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ENZI SETS SERIES OF HEARINGS TO REVIEW DRUG SAFETY, FDA'S
APPROVAL PROCESS, DRUG IMPORTATION

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today announced a series of five hearings that will focus on prescription drug safety and the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) drug approval process. The series is scheduled to begin February 16.

“It is critical that we maintain public confidence in the FDA's ability to protect the public health,” Enzi said Thursday. “People need to know that Congress is exercising careful and responsible oversight of the FDA. That's why I am directing the HELP Committee to review the recent controversies surrounding the safety of Vioxx and other painkillers as well as concerns that the FDA downplayed possible links between anti-depressants and suicidal behavior in children.

“By holding this series of oversight hearings, I hope we will come away with a better understanding of what the FDA and drug companies did in response to those headline-making incidents - and whether different FDA policies would have made a difference.”

In its review of the controversies surrounding Vioxx and Prozac, the HELP Committee will examine the procedures used by the FDA to keep tabs on drugs once they approved and allowed on the market. Enzi hopes to bring Congress and the public to a better understanding of: how the FDA does its business; what the Vioxx and Prozac controversies reveal about the effectiveness of the FDA's pre-market and post-market monitoring systems; and what, if anything the FDA and/or Congress need to change in response.

The slate of hearings Enzi announced today include:

- February 16 at 10 a.m.: The Realities of Safety and Security
- February 17 at 10 a.m.: Drug Importation: Would the Price Be Right?

The series will conclude with additional hearings on March 1, 2 and 3. Topics for the March hearings will be announced shortly.