



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI APPLAUDS HOUSE PASSAGE OF HEALTH INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY LEGISLATION TO SAVE LIVES,
REDUCE MEDICAL COSTS***

Washington, D.C. – Noting a recent study that revealed more than 1.5 million Americans are injured each year by drug errors in hospitals and doctor’s offices, U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee) today praised the House of Representatives for approving the “Health Information Technology Promotion Act,” H.R. 4157. The Senate passed similar legislation, the “Wired for Health Care Quality Act,” S.1418, in November 2005.

“This bill 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,” Enzi said. “I look forward to reconciling the House and Senate versions in conference as soon as possible so that we can send this bill to the President.”

“All of us believe that if we move from a paper-based health care system to secure electronic medical records, we will reduce mistakes and save lives, time and money,” Enzi said. “This report clearly shows the need to bring the government and the private sector together to build new electronic pathways for medical data, and thereby provide all Americans with healthcare that is better, safer and more efficient. Our bill directly addresses these concerns.”

The study, released last week by the Institute of Medicine, conservatively estimated that hospitals commit 400,000 drug errors a year, costing \$3.5 billion, not including lost productivity and other costs. Another 530,000 errors involving Medicare patients in out-patient facilities occur each year. Over a quarter of these medication-related injuries are preventable.

“S. 1418 will significantly reduce the number of errors that occur because of bad handwriting, hospital mix-ups, and doctors prescribing drugs without knowing what their patients are already taking,” Enzi said. “It fulfills the Institute’s top recommendation,

which is to improve the health information technology (health IT) infrastructure so that all prescriptions can be written electronically by 2010.”

Enzi said the bill will lay the foundation for technology and information sharing among doctors, hospitals, and insurers which they believe eventually will enable all Americans going to the doctor’s office or hospital for medical care to present an electronic card or identification tag that instantly provides patient data, insurance and medical histories, wherever and whenever treatment is needed. A recent Rand Corporation study projected a potential savings of \$162 billion a year for the health care industry under the initiative.

The bill 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.

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

The bill directs the Secretary of HHS 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 a quality measurement system to ultimately reward health care providers who improve the quality of care patients receive.

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