

News from the

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

Michael B. Enzi (Wyoming), Chairman



**For Immediate Release
Wednesday May 10, 2006
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***ENZI TAKES AIM AT ATTACKS ON S. 1955, TELLS CRITICS TO
STOP FEAR-MONGERING AND START LEGISLATING***

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee took aim at the scare tactics being implemented by opponents of the Enzi-Nelson Small Business Health Plan (SBHP) bill, S. 1955.

“Some insurance companies are desperate to retain their monopoly over the health insurance industry, and they are using scare tactics to confuse Senators and frighten Americans about what this bill will do,” Enzi said. “The fact is, this bill gives consumers more choices, and forces insurance companies to compete. Health insurance premiums will go down for American workers, and these companies are afraid their profits might go down as well.”

Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has regrettably chosen to join this campaign of misinformation and deception. Monday, he joined a group of insurance company executives to radically misrepresent the language and impact of the bill. Today, he will join Senator Hillary Clinton (D-NY) to spread more misinformation, falsely claiming that the bill would somehow jeopardize access to contraceptives.

“I honestly have no idea how one could look at this bill, with even a limited knowledge of how health insurance works in this country, and come to that outrageous

conclusion,” Enzi said. “It could not be further from the truth. This is clearly another attempt by opponents of this bill to tarnish it with falsehoods and misrepresentation. It is fear mongering in its most transparent form.”

Access to contraceptives is protected under federal rulings that the Enzi-Nelson bill does not affect. In 2000, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) ruled that employers may not discriminate against women in their health insurance plans by denying benefits for prescription contraceptives, if they provide benefits for drugs, devices, and services to prevent other medical conditions. A federal court decision in 2001 reaffirmed the EEOC’s interpretation of federal civil rights law.

“If a health plan covers prescription drugs and preventive care, like vaccinations and physical examinations, it has to cover contraceptives, too,” Enzi said. “It’s the law, and it’s not changing.”

Enzi urged his colleagues to stop their campaign of misinformation and fear-mongering, and to start looking at what this bill would really do. By allowing small businesses to band together across state lines, it would enable them to leverage their combined negotiating power to demand the benefits they want, at prices they can afford. It would further lower insurance premiums through reduced administrative costs. By bringing a large number of people into the health insurance market, it would lower costs across the board for Americans. Finally, by enabling more people to afford private health insurance, it would save the government money in Medicaid.

“As we continue to debate this bill on the floor of the Senate, I encourage my colleagues to focus on the bill, and to cease their use of scare tactics,” Enzi said. “The American people deserve better.”

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