



For Immediate Release

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Tuesday, January 23, 2007

***ENZI PRAISES HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION INITIATIVES
IN STATE OF UNION; WILL SEEK BIPARTISAN
SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT'S GOALS***

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, said tonight he is encouraged by the President's initiatives on health care and education outlined in the State Of The Union address, adding that he will work to push forward legislation supporting the President's goals of greater access to health care and stronger schools.

"I applaud the President's commitment to pursue needed health care and education legislation in a bipartisan manner, and believe we can do even more working with the Administration and with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle," Enzi said Tuesday night.

"President Bush struck the right chord, outlining a plan to focus tax incentives on helping working families afford basic health insurance," Enzi noted. "He also once again stressed his commitment to support market-based health insurance pooling for small businesses so that America's working families will have the right to choose health insurance plans that meet their health insurance needs."

On education, Enzi credited the President with setting "a high bar" to ensure stronger schools with the renewal of the No Child Left Behind Act and by improving key education programs that will ensure that every American has the knowledge and skills to be successful in the 21st century global economy.

"No Child Left Behind should mean that the proper flexibility and focus are provided so that no rural schools are left behind," Enzi maintained.

"As we prepare to renew several of our cornerstone education laws, we must ensure that teachers are ready and able to teach, and students are ready and excited to
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Enzi Release

learn,” he said. “We must be sure that we have a highly qualified, effective teacher in every classroom, especially in rural schools and Native American schools.

“Innovation and creativity in America’s schools requires the integration of concepts across the curriculum in ways that will excite our students and inspire them to achieve. America’s leadership and competitiveness hinge upon meeting this challenge.”

Health Care: Expanding Access, Reducing Costs, Improving Quality

“I look forward to working with the President and with my colleagues in Congress to expand access to health insurance so that more Americans can receive the care they need and deserve,” Enzi said. “I applaud President Bush for his commitment to reach across the aisle and find a nonpartisan, ‘third way’ approach to achieve real health care reform and ensure that American working families can access affordable, quality health care.”

Building on the President’s initiative to ease rising health insurance costs, Enzi said he is continuing to work toward a bipartisan agreement to advance Small Business Health Plan (SBHP) legislation, which would increase the ability of small businesses to offer health insurance for their employees and promote market reforms that will benefit all Americans unable to obtain group health insurance.

“I worked hard on SBHPs in the last Congress with my colleague Senator Ben Nelson (D-NE) and a broad coalition of health care stakeholders and businesses – from small builders and contractors to restaurants and real estate agents,” Enzi said.

“Still, we are facing six years of double-digit growth in health insurance premiums, with small business owners and their employees bearing the brunt of these skyrocketing costs. This inflationary spiral is lowering the quality of life for countless families and threatening the strength of our economy.”

Enzi said he also will continue to advocate bipartisan, bicameral legislation supporting Bush’s commitment to bring revolutionary information technology to health care in order to improve health care quality, reduce medical errors, and cut costs.

“The Wired for Health Care Quality Act, which we introduced last year, will bring the nation’s health care system closer to enabling all Americans the freedom and security of going to the doctor’s office or hospital and presenting an electronic card or identification tag that holds all patient data, insurance and medical history records,” Enzi said. “It’s revolutionary technology that would improve patient care by reducing medical errors, allow for more efficient record keeping to help save lives, and reduce the costs of health care.”

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Education: Key to a Competitive Workforce

“I look forward to working in the next year to renew several critical pieces of legislation to ensure that every American has access to a lifetime of learning, training, and re-training, and can develop the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in the 21st century, global economy,” Enzi said. “The global economy is increasingly technology-driven, so we must continue our efforts to ensure that our students and workforce have opportunities to strengthen their science, technology, engineering, and math knowledge and skills.”

Addressing the growing challenge of global competitiveness will be a key concern as Enzi works to improve upon and renew Head Start, the No Child Left Behind Act, the Higher Education Act, and the Workforce Investment Act.

In order to ensure that American students develop the knowledge and skills they need to secure high-skill, high-wage and high-demand jobs, Enzi said he will work closely with the Bush administration and his colleagues in the House and Senate to renew and improve upon:

- The “Head Start Act,” to provide young children a safe and healthy place to develop the building blocks for success in school;
- The “No Child Left Behind Act,” to ensure a quality education for *every* child;
- The “Higher Education Act,” to make college accessible and affordable for all students; and,
- The “Workforce Investment Act,” to provide lifelong learning and training to prepare American workers for the jobs of the 21st century.

“A skilled workforce is the key to remaining competitive in a global market; education is the key to attaining skills and knowledge. In this technology-driven, global economy, school is never out for America’s students and workers. President Bush clearly understands this challenge and is committed to working with Congress to better prepare our workforce,” Enzi said.

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