

News from the

**U.S. Senate Committee on
Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**

Michael B. Enzi (Wyoming), Chairman



**For Immediate Release
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***ENZI CO-SPONSORS BILL TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY
PHARMACISTS, ENHANCE NEW DRUG BENEFITS FOR SENIORS***

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, said today he has joined colleagues to introduce a bill supporting community pharmacists now adjusting to the new Medicare Part D drug benefit by ensuring they are reimbursed as quickly as possible and by guaranteeing beneficiaries have access to local pharmacists.

The bill, the “Pharmacist Access and Recognition in Medicare Act,” is cosponsored by Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) and Senator Jim Talent (R-MO) and was introduced Thursday.

“Pharmacists are on the front lines of a revolutionary change in Medicare that is bringing long-overdue prescription drug benefits to our seniors,” Enzi said. “I strongly support community pharmacists and realize that they face challenges as they help implement the most significant improvement to Medicare since its inception in 1965.

“This bill will protect the valuable role that pharmacists play in the communities all across the country and will help them adjust to many of the market changes being created by Medicare’s new drug benefits.”

Enzi said over the past few months he has spent many days in Wyoming talking to seniors about the new drug program and also learning about the role of pharmacists in

implementing it. The “Pharmacist Access and Recognition in Medicare Act” responds to many of the concerns outlined by Wyoming constituents and community pharmacists by including provisions to:

- **ensure prompt payment to community pharmacists** - Because community pharmacists do not have the negotiating leverage necessary to ensure they are reimbursed often enough to keep a positive cash flow, (some are being reimbursed only every 45 days) this provision would specify that the Part D plan s reimburse pharmacists every 14 days.
- **restrict co-branding on Medicare prescription drug cards** - Since some Part D plans have established joint marketing programs with large, chain pharmacies, many seniors have assumed that their new benefits can only be accessed through those large chain pharmacies. This bill will eliminate such marketing tactics and encourage seniors to use whatever pharmacy they prefer, which it’s their community pharmacy or a chain drug store.
- **modify medication therapy management services available to seniors** - In order to save seniors money on their prescriptions and to promote safe use of prescription drugs, the bill would modify federal medication therapy management services after The Wyoming PharmAssist Program, which directly connects patients with registered pharmacists to review their medications for possible drug interactions and duplications.

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