



For Immediate Release

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ENZI PRAISES SENATE APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT TO SUPPORT SMALL BUSINESS HEALTH CARE POOLING PLANS

Washington D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, today hailed Senate approval of his bipartisan amendment to the budget bill that lays a financial foundation to support any health insurance proposal that would allow market-based, small business pooling plans to expand the range of affordable group health insurance plans available to the nation’s small businesses and working families.

Passage of the amendment, cosponsored by Senator Ben Nelson (D-NE), Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), Senator Chuck Grassley (R-IA), and Senator Ken Salazar (D-CO), is the first step toward paving the way for a health insurance reform bill that would take aim at reducing the rolls of the uninsured – estimated to number as many as 45 million today.

“Small businesses and working families have been crying out for help for over 10 years,” Enzi said. “We must answer the call and provide them with the right tools so they can take care of their workers and their families. This amendment recognizes the need to utilize market-based pooling to address rising health care costs, expand access, and improve health care quality.”

Senator Nelson said: “There are two types of people when it comes to health insurance: those without insurance and those who have it but are afraid of losing it. The Senate’s action is a major step forward in the effort to finally enact legislation to expand access to health insurance for employees of small businesses.”

“In just five years the average cost of employer-based family coverage has nearly doubled, from \$4,248 five years ago to \$8,167 per family today, creating an ever-widening gap between the health haves and have nots,” Enzi said. “By allowing small business groups and working families to pool their members, we can reduce the cost of health insurance, expand access to health care, and reduce the number of uninsured Americans.”

Enzi, who serves as Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee) and as a Member of the Senate Budget Committee, offered the amendment to the budget bill (S.Con.Res.21) to create a deficit

neutral reserve fund to be used in the event that the Senate develops a bill to allow market-based, small business health care pooling plans.

Senator Enzi and Senator Nelson introduced bipartisan small business pooling legislation in the last Congress and garnered 55 votes on the floor of the Senate – a clear majority, but 5 votes short of the necessary super-majority to get past a Senate filibuster.

“Senator Nelson and I are actively discussing with our colleagues possible bipartisan approaches,” Enzi said. “As the wide bipartisan support for today’s amendment shows, we are on a promising track, and we intend to stick with it. Market-based pooling must be part of any comprehensive health reform solution.”

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