

News from the

**U.S. Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**

Michael B. Enzi (Wyoming), Chairman



For Immediate Release

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Senate Approves "Wired for Health Care Quality Act"

Lays Foundation for Paperless, Cutting Edge Technology to Improve Health Care

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee) today said the Senate has approved the "Wired for Health Care Quality Act," S.1418, which will encourage the adoption of cutting edge-information technologies in health care intended to improve patient care, reduce medical errors and contribute to cost savings for health care providers.

"This brings us closer to enabling all Americans the freedom and security of going to the doctor's office or hospital and presenting an electronic card or identification tag that holds all patient data, insurance and medical history records. This technology also would improve patient care by reducing medical errors and allowing for more efficient record keeping to help save lives," Enzi said.

"If we can wave a wand and buy gas at the pump then we should be able to utilize the newest technology on something even more important like allowing patients to transfer information between hospitals and doctors offices in seconds without complicated, wasteful paper records."

The bill, approved unanimously this morning, will encourage private sector involvement by adopting the standard setting processes outlined in the American Health Information Collaborative. It also will establish grants to help leverage the federal government's investment in healthcare by targeting financial resources to providers who need help to get on line.

“Health IT will allow people to own their own health records. When they go to the doctor’s office they won’t have to take the clipboard and write down everything they can remember about themselves,” Enzi emphasized. “Just as importantly, this system could also cut down on medical errors with prescriptions. Instead of having to decipher the doctor’s handwriting the information could be given to the pharmacist electronically.”

Highlights of S.1418, the “Wired for Health Care Quality Act”

The bill directs the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services to:

- establish and chair the public-private American Health Information Collaborative;
- make recommendations to identify uniform national standards for adoption by the federal government to support the widespread adoption of health IT;
- award competitive grants to hospitals, group practices, and other health care providers to facilitate the adoption of health IT;
- award demonstration grants to health professions centers and academic health centers to integrate health IT into the clinical education of doctors and health care providers;
- establish quality measures to ultimately reward health care providers who improve the quality of care patients receive.

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