



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI SAYS PRESIDENT'S BUDGET PROPOSAL REFLECTS
EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE PRIORITIES,
IS A GOOD STARTING POINT***

Washington, D.C. –U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, today said many of his education and health priorities he has in the 110th Congress were outlined in the President's \$2.9 trillion Fiscal Year 2008 budget request released today. Enzi pointed out that the President's budget request is only the first step in a long process that ends with House and Senate lawmakers setting a budget that serves as a blueprint for broad categories of spending.

“As important as this budget is in outlining the Presidents priorities, at the end of the day the House and Senate control the purse strings,” said Enzi, senior member of the Budget Committee.

The Budget Committees in the Senate and the House will take into account the President's ideas, but Congress ultimately establishes limits on total spending. Decisions on specific discretionary spending programs will be made by the Appropriations Committees.

“The President's budget request is an indication of his priorities and is a useful starting point for lawmakers. Congress will take into account the President's priorities, but the final document may look very different from the President's proposal,” said Enzi.

Congress typically approves the final budget by April.

Enzi was pleased to see that the President has signaled his support for an increase in funding for education programs. He said he will do his best to work with the other members of the HELP Committee to weigh all options with an eye toward the goal of making college more affordable and accessible for everyone with college aspirations. The budget proposal would increase the maximum Pell grant award to \$4,600 in 2008 and to \$5,400 by 2012.

“I support the President’s budget request that provides an increase in Pell grant funding to help make college more accessible and affordable for low and middle income students. I also support the President’s request for a meaningful increase for No Child Left Behind funding, a \$1.2 billion boost. This shows a commitment to renewing the law, which is scheduled to take place later this year,” said Enzi. “While I support these proposed increases in student aid, I will continue studying the budget request and evaluating how the administration proposes to pay for the new spending. While funding is important, it is not the panacea for all of the education woes in this country. The funding must be backed by sound policy. Schools and colleges must also play a part in accountability and in bringing down the cost of education. ”

This year the HELP Committee will be renewing Higher Education Act as well as the No Child Left Behind Act.

“The budget process is a good opportunity to review and streamline the laws to make sure programs are operating efficiently and that limited federal dollars are stretched the farthest. Evaluating the overall cost of a college education will be one of my focal points during the renewal process for these bills,” said Enzi, who helped author the No Child Left Behind Act.

Also on the HELP Committee’s agenda this year is the renewal of many laws relating to funding of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Enzi was pleased to see the President’s proposal included a \$151 million increase for the agency over the next year.

“The FDA regulates \$1 trillion worth of products each year, representing 25 cents out of every consumer dollar,” said Enzi. “An increase in funds for this critical agency can ensure that the products Americans use every day are safe and effective.”

The President’s budget also proposes a \$57 million increase in health information technology funding.

“Moving from a paper-based health care system to secure electronic medical records will reduce mistakes, save lives, save time and in the long run save money,” said Enzi. Last year the HELP Committee, under Enzi’s leadership, passed the Wired for Health Care Quality Act, and the Senate passed it unanimously. The proposal helps rural areas adopt cutting edge information technologies in electronic health records to improve patient care and bring cost savings for health care providers. Enzi is hopeful that the President’s support of portable, electronic health records will help lawmakers pass the legislation into law this year.

Enzi applauded the President’s request to balance the budget and is working with colleagues on new legislation designed to change the entire federal spending system so that emergency spending will be anticipated, spending deadlines will be met and there will be more time for oversight of how the money is being used.

“Any sound budget should have a plan to decrease deficit. I applaud the President’s request to balance the budget by 2012 and help stabilize spending,” Enzi said.

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