



For Immediate Release

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ENZI: AMERICA'S SCHOOLS MUST BE DESIGNED TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Washington D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today said that more must be done to prepare America's high school students to enter post-secondary education and the workplace with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

“Simply graduating students is not sufficient, because a high school diploma today is no guarantee that a student has learned the basics,” Enzi said. “Nearly half of all college students are required to take remedial courses on subjects they should have learned in high school before they can begin college level coursework. This contributes to the rising costs of college, prevents students from graduating on time, and deters many students, particularly low-income and minority students, from ever earning a degree.”

At today's HELP Committee hearing titled, “No Child Left Behind Reauthorization: Modernizing Middle and High Schools for the 21st Century,” Enzi said that Congress must address the alarming dropout rates across the country. Every day, 7,000 students drop out of school, and unless high schools are able to graduate their students at higher rates than the 68 to 70 percent they currently do, more than 12 million students will drop out during the next decade.

“To remain competitive in a global economy, we must ensure that all Americans have the education and training they need to be successful,” Enzi said. “We need a plan. We need to ensure opportunities are available to all Americans, because our future depends on widely available and extensive knowledge and training and a commitment to excellence.”

“The decisions we make about education and workforce development will have a dramatic effect on the economy and our society for a long time to come,” Enzi said. “For America to retain its competitive edge in the global economy, we need to find ways to encourage high school students to stay in school and prepare for and enter high-skill fields, like math, science, engineering, health, technology, and foreign languages.”

“In the HELP Committee, we are working to strengthen America’s education and training pipeline. Through the reauthorization of the Head Start Act, the No Child Left Behind Act, the Higher Education Act, and the Workforce Investment Act, we can make sure that every individual has access to a lifetime of education and training opportunities that provide the knowledge and skills they need to be successful and that our employers need to remain competitive.”

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Statement of Michael B. Enzi, Ranking Republican

Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

**Hearing on NCLB Reauthorization: Modernizing Middle and High Schools
for the 21st Century**

April 24, 2007

Thank you, Senator Kennedy, for holding this hearing today on modernizing our high schools. We need to make sure our high schools are designed to prepare our students for the 21st century.

We need to find ways to encourage high school students to stay in school and prepare for and enter high-skill fields such as math, science, engineering, health, technology and critical foreign languages. We must also strengthen the programs that encourage and enable citizens of all ages to enroll in postsecondary education institutions and obtain or improve knowledge and skills. The decisions we make about education and workforce development will have a dramatic impact on the economy and our society for a long time to come.

The present situation is discouraging. Every day in the United States, 7,000 students dropout of school. If the high school students who had dropped out of the class of 2006 had graduated instead, the nation’s economy would have benefited from an additional \$309 billion in income they would have earned over their lifetimes. It’s an incredible statistic. Because we couldn’t reach those 7,000 students, it will cost us and them \$309 billion in income we will both lose. We simply cannot afford to lose those resources. We must deal with the situation head on – we cannot allow students to “waste” their senior year, and graduate unprepared to enter postsecondary education and a workforce focused on skills and knowledge.

The future outlook is not good. Unless high schools are able to graduate their students at higher rates than the 68 to 70 percent they currently do, more than 12 million students will drop out during the course of the next decade. The result long term will be a loss to the nation of \$3 trillion, and as you can imagine, even more in terms of the quality of life for those dropouts.

In addition, it's important to remember the fact that a high school diploma does not guarantee that a student has learned the basics. Nearly half of all college students are required to take remedial courses, after graduating from high school, before they can take college level coursework.

Each year, more than one million first-time, full-time, degree-seeking students begin their undergraduate careers at four-year colleges and universities with every hope and expectation of earning a bachelor's degree. Of those students, fewer than four in 10 will actually meet that goal within four years; barely six in 10 will make it out in six years. Among minority students, remediation rates are even higher and completion rates are even lower.

To remain competitive in a global economy, we cannot afford to lose people because they do not have the education and training they need to be successful. We need a plan. We need to ensure opportunities are available to all Americans, because our future depends on widely available and extensive knowledge and training and a commitment to excellence. Strong partnerships and alignment among K-12 schools, institutions of higher education, business and government will help us meet the needs.

In the HELP Committee, we are using this opportunity to shape policy and strengthen the education and training pipeline. Through the reauthorization of Head Start, No Child Left Behind, the Higher Education Act and the Workforce Investment Act we can make sure that every individual has access to a lifetime of education and training opportunities that provide the knowledge and skills they need to be successful and that our employers need to remain competitive.

I look forward to hearing the testimony of our witnesses and to working with members of the HELP committee in developing a sound policy to address these critical issues.

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