



For Immediate Release

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## **Higher Health Care Costs, Taxes Not the Change Americans Want**

**Washington, D.C.** – In remarks on the Senate floor today, U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, called for a health reform bill that will reduce costs and make health insurance more affordable for all Americans instead of pushing costly new “change” in the form of higher taxes and even higher costs get the care families need.

“Congress should pass a bill that decreases the cost of health care and reduces insurance premiums,” Enzi said.

“Unfortunately, the bills Speaker Pelosi, Senator Reid, and President Obama are pushing through Congress will do nothing to address spiraling health care costs and will actually increase the insurance premiums most Americans pay for their health care.

“The 2000 page Pelosi bill and the 1500 page Senate Finance bill will drive up costs, increase taxes, and expand the size of government.

“Our economy can’t take the higher taxes, higher unemployment, and higher mandates these bills impose. Taken together, the new taxes, mandates and regulations in these bills will cumulatively increase health insurance premiums for millions of Americans who currently have health insurance.

“These higher taxes, higher premiums, and higher costs are not the “change” the American people voted for.”

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### **Full Statement as Prepared for Delivery:**

Mr. President, the status quo in health care is unacceptable. Health care costs are skyrocketing, insurance premiums are increasing, and too many small businesses can no longer afford to offer health insurance to their workers.

While I agree that we need to change our current system, the approach reflected in the current health reform bills is the wrong answer. I object to the current health care reform bills, not because I support the status quo, but because the bills do nothing to address the problems of increasing costs and premiums. These bills will not reduce health care costs and will actually increase insurance premiums for most Americans.

I have fought for years to enact common sense reforms that will help slow health care cost growth and make the insurance market work better for small businesses. Before I entered politics, my wife and I ran a small business. We know firsthand how hard it is to meet payroll and provide meaningful benefits to employees. I understand how the current insurance market fails to meet the needs of many small businesses.

That is why I have fought for real reforms that will actually help small businesses. In 2006, I introduced a small business health plans bill that would have saved the taxpayers about a billion dollars and would have provided health insurance to almost a million people. The bill would have made common sense reforms to the insurance market and given more leverage to small businesses to help them negotiate lower insurance premiums.

The insurance industry, working closely with many of my Democratic colleagues, fought to defeat my bill. Unfortunately, they were successful, and 43 Senators voted to block our efforts to get the Senate to pass these reforms.

Since 2006, little has changed in the insurance marketplace. Health care costs and premiums continue to spiral upwards. The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that costs for small businesses with less than 200 employees rose by 4.7 percent from 2006 to 2007, 2.2 percent from 2007 to 2008, 5 percent from 2008 to 2009, and they are expected to rise next year.

Small businesses cannot continue to sustain these types of price increases. They need and want reform, and Congress should deliver reform. Congress should pass a bill that decreases the cost of health care and reduces insurance premiums.

Unfortunately, the bills Speaker Pelosi, Senator Reid, and President Obama are pushing through Congress will do nothing to address spiraling health care costs and will actually increase the insurance premiums most Americans pay for their health care. Even worse, increases in premiums will come at a time of rising unemployment.

The 2000 page Pelosi bill and the 1500 page Senate Finance bill will drive up costs, increase taxes, and expand the size of government. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, the Administration's own official actuaries, the National Association of State Insurance Commissioners and at least six other private studies have all reported that the Democrat Leadership bills will drive up costs.

Actuaries at the consulting firm, Oliver Wyman, which did one of the studies, estimated these bills will increase premiums for small business by at least 20 percent. WellPoint, the largest Blue Cross Blue Shield plan in the nation, looked at their actual claims experiences in the 14 States in which they operate, and concluded premiums for healthier small businesses will increase in all 14 states—in Nevada by as much as 108 percent.

Even the Congressional Budget Office has said: "premiums in the new insurance exchanges would tend to be higher than the average premiums in the current-law individual market."

When the 85 percent of Americans who already have health insurance hear the term "health care reform", they want Washington to do something that lowers the cost of their health insurance premiums. Unfortunately, the bills that Congress has developed will do the exact opposite.

Our economy can't take the higher taxes, higher unemployment, and higher mandates these bills impose. Taken together, the new taxes, mandates and regulations in these bills

will cumulatively increase health insurance premiums for millions of Americans who currently have health insurance.

These higher taxes, higher premiums, and higher costs are not the “change” the American people voted for. Unemployment is higher than it’s been in decades, the housing market is in distress, and more and more middle class Americans are feeling squeezed by irresponsible decisions being made here in Washington.

We all agree the health insurance market is broken and needs to be fixed. Everyone who wants health insurance should be able to get it, and they shouldn’t have to spend all of their hard-earned savings to get it. No American should be denied health insurance because they have cancer, diabetes, or some other pre-existing condition. No one should be denied health insurance, period.

These reforms are very important and long over-due. We also need to enact common sense reforms similar to the reforms I advocated for in 2006 with small business health plans and then in 2007 and 2008 with my plan, “Ten Steps to Transform Health Care in America”.

I urge the Democrat Leadership to go back to the drawing board to develop bipartisan health care solutions that will actually reduce costs and make health insurance more affordable for small businesses.

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