



For Immediate Release

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ENZI APPLAUDS ACTION TO REDUCE UNDERAGE DRINKING

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today announced that Congress passed the "Sober Truth on Preventing (STOP) Underage Drinking Act," H.R. 864, a bill that takes important steps to combat underage drinking and curb the disturbing trend of parents and adults providing children with alcohol.

"American youths have almost unfettered access to alcohol – the National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that 95 percent of 12-graders perceive alcohol as readily available to them," Enzi said. "Alarming, most children and youth who drink obtain the alcohol from their parents or another adult."

"The STOP Underage Drinking Act will authorize a National Media Campaign against Underage Drinking directed at educating adults about the dangers that alcohol poses to young people," Enzi said. "It also enhances and coordinates ongoing efforts by various federal agencies, local communities, states, and schools to prevent underage drinking and alcohol abuse."

The impact of alcohol on young people is as staggering as it tragic: alcohol is involved in 36 percent of homicides, 12 percent of male suicides, and 8 percent of female suicides involving people under 21, and it contributes to the four leading causes of deaths among 15 to 20 year-olds. Young drinking drivers were involved in 69 percent of youth fatalities from alcohol-related traffic accidents in the year 2000, and in 1999 nearly 40 percent of people under age 21 who were victims of drowning, burns, and falls tested positive for alcohol.

"We have a clear problem here, and there is no 'silver bullet' to solve it," Enzi said. "However, I believe that passing this bill is an important step toward improving our efforts to combat underage drinking."

Key components of the bill, which passed in the Senate Wednesday evening and was subsequently approved by the House of Representatives today, include:

- Creating an Interagency Coordinating Committee to coordinate the efforts and expertise of various Federal agencies to combat underage drinking, to be chaired by the Secretary of Health and Human Services and to include other agencies and departments such as the Department of Education, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Federal Trade Commission;
- Authorizing the National Media Campaign against Underage Drinking directed at adults;
- Providing grants to prevent underage drinking and alcohol abuse by college and university students; and,
- Increasing research and data collection to be conducted at the Federal level on underage drinking, including reporting on the types and brands of alcohol that children use and the short and long term impact of underage drinking upon adolescent brain development.

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