

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 10, 2010

The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
Administration Building, Room 100-A
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

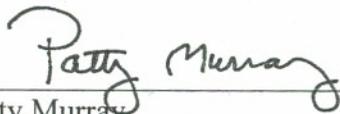
We write to urge you to approve without delay Governor Chris Gregoire's request to declare a Secretarial Disaster Designation for seven counties in Washington state. This designation, requested on January 13, 2010, is essential due to the extreme weather conditions these counties endured throughout 2009.

Record low temperatures, drought conditions, and destructive wind storms have caused considerable harm to crops in these counties. In particular, apple trees, grape vines, and several varieties of wheat have been severely damaged, possibly causing the loss of an entire harvest season. In addition to crop damage, the severe weather conditions have possibly damaged irrigation systems in two of the counties. In already difficult economic times, these unprecedented weather conditions have had a devastating effect on farms in Washington, and could trigger a detrimental ripple effect on the state's economy.

It is clear that these conditions have already hurt countless Washington state farms, and the full extent of the damage will not be known until spring. These farms need the assistance that can be provided once a Secretarial Disaster Designation is declared. We urge you to approve Governor Gregoire's request so that this crucial assistance can be made available as soon as possible.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

cc: Governor Chris Gregoire
Director Dan Newhouse, Washington State Department of Agriculture