



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI APPLAUDS COMMITTEE PASSAGE OF PANDEMIC AND
ALL-HAZARDS PREPAREDNESS ACT***

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today praised Committee passage of the "Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act," a bill he said will "protect and safeguard the health and well-being of all Americans."

"The Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act builds on the lessons we have learned from the tragedies of September 11th and the Gulf Coast Hurricanes to improve our nation's preparedness and response capabilities for any public health emergency," Enzi said. "We cannot know for certain whether our next enemy will come in the form of a natural disaster, a bioterrorist attack, or a pandemic disease outbreak, but we must have a public health system that is fully prepared to face it."

Noting the absence of coordination between different levels of government during the Gulf Coast Hurricanes, Enzi said that the Pandemic and All-Hazards Preparedness Act, S. 3678, would integrate local, state, and federal public health infrastructures and create a clear chain of command. The bill will also invest in modernizing state public health systems and enable them to respond to newly emerging threats.

"This reauthorization provides better coordination and better preparation between local, state, and federal authorities; a bigger and better supply of drugs, vaccines and other medical products; and greater accountability and better evaluations of each state's preparedness," Enzi said.

"In a public health emergency, local and state officials are the first ones on the scene and the ones most able to gauge and respond to the situation," Enzi said. "Preparedness begins at the local level, so we must be sure that states have the resources they need to expand their capacity to respond to an emergency."

Enzi said that the bill will ensure greater accountability and better systems of evaluation by requiring states to meet important benchmarks and performance standards. This will assure a minimum standard of emergency and public health preparedness.

“I want to commend Senator Burr (R-NC) and Senator Kennedy (D-MA) for working together on this bill to ensure better coordination, better preparation, more accountability and more careful evaluations of each state’s readiness for whatever public health crisis may face us next,” Enzi said. “I also want to thank Senator Frist (R-TN), Senator Gregg (R-NH), Senator Roberts (R-KS), and Senator Clinton (D-NY) for their attention to these issues and their contributions to this effort.”

Key provisions of the bill include:

- Promoting public health situational awareness with a nationwide, near real-time network, built on existing surveillance programs, to detect and contain public health threats;
- Ensuring that emergency medical care can be delivered rapidly and effectively through improved training, stronger logistical support, and a clear organizational framework for health care workers;
- Improving the capability of local hospitals to respond to a surge in patients needing emergency care through the use of mobile medical assets and federal facilities;
- Strengthening the state and local public health workforce through grants for individuals who agree to serve in a state or local public health department in an underserved area;
- Requiring states and hospitals that receive federal resources and cooperative grants to meet minimum standards and conduct regular exercises;
- Directing the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to lead all Federal public health and medical response emergencies; and,
- Transferring the National Disaster Medical System to HHS, to provide an effective, coordinated federal response to public health emergencies.

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