



For Immediate Release

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***HELP COMMITTEE PASSES PUBLIC HEALTH BILL TO TREAT
TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY, PROTECT AMERICA'S SENIOR
CITIZENS FROM FALLS***

Washington D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today announced passage of “The Keeping Seniors Safe from Falls and Reauthorization of the Traumatic Brain Injury Act,” S.1531, an innovative bill designed to study the incidence and treatment of traumatic brain injury, and to expand research on approaches to fall prevention and treatment for America’s senior citizens. The bill passed by unanimous voice vote.

“Each year, approximately 1.4 million Americans sustain a traumatic brain injury (TBI), causing significant – and often lifelong – disability and discomfort,” Enzi said. “This bill will shed new light on methods of preventing and treating TBI.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), of the 1.4 million Americans who sustain a TBI each year, around 50,000 die and another 80,000 to 90,000 experience long-term or life-long disabilities as a result. Currently, 5.3 million Americans are living with disabilities stemming from TBI, including problems with cognition, movement abilities, sensation, and emotion.

The first portion of the bill, “Traumatic Brain Injury Reauthorization,” reauthorizes a study through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to determine the incidence and prevalence of traumatic brain injury, identify common therapeutic interventions, and develop rehabilitation guidelines. It also reauthorizes grant programs through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to coordinate TBI services, and continues valuable research programs conducted by the NIH.

The second portion of the bill, “The Keeping Seniors Safe from Falls Act,” will direct the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to oversee and support national and local education campaigns focusing on reducing falls among older adults

and preventing repeat falls. The bill also calls for the Secretary of HHS to evaluate the effect of falls on health care costs, the potential for reducing falls, and the most effective strategies for reducing fall-related health care costs.

“Anyone who has an elderly parent, relative or friend who lives alone knows about the concern that comes with an unanswered phone call,” said Enzi. “For many of our nation’s elderly, a fall means serious injury. This act will help to prevent falls and ease our minds.”

Falls represent a serious health risk for millions of older Americans. In the United States, one of every three persons age 65 and older falls each year. Falls are the leading cause of injury deaths and the most common cause of injuries and hospital admissions for trauma for older adults. In 2002, for example, almost 13,000 people over the age of 65 died as a result of fall-related injuries. Enzi said by the year 2030, as the baby boomer generation is added to the ranks of the elderly, the number of people over age 65 is expected to double, potentially doubling the number of elder falls.

“Education, prevention and early intervention will reduce the occurrences and costs of falls,” said Enzi. “This bill is an important step to securing the health and safety of America’s seniors.

“I want to thank Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) for taking the lead with Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), the Committee Ranking Member, on reauthorizing TBI legislation,” Enzi said. “I would also like to thank Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) for her work and dedication to the prevention of falls among older adults.”

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