



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI GIVES HOUSE PANEL ONE THUMBS UP,
ONE THUMBS DOWN ON PROTECTING WORKER RIGHTS***

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today praised the House Education and Labor Committee for approving legislation to prohibit employers and health insurers from discriminating against individuals based on genetic information, but rejected a bill the panel approved that would compromise a worker's right to cast a government-supervised, private ballot when deciding whether to join a union.

"I am very pleased that the House Education and Labor Committee approved the 'Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act,' a bill that will help fulfill the promise of genetic research to save lives and reduce health care costs, by establishing basic protections that will encourage individuals to take advantage of genetic screening, counseling, testing, and new therapies, without the fear that this information will be misused by employers or health insurers," Enzi said.

"However, it is ironic and regrettable that the Committee followed this strong action to protect the rights of working Americans by approving a bill that will rob them of one their most fundamental rights – the right to vote by private ballot when deciding whether to join a union," Enzi said. "Americans get a private ballot when they choose their President, their Congressmen, their local councilmen, even their PTA leaders – why shouldn't they have the same right in the workplace when they decide whether to form a union? Free, fair, and private elections are a fundamental principle of American democracy."

Enzi said that while the "Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act" will protect workers from abuse by employers, the so-called "Employee Free Choice Act" will expose them to pressure, intimidation and coercion by co-workers and union organizers.

The so-called "Employee Free Choice Act," would not only require the imposition of a workplace union, based solely on signed authorization cards, it would radically alter the longstanding process of collective-bargaining and set aside traditional methods used to resolve differences between workers and employers. It also would end

standards in place for over 70 years used to compensate parties who suffer a loss as a result of wrongful acts.

The HELP Committee passed a similar version of the “Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act” on January 31. This bill prohibits genetic discrimination in health insurance and the workplace by barring health insurers and employers from requesting or using genetic information to take any action that would affect an employee’s health or employment benefits. This includes health insurance premiums, contribution amounts, and eligibility, as well as employment decisions like hiring, firing, job assignments, and promotions.

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