



For Immediate Release

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What's Missing in the Kennedy Bill? Critical Reforms to Make Health Care More Affordable, Bring Down High Cost of Medical Lawsuits

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today offered an amendment to correct the Kennedy health bill's glaring failure to reduce medical lawsuits, which drive up health care costs and force doctors to order wasteful tests and treatments to cover liabilities.

"Lawsuit reform is a critical piece of the health care reform puzzle," Enzi said. "Frivolous lawsuits drive up health care costs and put patient safety at risk by forcing doctors to practice defensive medicine, which is costly, inefficient and dangerous. We need medical justice that will bring down costs and make health care more affordable, while ensuring that injured patients are compensated fairly and promptly.

"As the President has said, we can't enact sustainable health care reform without addressing skyrocketing costs. The high cost of medical lawsuits leaves many Americans unable to afford the care they need. Unfortunately, the Kennedy bill does not address lawsuit reform and does not bring down costs.

"My amendment, based on the bill I wrote with Senator Baucus, will improve patient safety and lower costs so that Americans can get the care they need," said Enzi, the Senate's only accountant and the only senator serving on the HELP, Finance and Budget Committees.

Enzi offered the "Reliable Medical Justice Act," which he introduced in 2007 with Senator Max Baucus (D-MT), Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, as an amendment to the Kennedy health bill. The Enzi-Baucus bill would create demonstration programs for states to develop, implement and evaluate alternatives for resolving disputes over health care errors, and promote information-sharing to improve quality of care.

The Kennedy health care bill, introduced last week, does not address the problem of medical lawsuits.

"In his speech Monday to the American Medical Association, the President agreed with me that we need to look at a range of ideas to put patients first and scale back the use of defensive medicine. One step we must take to protect patients and end the practice of defensive medicine is to address lawsuit reform."

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