



For Immediate Release

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ENZI DECLARES FINAL PASSAGE OF MINIMUM WAGE, SMALL BUSINESS RELIEF PACKAGE A VICTORY FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today commended the Senate for overwhelmingly approving a fair and balanced minimum wage increase that supports working families and small businesses, declaring final passage of the package “a clear victory for the middle class.” He urged the House of Representatives to follow the Senate’s lead.

“Who is more middle class than America’s small businessmen and women?” Enzi said. “Passing the Senate’s bipartisan minimum wage and small business relief is good for low skilled workers and it is good for the middle class working families of America.”

“Some have made reference to the so-called ‘war on the middle class.’ Let’s get our facts straight: Mandating the minimum wage increase without proper relief to the working families who employ many of America’s workers would have been an assault on the middle class. Others like to talk about ‘two Americas.’ Our action today recognizes that there is one America. We are all in this together and we need not do great injury to one group of Americans just to aid another.”

“The Senate has taken strong action on behalf of minimum wage earners and middle class small business owners,” Enzi said. “I want to reiterate my hope that our colleagues in the House will not derail this bipartisan approach to offering real support and relief to the middle class. The minimum wage increase is in their hands.”

Enzi thanked his colleagues in the Senate for rejecting a partisan, overly simplified approach to the minimum wage bill, and instead accepting a bipartisan approach that will help relieve the burden that federal regulation, taxation, and mandates place on small businesses.

“A Small Business Administration study issued in September estimated that small firms, those with 20 or fewer employees, face an annual regulatory compliance cost 45 percent higher than large firms,” Enzi said. “The average annual regulatory compliance cost for small firms was \$7,647 – which happens to be roughly equivalent to the cost of

employing a part-time minimum wage worker at the higher rate we are passing today. By including targeted tax and regulatory relief, we have ensured that small businesses, the lifeblood of the American economy, can continue to create new jobs and drive economic growth.”

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR MICHAEL B. ENZI REGARDING H.R.2,
THE MINIMUM WAGE HIKE AND SMALL BUSINESS TAX INCENTIVE
PACKAGE

2/1/07

Mr. President, I rise today to speak in support of final passage of HR.2 as amended. I appreciate the wise direction that this body has decided upon with regard to the minimum wage. Yesterday, eighty- eight members of the Senate correctly concluded that raising the minimum wage without providing relief for the small businesses that must pay for that increase is simply not an option. I want to reiterate my hope that our colleagues in the House will not derail this bipartisan approach to offering real support and relief to the middle class. The minimum wage increase is in their hands.

The Senate’s reasonable approach recognizes that small businesses have been the steady engine of our growing economy, and that they have been the source of new job creation. It also recognizes that small businesses are middle class families, too. I am proud that this body has chosen a path which attempts to preserve this segment of the economy which employs so many working men and women. The Senate has recognized the simple fact that a raise in the minimum wage is of no benefit to a worker without a job, or a job seeker without a prospect.

As this Congress moves forward we will need to confront a range of issues facing working families – the rising cost of health insurance and the availability of such insurance, the necessity and costs of education and job-training, and the desire to achieve an appropriate balance between work and family life. The lessons we have learned in this debate should not be forgotten as we approach new and equally complex issues.

In addressing minimum wage we have rejected the notion that it be a “clean bill”. Ultimately we did so because it is not a “clean” issue. Around here, “clean” more often than not, simply means “do it my way” and does not respect the democratic process of the Senate and allowing the Senate to work its will. There were claims that no Democrats offered amendments to the bill. That is false. The Chairman of the Committee on Small Business, Senator John Kerry offered two amendments and the Senator from Wisconsin, Senator Feingold offered an amendment on Buy America standards. As you can see, members on both sides were not aiming to delay, but they were offering amendments to better the bill.

I am pleased that we proved to the American people that we indeed can work together and provide solutions to complex and difficult problems. The Senate chose the right course of coupling an increased wage with provisions that will assist those small business employers that will face the greatest difficulties in paying such increased costs. I hope we do not forget the wisdom of this approach as we address other workplace, economic and social issues

I am also heartened that in the course of this debate this body has begun to recognize what I know from my own life to be true - “working families” are not only those that are employed by businesses, they are also those who own the businesses. I know from personal experience that all small business owners have two families, their own, and the family of those that work for them. I also know that business owners feel the pressure of rising costs, the dilemma of difficult options, and the uncomfortable squeeze of modern life in *both* of their families, as much as many workers do in their own.

America has heard a lot of partisan rhetoric during the course of this debate, talk of a so-called “war on the middle class” and of “leaving people out.” I’d like to note for the record that such rhetoric got us nowhere. We are ending consideration of this issue basically where we began and where many of us were the last few years – with a majority of the Senate supporting a minimum wage increase as long as we can soften the impact of that increase on the small businesses which create minimum wage jobs. A higher wage is of no use when the job itself is gone. The Senate chose to look at the whole picture this time around. The minimum wage could have been raised years ago had some on the other side been willing to accept the important role working families and small businesses play in providing employment in this country.

Some people like to talk about “two Americas.” What the Senate is preparing to do today recognizes that there is one America. We are all in this together and we need not do great injury to one group of Americans just to aid another. That kind of partisan rhetoric isn’t accurate and is aimed at spreading a very skewed view of America. It is aimed to divide, rather than unite Americans around a simple solution.

Mandating the wage increase without proper relief to the working families who employ many of America’s low skilled workers is an assault on the middle class. Let’s get our facts straight. Passing the Senate’s bipartisan minimum wage and small business relief package is good for low skilled workers and it is good for the middle class working families of America.

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