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HELP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ENZI, MAJORITY LEADER FRIST  
UNVEIL PLANS FOR HEALTH CARE REFORM BILL  
TARGETS RISING COSTS; ACCESS TO CARE, LIABILITY, MEDICAL DATA  
SHARING

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY., Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee) and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) today unveiled plans for health care reform bill to battle rising health care costs, improve access to health insurance, reform medical liability laws and create a new national framework for exchanging health information securely and privately.

"Rising health care costs and access to affordable health insurance are among the biggest worries Americans face today," said Enzi. "At the heart of the legislation Senator Frist and I will introduce will be proposals developed last year by the Senate Republican Task Force on Health Care Costs and the Uninsured as well as many of President Bush's health care reforms."

As the new chairman of the HELP Committee, Enzi said he is deeply concerned about the 44 million Americans who lack health insurance, including between 20 million to 30 million people who are chronically uninsured. "Health care costs are increasing faster than any other basic service in American society," Enzi said. "One of the key contributors to these escalating costs is the problem health care providers have exchanging data critical to patient care.

"My colleagues and I will include proposals in the bill we will introduce to speed the adoption of new standards and procedures to help health care providers 'talk' to each other – reforms I believe eventually will save billions of dollars and, potentially, many thousands of lives."

The bill, S.4, the "Healthy America Act of 2005," will bring together an aggressive and innovative set of health care solutions, including:

- creating targeted tax credits to help Americans purchase private health insurance;
- reforming the struggling small-group and individual health insurance markets;
- expanding the availability of Health Savings Accounts (HSAs);

- reforming America's costly and chaotic medical liability system to ensure fair and rapid compensation to injured patients, reduce frivolous lawsuits, and limit excessive and costly damage awards;
- creating a new national framework for establishing personal electronic health records and for exchanging health information securely and privately;
- expanding America's Community Health Centers and related facilities to address the unique challenges of the nation's rural health care system.