



For Immediate Release

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Enzi, Republicans Fight to Reduce Spending in Kennedy Health Bill

Washington, D.C. – As the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee enters its second day considering the Kennedy health care bill, U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Ranking Member of the HELP Committee, is leading Republican efforts to reduce the bill's out-of-control spending.

“Republicans stand ready to write a health care reform bill that matches what the President said this week – Americans who like the care they have must be able to keep it, and the bill must and will be deficit neutral,” Enzi said. “I hope the Democrats will work with us to enact strong, bipartisan health care reform this year.

“The Kennedy health care bill comes with a price tag of more than \$1 trillion and leaves millions of Americans uninsured,” said Enzi, the Senate's only accountant. “The Kennedy bill is in conflict with the Obama message on health care and breaks the promises he's made.”

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE ENZI DAY TWO -- HELP COMMITTEE MARK UP JUNE 18, 2009

Thank you, Senator Dodd. Before I start, I want to thank my colleagues for a productive day yesterday. I appreciate the fact that the Chairman allowed all voices to be heard for a substantial period of time. And, I want to thank Members for their attention and important contributions. As I said yesterday, our constituents sent us here to work hard and to work in good faith on their behalf. We each bring unique experiences and skills to this health reform debate. For all of us, this could be the most important bill that we will ever work on. And, what we do here, will unquestionably affect the lives of every single one of our constituents. As we legislate on this issue we should be mindful that our health care system touches one-sixth of our nation's economy. Simply stated, it is essential that we do this together and that we get this right.

A couple of days ago, the White House press secretary called this bill, “An incomplete, older proposal” and concluded that it was, “Not indicative of where we are.” Unfortunately, however, it is where we are in the HELP Committee. Today we begin the amendment process on this health reform bill, and it is critical that we fix this broken

piece of legislation. With that in mind, I want to focus briefly on just a couple of areas where I think this bill fails to get things right and needs fixing.

First, this bill in its current form would have a devastating impact on our nation's deficit. In his speech before the American Medical Association on Monday, President Obama stated that, "Health care reform must be and will be deficit neutral in the next decade." According to the Congressional Budget Office, this bill falls far short of the President's commitment to deficit neutrality. Preliminary estimates on this incomplete bill find that if enacted, this legislation would increase spending by more than \$1.3 trillion over the next ten years. It is astonishing to me that such a policy could even be contemplated in this current fiscal environment. Earlier this month, Fed Chairman Bernanke stated that, "Addressing the country's fiscal problems will require a willingness to make difficult choices." Chairman Bernanke went on to say, "Over the long term, achieving fiscal sustainability requires that spending and budget deficits be well controlled." Reading these quotes reminded me of the words from Senator Isakson who strongly urged us, yesterday, not to take the easy way out. But that is what this bill does. This bill makes promises we cannot fulfill. I urge my colleague to think long and hard about Chairman Bernanke's testimony as they consider this bill and its impact on our economic future.

Secondly, as we debate and amend the provisions in the section of this bill referred to as, "Quality", I would like to discuss President Obama's commitment that, "If you like what you have, you can keep it." This is a catchy phrase, but unfortunately, according to the CBO, this promise rings hollow for approximately 10 million Americans who will lose their employer-based coverage under this bill. Furthermore, the provisions of the bill we will address today provide the government with an unprecedented role in the doctor-patient relationship. Government bureaucracy will end up dictating the treatment that we can and cannot have, and the result will be a delay and a denial of health care services. This is unacceptable, and it too violates the promise that, "If you like what you have you can keep it."

Throughout the year, President Obama has spoken often of ushering in an "era of responsibility." But the provisions of this bill violate that promise as well. With this bill, we usher in an era of unprecedented entitlement spending in the name of reform. I urge my colleagues to help me amend this legislation over the coming days. I still hope that we can recover from this shaky start and enact strong, bipartisan health care reform this year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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