



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI APPLAUDS CALLS TO PREVENT
AND REDUCE UNDERAGE DRINKING***

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today applauded the U.S. Surgeon General's Office for issuing a "Call to Action" to encourage Americans to step up efforts to combat underage drinking and alcohol abuse .

"America's youth have almost unlimited access to alcohol – the National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that 95 percent of 12-graders perceive alcohol as readily available to them," Enzi said. "Alarmingly, most children and youth who drink obtain the alcohol from their parents or another adult. We must do more to inform parents and young people about the dangers of alcohol abuse and the effect that underage drinking can have on the health and development of adolescents."

The Surgeon General's Call to Action, developed in collaboration with the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA), identifies goals to reduce and prevent underage alcohol use. The report focuses on engaging parents, communities, and all levels of government in a coordinated national effort to combat underage drinking, conducting research into the impact of alcohol use on adolescent health and development, and providing that information to parents and young people.

"I would like to thank the Surgeon General's office, NIAAA, and SAMHSA for issuing this Call to Action and reminding us of the important challenge we face as we work to prevent underage alcohol use and abuse," Enzi said. "As we continue in these efforts, it is critical that we reauthorize SAMHSA this year so that this administration can continue to serve one of its critical functions – combating underage substance abuse."

Last year, Senator Enzi led passage of the "Sober Truth on Preventing (STOP) Underage Drinking Act," H.R. 864, a bill that takes aim at the disturbing trend of parents and adults providing children with alcohol by authorizing a national media campaign directed at educating adults about the dangers that alcohol poses to young people. It also enhances and coordinates ongoing efforts by various federal agencies, local communities, states, and schools to prevent underage drinking and alcohol abuse.

“We have a clear problem here, and there is no ‘silver bullet’ to solve it,” Enzi said. “Passing the ‘STOP Underage Drinking Act’ last year was a critical step in our efforts to combat underage drinking. I believe that the goals laid out by the Surgeon General, NIAAA, and SAMHSA represent the next important step to build on the provisions of that bill and stop our youth from abusing alcohol.”

The impact of alcohol on young people is as staggering as it is tragic: alcohol is involved in 36 percent of homicides, 12 percent of male suicides, and 8 percent of female suicides involving people under 21, and it contributes to the four leading causes of deaths among 15 to 20 year-olds. Young drinking drivers were involved in 69 percent of youth fatalities from alcohol-related traffic accidents in the year 2000, and in 1999 nearly 40 percent of people under age 21 who were victims of drowning, burns, and falls tested positive for alcohol.

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