



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI APPLAUDS HELP COMMITTEE APPROVAL OF BILL  
TO PREVENT GENETIC INFORMATION DISCRIMINATION***

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today applauded the Committee’s vote to approve the “Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act,” a bill that will prohibit discrimination by health insurers and employers, who may attempt to use genetic information to discriminate against persons with potential health problems.

“This bill prohibits genetic discrimination in health insurance and the workplace by barring health insurers and employers from requesting or using genetic information to take any action that would affect an employee’s health or employment benefits,” Enzi said. “This includes health insurance premiums, contribution amounts, and eligibility, as well as employment decisions like hiring, firing, job assignments, and promotions.

“The ‘Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act’ will help fulfill the promise of genetic research to save lives and reduce health care costs, by establishing basic protections that will enable and encourage individuals to take advantage of genetic screening, counseling, testing, and new therapies, without the fear that this information will be misused or abused,” Enzi said.

“I want to thank Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA), Chairman of the HELP Committee, for his leadership on this issue, and I look forward to sending it to the full Senate for a vote,” Enzi said. “I also want to thank Senator Olympia Snowe (R-ME), who has served as the Senate’s compass to keep us focused on this far-reaching issue that, if not addressed, will have long-term, possibly life-changing consequences for countless families and employers. I look forward to bringing this important bill before the full Senate for debate.”

“As a former small businessman, I am sensitive to the concerns raised by some in the business community that this legislation might impose new liabilities on employers,” Enzi said. “However, I am confident that when critics become familiar with the provisions of this bill, they will see that, in fact, it protects both employees and employers by setting a standard of conduct that is easy to understand and easy to follow. We are far

better off setting uniform, consistent rules of the road clearly and up front, rather than allowing them to be set piecemeal through litigation.”

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**Statement of Senator Michael Enzi  
Executive Session  
January 31, 2007**

**Organization of the Committee**

Mr. Chairman, I would just like to say a few words about our Committee. Again, I congratulate you on ascending to the Chairmanship of this Committee. We have worked in a bipartisan manner over the past couple of years and I look forward to doing so in the 100<sup>th</sup> Congress.

With respect to the organization of the Committee, I thank you for reaching out to us for a couple of changes to the Committee’s Rules. In addition, I recognize that the reorganization of our Subcommittees will bring health and education issues to the full Committee level. There is little doubt that these two issues will be the keystone issues for this Congress.

I am pleased that we are starting out on the Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act as the first piece of Committee business. This bill has enjoyed wide bipartisan support last Congress and shows our ability to work together to move key pieces of legislation that will benefit generations to come.

Thank you again as we begin our journey for this Congress.

**Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2007**

Senator Snowe, joined by Senator Kennedy and myself, introduced S. 358, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2007, which takes an important step toward eliminating discrimination based on genetic information from health insurance and employment decisions.

The bill is identical to S. 2283 of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, which passed the Senate 95 to 0 and S. 306 of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, which passed the Senate 98 to 0, both times with strong Administration support. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation once again.

Last week, both President Bush and Secretary Leavitt called on Congress to pass a genetic nondiscrimination law, understanding the importance of protecting this important, confidential information from exploitation.

This legislation would protect individuals from health insurance and employment discrimination on the basis of genetic information. Establishing these protections will

address serious concerns about the potential for discrimination, which will in turn encourage individuals to participate in genetic research and take advantage of genetic testing, new technologies, and new therapies.

It is time that we assure the American people that appropriate safeguards are in place to guard this important information. This bill will restore their confidence in the system and their faith that the process is fair.

This bill will also encourage scientific progress. The science of genetics may well hold our best hope for combating many of our worst afflictions, but fear of exploitation and discrimination has hampered its progress.

As a former small businessman, I am sensitive to the concern raised by some in the business community that this legislation could impose new liabilities on employers. I am pleased that we have been able to add several provisions to the legislation which protect employers who have done no wrong from frivolous lawsuits. The fact is, without this legislation the rules will continue to be created piecemeal through litigation. This produces considerable uncertainty, making it hard for employers to follow the law or predict when they might be sued. By setting clear, consistent, uniform rules, I believe this bill will *reduce* litigation risk.

I am aware that Senator Coburn has expressed some concerns about this bill, including the issue of unborn children. To be clear, this bill in fact does protect unborn children against genetic discrimination. That is certainly the legislative intent and what the law would do. I very much appreciate Senator Coburn's attention and medical expertise on this issue, and I am committed to working with him to find an agreeable means to clarify this issue before we bring the bill to the Senate Floor.

I invite all of my colleagues to join me in voting this legislation out of Committee once again.

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