



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI MAKES THIRD ATTEMPT TO PASS RYAN WHITE CARE ACT; LIVES THREATENED BY OBSTRUCTION FROM HANDFUL OF SENATORS***

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today condemned efforts by a handful of Senators blocking passage of the “Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resource Emergency Act,” (RWCA) and their attempts to delay implementation of a more equitable distribution of funds to combat HIV/AIDS where the disease is growing most.

“New York and New Jersey are stealing the futures from those with HIV,” Enzi said. “These Senators are from states that are grossly overpaid under current law, yet they are fighting to protect the status quo for another year and preserve a funding formula that is failing millions of Americans from other states whose lives are in danger. People are dying and we need to act today, not tomorrow, not next month.”

For the third time this week, Enzi took to the Senate floor attempting to win approval of RWCA, which would increase overall investment in Ryan White programs by \$1.3 billion over 5 years. The bill would also revise flawed funding formulas, which currently favor states with urban areas and a longer history of AIDS infections over states where the disease is now spreading most rampantly. It better targets funding so that infected persons have better access to high quality health care, improves accountability for health outcomes, and ensures more equitable treatment opportunities for all persons with HIV/AIDS. Each attempt to pass the bill has been blocked by Democratic Senators.

“Holding up passage of this bill is wrong and the arguments made by opponents of this bill don’t hold water,” Enzi said. “My colleagues and I have heard of people on waiting lists that cannot get the drugs they need because the money does not follow the person. The enormous disparities between treatment options in different states – disparities that are a direct result of funding inequities – are fundamentally unfair, unjust, and unacceptable. This bill readjusts that so that the people who need the drugs get the drugs. It sounds like a basic American principle to me.”

If the law is not reauthorized by September 30, several states, including California, Massachusetts, Maryland, Illinois, and the District of Columbia will receive drastic reductions in funding and the program that people infected with HIV and AIDS rely on for drugs and other services will not be able to provide them with the treatment they desperately need.

“This bill is critical to people all over the United States. There are HIV/AIDS families in every single state asking Congress to pass this bill and to pass it immediately,” Enzi concluded.

New York’s Congressional delegation, which is leading opposition to the bill, argues that changing the formulas would devastate their state’s treatment infrastructure. A closer look, however, reveals that the impact on New York, like other states with large urban areas, would not be so great:

- In 2006 the national average funding per AIDS case was \$1,613. New York’s average was \$2,122 per case – nearly 33 percent more per case than the national average.
- Under the corrected funding formulas, the national average in 2007 would be \$1,793, and New York’s would still be a significantly higher \$2,107 – just 5 percent less than the state currently receives.
- In 2000-2003, New York carried over an average a surplus of \$29 million a year in Title I and Title II funds.

The Ryan White CARE Act was initiated in 1990 to provide treatment and care for individuals suffering from HIV/AIDS who are in the greatest need of assistance. The legislation must be reauthorized every five years.

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