody who goes into green carpentry, we need to make sure they've got the skills that they need so they can be the best they can be. That's what education is all about.

If we want to make sure that education works for all students, we have to include Career and Technical Education. Career and Technical Education provides skills so that every single one of our students can be successful, get a job one day, and support themselves and their family.

So, Career and Technical Education really expands education altogether and makes sure everyone is encompassed.

Career and Technical Education is important for our employers and our workforce. I have so many business owners who tell me they can't find the skilled workers they need. And yet we have a lot of people who are unemployed or can't get jobs. So the mismatch between our workers and the skills that our employers want when they hire is really important to address. One of the best ways we do that is through Career and Technical Education.

One example that I love here in the State of Washington is our marine industry. Marine jobs and boatbuilding are growing! They need welders, carpenters, mechanics. Career and Technical Education provides a lot of those skilled workers.

Career and Technical Education is also important because it builds healthy communities. It makes sure that every single American is tapped for what they are capable of. If people are satisfied with their work, and they stick to it, and they love being a part of it, then all of our communities are healthier.

***Career and Technical Education survived dramatic budget cuts for the next biennium in the 2009 Washington Legislature. Why do you think CTE was protected by the Legislature when so many other educational programs took a beating? And how will legislation you are co-sponsoring in the Other Washington strengthen Career and Technical Education in our schools?***

I can't speak for the decisions that our state Legislature had to make in a very, very tough budget climate. But I do know that investments to make sure people have the skills that they need and make sure that our businesses have the employees they need will help expand our economy.

That's why I'm working on legislation at the federal level to provide grants to local communities — to bring together labor and business and education leaders and community leaders, public/private partnerships, to assess, what are the jobs that we have here? What are the economies that we know are doing well in our communities, so we want to help grow? And what do we need to be doing in the education system to provide a career pathway for people to go into those businesses right here in our local communities and provide for their families?

***If money for Career and Technical Education were plentiful, what improvements or expansions would you recommend for the Career and Technical Education program, and why?***

Our state does a pretty good job with a lot of different careers. I think the one expansion that I would really like to see focused on is the green technology area.

We need builders to build homes that are energy-efficient. We need mechanics and people who are specialized in doing maintenance on wind farms. We need to look at what the new energy creativity is of the future and ask, what skills do we need to make sure that we can build and maintain those kinds of energy productions or green economies far into the future? I think there's tremendous opportunity.

***What role should Career and Technical Education have in the economic recovery and in the growth of a green economy in our state?***

The way we're going to get our economy back on track is by making sure that companies and businesses are strong. The one thing they say to me over and over, whether it's an owner of a small company or a very large company, is they need productive workers who can go to work day one, and really help their business grow. Our technology and skill centers provide that kind of workforce.

***How can parents and the labor, business and elected leaders in our communities help to build up and ensure the success of CTE programs, and how can they help you in the Other Washington?***

One thing we do know, in tough budget times, it's easy to put a program on the chopping block if you don't know what it is. And for legislators, if they have not heard about a program, the first one to go is the program they've never heard about.

So for parents or workers or participants or students who have found Career and Technical Education to be something that really makes a difference in their lives, if they share their story with their local legislator or with their congressional delegation, it will help us to understand and fight for those kinds of dollars in this very tough time.

***Do you have other messages about Career and Technical Education that you would like to deliver to middle and high school students and their parents?***

What I would like young students to know is work hard, get good grades, and if you feel you have a strength or something you're interested in, don't give up!

I had a student tell me that he really wanted to work in a career with carpentry. He said he had to go look on the dusty shelves of his counseling center to find out how to become a carpenter.

Keep asking! Keep working. Because we need all kinds of people doing all kinds of skills. The most important thing is, if you love what you do, you're going to be successful.