



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI APPLAUDS PASSAGE OF BILL TO ENHANCE AMERICAN  
COMPETITIVENESS; CALLS FOR FURTHER BIPARTISAN ACTION  
TO PROMOTE LIFE-LONG LEARNING***

**Washington D.C.** – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today applauded the Senate for passing the “America COMPETES Act,” S. 761, and urged his colleagues to continue working together in a bipartisan way to enhance American competitiveness.

“The overwhelming support for the America COMPETES Act today is proof positive that we when we are willing to set partisan politics aside and work together, we can do great things for the American people,” Enzi said. “This is an encouraging starting point, and I hope that we can continue to work together in this bipartisan spirit to ensure that every American has the opportunity to achieve academically and obtain the skills needed to succeed in the global economy.”

The “America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (COMPETES) Act” passed the Senate by an 88-8 vote.

Enzi said that as Ranking Member of the HELP Committee, he is fully committed to working with Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), Chairman of the HELP Committee, to renew the Higher Education Act (HEA), the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in order to ensure that every American has “a lifetime of learning opportunities.”

“The call for education and skills training is loud and clear,” Enzi said. “Promoting ingenuity, knowledge, and skills is vital to filling the high skills, high-paying jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

He also warned that a substantial portion of our workforce now finds itself in direct competition for jobs with highly motivated, and often well-educated, people from around the world. “Unless we pay attention to these facts, this competition will only increase in the future.”

The America COMPETES Act includes provisions that improve math, science and critical foreign language education in our Nation from elementary school through graduate school. It supports improvements to teacher preparation, establishes stronger links between graduate schools and employers, provides funding to support students trained at the doctoral level in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, while enhancing federal programs that support students in graduate school.

Enzi highlighted a number of key indicators that illustrate the need to pass American COMPETES, including:

- **Business is spending billions each year to train new employees and remediate the educational skill gaps of those already in the workforce;**
- **The American workforce is aging - 77 million baby boomers are set to retire over the next several decades;**
- **Reading proficiency among 12th graders has declined to the point where just over one-third of them are even considered proficient readers. In addition, 47 percent of those with a college degree are not considered proficient readers according to the most recent National Assessment of Adult Literacy;**
- **The United States has one of the highest college enrollment rates, but a college completion rate average to below average among developed countries in the world;**
- **Four out of every five jobs will require postsecondary education or the equivalent, yet only 52 percent of Americans over the age of 25 have achieved this level of education.**

“The decisions we make about education and workforce development will have a dramatic impact on the economy and our society for generations to come,” Enzi added. “We need to build, strengthen and maintain our educational pipeline, beginning in elementary school. We must also strengthen programs that encourage and enable citizens of all ages to enroll in postsecondary education and obtain or improve their knowledge and skills. The America COMPETES Act is a good starting point,” he concluded.

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