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HELP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN ENZI ANNOUNCES BILL
TO STRENGTHEN EDUCATION, SUPPORT LIFELONG LEARNING

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 to introduce legislation to strengthen public education and support lifelong learning for students at all stages in life.

Enzi, the newly-elected Chairman of the HELP Committee, said he will soon introduce S.9, "The Lifelong Education Opportunities Act," which will set higher performance goals for children, parents and teachers, and raise the level of achievement for all students, regardless of their background.

"As our bill will demonstrate, we believe all students can learn," Enzi said. "More importantly, with the right support, all students can be star achievers. We want to make sure every child's life is a success story and every school provides our children with the skills they will need to achieve their own version of the American Dream, regardless of their background."

According to Enzi an estimated 60 percent of tomorrow's jobs will require skills that only 20 percent of today's workers possess. Moreover, the average worker leaving college today will switch careers 14 times in their life with 10 of their future careers in jobs that do not exist today.

"Businesses will be creating and filling good jobs in response to market-based changes. We must make sure we can fill those jobs with American workers. What that suggests suggests is that our nation needs an educational system in place that will support a lifetime of education, training, and retraining," Enzi said. "As tomorrow's workers change careers, they will need support to learn new skills, or learn to apply their current skills in new jobs."

Enzi said "The Lifelong Education Opportunities Act," will build on the success of the "No Child Left Behind Act," which established high expectations for all public school children as the core pillar of federal education policy. "Four years ago, when we passed the 'No Child Left Behind Act,' we did what was needed to improve student achievement, and we are seeing the results," Enzi added. "Despite this success, there's still more room for improvement."

"The Lifelong Education Opportunities Act" will include provisions to provide for a lifetime of education opportunities by:

- supporting a lifetime of learning opportunities for students at all stages in life by addressing the needs of adult learners as well as children;
- creating a stronger link between education and the workforce by reauthorizing the "Workforce Investment Act," to support the needs of business, including small businesses, which are struggling to retain skilled workers;
- improving accountability for results by better measuring student achievement and ensuring that students leave high school with a diploma, and a quality education with a strong foundation of reading, writing, math and science skills that will help them succeed in the workforce;
- helping teachers serve their students better by reducing the amount of time they spend outside the classroom complying with paperwork demands related to federal program requirements;
- providing flexibility for states to manage federal education program dollars more effectively. S.9 will let leaders at the state and local level make the important decisions about our education system.

“In our technology-driven economy, school can never be out,” said Enzi. “The bill we are introducing today is vital to ensure that America retains its competitive edge in the global economy and that every American can participate in our nation’s success.”