



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI: A VOTE FOR CLOTURE IS A VOTE FOR SMALL BUSINESSES  
AND WORKING FAMILIES***

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today said the Senate has rejected a partisan, one-sided approach to raise the minimum wage and voted to move forward a bipartisan, fair and balanced minimum wage increase that supports both working families and the small businesses that will face the greatest difficulties in meeting a federally mandated wage hike.

“Raising the minimum wage without providing relief for the small businesses that must pay for that increase is simply not an option,” Enzi said. “In the long run, we simply cannot claim to be helping workers while at the same time we hurt the businesses that employ them.

“A vote for cloture is a vote for small businesses and working families. It is a vote for a well balanced and bipartisan solution.”

The Senate approved today the motion to file cloture on the Baucus Substitute Amendment to H.R. 2, the minimum wage bill. The Senate can now proceed to a final vote on that amendment, which couples an increase in the federal wage from \$5.15 an hour to \$7.25 an hour with targeted tax and regulatory relief for small businesses.

“In addressing minimum wage we have rejected the misguided notion that it be a ‘clean bill,’ because it is not a ‘clean’ issue. While pretending that economics or social issues are simple often makes for great rhetoric, and always makes for great politics, it seldom makes for responsible policy. Around here, ‘clean,’ more often than not, simply means ‘do it my way’ and does not respect the democratic process of the Senate and allowing the Senate to work its will.

“I am pleased that we rejected such false simplicity here and chose the course of coupling an increased wage with provisions that will assist those small business employers that will face the greatest difficulties in paying such increased costs. I hope we do not forget the wisdom of this approach as we address other workplace, economic and social issues.”

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR MICHAEL B. ENZI REGARDING  
THE BAUCUS SUBSTITUTE TO H.R.2,  
THE MINIMUM WAGE HIKE AND SMALL BUSINESS TAX INCENTIVE  
PACKAGE  
1/30/07

Mr. President, I rise today to speak in support of the motion to file cloture on the Baucus Substitute to HR.2. Around the noon hour today, we will be voting to end debate on the minimum wage bill. Regardless of how that vote turns out, I believe the direction that this body has decided upon with regard to the minimum wage is clear. Raising the minimum wage without providing relief for the small businesses that must pay for that increase is simply not an option.

We here in the Senate recognize that small businesses have been the steady engine of our growing economy, and that they have been the source of new job creation. America's working families rely on small businesses and vice versa. I am proud that this body has chosen a path which attempts to preserve this segment of the economy which employs so many working men and women.

The Senate has recognized that our economy is interdependent. One simply cannot credibly claim to be helping workers while at the same time hurting the businesses that employ them. Recognition of this simple fact is the reason why the bill before this body couples a raise in the minimum wage with relief to those businesses and their working families that will face the most difficulty in meeting the mandate. This body has also recognized the even simpler fact that a raise in the minimum wage is of no benefit to a worker without a job, or a job seeker without a prospect. I would take this occasion to urge that these simple real world truths be recognized by our colleagues in the other chamber.

Unquestionably, as this Congress moves forward we will need to confront a range of issues facing working families – the rising cost of health insurance and the availability of such insurance, the necessity and costs of education and job-training, and the desire to achieve an appropriate balance between work and family life. These are important issues, and the way in which this body has determined to address minimum wage should give us an outline as to the way such other issues might be approached as well.

In addressing minimum wage we have rejected the notion that it be a “clean bill”. Ultimately we did so because it is not a “clean” issue. By that I mean that neither the real world, nor questions of national economics and social policy, are as simple as some would like them to be. Quite the contrary, they are complex and interrelated. While pretending that economics or social issues are simple often makes for great rhetoric, and

always makes for great politics, it seldom makes for responsible policy. Around here, “clean” more often than not, simply means “do it my way” and does not respect the democratic process of the Senate and allowing the Senate to work its will.

I am pleased that we rejected such false simplicity here and chose the course of coupling an increased wage with provisions that will assist those small business employers that will face the greatest difficulties in paying such increased costs. I hope we do not forget the wisdom of this approach as we address other workplace, economic and social issues. None of these are simple; and none, no matter how laudable the end, are without costs or free from the danger of unintended consequences where, in an effort to do some good, we wind up causing great harm.

I am also heartened that in the course of this debate this body has begun to recognize what I know from my own life to be true - “working families” are not only those that are employed by businesses, they are also those who own the businesses. I have noted many times that I was a small business owner, that my wife and I operated mom and pop shoe stores in Wyoming. My story is not unique, particularly in today’s economy. I know that all small business owners have two families, their own, and the family of those that work for them. I also know that business owners feel the pressure of rising costs, the dilemma of difficult options, and the uncomfortable squeeze of modern life in *both* of their families, as much as many workers do in their own. I believe we have begun to realize this reality in the way we have approached the minimum wage legislation, and I do not think we should lose sight of it as we move through this Congress.

I would also note that while I am pleased by the overall approach this body adopted, I am somewhat disappointed that it was not as complete as it could have been. In the event cloture is invoked we will not have addressed a range of provisions that were offered, and that should have been considered and voted on. In this respect, I would note specifically those I mentioned late last week – Senator Gregg’s amendment on Employee Option Time, or “flex-time” for private sector workers, and Senator DeMint’s amendment dealing with the same matter, as well as Senator Burr’s amendment on health insurance costs, and Senator Vitter’s amendment that would have provided a measure of monetary relief for small businesses that make inadvertent paperwork errors in providing government-required information.

All of these were well-reasoned, would have provided benefits in addition to, or in counterbalance to a minimum wage hike, and all were entitled to due consideration and a vote in this chamber. We were not allowed to have a vote. Many have charged that the majority denied us a vote on these amendments because they would have passed, and that would have somehow represented a “win” for Republicans. Therefore, goes the theory, voting on these amendments was prevented. Whether true or not, the lack of a vote on these amendments does nothing but lend credence to the view that in the Congress partisanship too often trumps positive progress.

The reality is that good ideas do not simply fade away; and that if not here and now, then at some point in this Congress these and other good ideas must be given consideration

and must be voted on. Fairness demands it, and our responsibility to working families and small businesses requires it.

A vote for cloture is a vote for small businesses and working families. It is a vote for a well balanced and bipartisan solution.

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