

News from the

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

Michael B. Enzi (Wyoming), Chairman



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**ENZI PRAISES PRESIDENT ON
HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION**

HELP AGENDA TO SUPPORT STATE OF THE UNION OBJECTIVES

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Sen. Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, tonight praised President Bush for his commitment to improve health care through information technology, ease rising health insurance costs and raise education expectations to prepare more competitive workers for world-class jobs in his State of the Union address. Enzi pledged to lead the HELP Committee in an aggressive legislative agenda to support and compliment the President's agenda.

“The President sounded the call for action on many of the same goals we’ve set for our work this year on the HELP Committee,” Enzi said, following tonight’s address. “I applaud his vision to move forward on two of the most difficult challenges facing the nation: health care and education. Families are looking to us to provide real relief and sensible solutions to rising health care costs and strong growth in top-paying jobs, and we plan to deliver.”

Health Care: Protecting the Uninsured; Reducing Errors, Improving Care

Building on the President's initiative to ease rising health insurance costs, Enzi said he is working to bring to the Senate floor the "Health Insurance Marketplace Modernization and Affordability Act" (S.1955) a bill that will help small businesses and working families afford health insurance and make health care more secure

"We are nearing almost six years of double-digit growth in health insurance premiums," Enzi said. "This inflationary spiral is lowering the quality of life for countless families and hurting our economy. Never before has there been a more urgent need to pass sensible health insurance legislation."

In addition, Enzi is a key advocate of legislation supporting Bush's commitment to bring revolutionary information technology to health care as provided for in the "Wired for Health Care Quality Act," (S.1418), which the Senate passed last year.

"The Wired for Health Care Quality Act will bring 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 legislation will lay the foundation for technology and information sharing among doctors, hospitals, and insurers," Enzi said. "This revolutionary technology would improve patient care by reducing medical errors and allowing for more efficient record keeping to help save lives." Enzi said he is working with leaders in the House of Representatives to push for passage of Health IT legislation through the House.

Education: Key to a Competitive Workforce

Echoing the President's agenda for providing Americans with the educational tools they need to remain competitive on the world stage and find good jobs, Enzi said: "Our mission is to secure a lifetime of learning and opportunity - and that begins with an educational system that provides students fundamental literacy, competitive math, science and foreign language skills and the teachers to ensure students achieve those skills at each step of their education from elementary schools through high school and college."

Under Enzi's leadership, the HELP Committee laid a foundation to boost the competitiveness of American workers during the first session with passage of "The Higher Education Amendments Act of 2005" (HEA) as well as the "Workforce Investment Act" (WIA) S.1021. Those important bills will help retain America's competitive edge in the global economy by ensuring that higher education prepares today's students for the demands of tomorrow's workplace.

"Every day global competitiveness places more demands on productivity in the American workplace," Enzi said. "President Bush clearly understands this challenge and is committed to working with Congress to better prepare our workforce."

Working in conjunction with HEA and WIA, the Perkins Act, S. 250, will require state agencies to work together on identifying the needs of the workforce and in designing job and skills training programs to match those needs. “The Perkins Act is critical to prepare students for college and the workplace,” Enzi said. “It will help ensure that more students graduate from high school and are prepared for postsecondary education and training, which is critical to the jobs being created.”

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