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HELP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ENZI TO ADVANCE JOBS INITIATIVE WITH EDUCATION, WORKPLACE SAFETY BILLS

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today said he is pushing forward legislation to support the Jobs Agenda outlined today by the Senate Republican Conference, through his introduction of S.9, “The Lifelong Education Opportunities Act,” and his planned re-introduction of the “Safety Advancement for Employees (SAFE) Act.”

“We want to make sure every child’s life is a success story and every school provides our children with the skills they will need to achieve their own version of the American Dream, regardless of their background,” Enzi said. “Our nation needs an educational system in place that will support a lifetime of education, training, and retraining. As tomorrow’s workers change careers, they will need support to learn new skills, or learn to apply their current skills in new jobs.”

“In S.9 we have included language to reauthorize the Workforce Investment Act. This bill will give American workers the skills they need to compete – and succeed – for the good jobs being created. More importantly, it will support the needs of businesses to compete in the global marketplace, including small businesses, which are looking for skilled workers,” he added.

According to Enzi, an estimated 60 percent of tomorrow’s jobs will require skills that only 20 percent of today’s workers possess. It is estimated that the average worker leaving college today will switch careers 14 times in their lifetime. It is also estimated that 10 of the top careers of the future do not exist in today’s workforce, making education and worker training an even greater national priority.

“The Lifelong Education Opportunities Act” will include provisions to provide for a lifetime of education opportunities by:

- supporting a lifetime of learning opportunities for students at all stages in life by addressing the needs of adult learners as well as children;
- improving accountability for results by better measuring student achievement and ensuring that students leave high school with a diploma, and a quality education with a strong foundation of reading, writing, math and science skills that will help them succeed in the workforce.

“In our technology-driven economy, school can never be out,” Enzi said. “This bill is vital to ensuring that America retains its competitive edge in the global economy and that every American can participate in our nation’s success.”

Enzi said he also plans to introduce a bill that provides “practical prevention” of workplace injuries by building on the provisions of the “Safety Advancement for Employees (SAFE) Act,” which he introduced during the last Congress. The SAFE Act provided systematic safety improvements that American workers and their families deserve, and that will help the vast majority of good faith employers who want to achieve compliance with safety laws.

“Every worker in America deserves to return home safely at the end of the day. However, more than 5,500 workers die while at work annually,” Enzi said. “This means that, on any given day, 15 workers will not return home to their families. The fact that these accidents are occurring is not because employers don’t care about workplace safety.”

The SAFE Act, which Enzi introduced during the last Congress, will allow OSHA to effectively target the few bad actors who willfully place their employees at risk and also includes provisions to improve hazard communication and reduce injuries and illnesses caused by the presence of hazardous chemicals in the workplace.

“The SAFE Act is a workable solution that effectively adds thousands of highly-trained safety and health professionals to the job of inspecting worksites around the country, while encouraging employers to get into compliance voluntarily,” he added. Enzi said he looks forward to working with the Senate Republican Conference to move legislation that will promote and sustain job growth.