



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI MARKS WORLD AIDS DAY; URGES ACTION TO HALT SPREAD
OF DISEASE AND EXPAND ACCESS TO CARE***

Washington, D.C. – Marking the 19th annual “World AIDS Day,” U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, said that “people living with HIV/AIDS, in America and abroad, deserve access to quality care and life-saving treatments,” and urged doctors and patients across the world to make HIV tests part of their routine physical exams.

“Around 40 million people in the world are living with HIV/AIDS, and millions more are infected each year,” Enzi said. “Though we have taken steps to combat the disease, the global epidemic must be fought on a number of fronts with every nation as a partner. Education and prevention campaigns, promotion of testing, and consistent treatment are critical to fighting HIV/AIDS. Only with the help every nation, local organizations, and communities can we fight this growing epidemic.”

Enzi expressed hope that World AIDS Day, December 1, 2006, will serve as a reminder to people across the globe of the importance of getting tested for HIV and knowing one’s status, saying, “Making an HIV test part of a routine physical exam is an important step toward improving treatment of HIV/AIDS patients and stopping the spread of the disease. By identifying HIV-positive individuals sooner, doctors can provide patients with better access to life-saving and life-extending care.”

“For so long, we could only treat the symptoms of AIDS and provide comfort to the dying. Today, we have the ability to fight back against HIV itself. We have medicines that can effectively halt the evolution of HIV and help people live normal lives.”

Enzi noted that the nature of the epidemic in the United States has changed drastically over the last 25 years, since HIV/AIDS was first diagnosed, and said that the way the government funds treatment for the disease must reflect these changes.

“More and more women, minorities, and people in the South and rural areas are being infected with HIV/AIDS,” Enzi said. “Recognizing this, I have worked with Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) on a bill to modernize and strengthen our domestic response to HIV/AIDS, the Ryan White CARE Act, to ensure that Americans in need can receive access to treatment and prevention, regardless of their gender, race, or where they live.”

“I also look forward to working with my colleagues in the next Congress to evaluate and strengthen our global response to this disease,” Enzi said. “We have the technology and know-how to stop AIDS from killing people and destroying families. We need to employ this technology and know-how in the best, most efficient manner possible.”

Enzi took the opportunity on World AIDS Day to call attention to some sobering statistics on HIV/AIDS from the United Nations Program on AIDS (UNAIDS):

- Approximately 40 million, and perhaps as many 47.1 million, people in the world are living with HIV/AIDS.
- 4.3 million new HIV/AIDS cases were diagnosed in 2006.
- 2.9 million people died of AIDS in 2006.
- More than 25 million people have died of AIDS since 1981.
- In developing countries 6.8 million people are in immediate need of life-saving AIDS drugs, but only 1.65 million are receiving treatment.
- Sub-Saharan Africa has been struck hardest by the epidemic, with 24.7 million people living with HIV/AIDS, a 5.9 percent prevalence rate in the adult population, and 2.1 million AIDS deaths in 2006.
- Africa has 12 million AIDS orphans.

“This is a global problem that requires a global solution,” Enzi concluded. “We must all do more to raise awareness and halt the spread of this deadly disease.”

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