



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI: 9-11 HEROES DESERVE FACT-BASED, LONG-TERM,
FISCALLY-RESPONSIBLE, HEALTH CARE SOLUTION***

Washington D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi, R-WY, Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP Committee), today said he is committed to developing a long-term, financially responsible solution for 9-11 healthcare “worthy of heroes.”

At today’s HELP Committee hearing titled, “The Long-Term Health Impacts from September 11: A Review of Treatment, Diagnosis, and Monitoring Efforts,” Enzi emphasized that federal efforts to assist 9-11 responders should dovetail with existing federal, state, city, employer, union and other benefits programs in order to harvest all available resources and leverage any well-designed benefit delivery systems already in place.

“To ensure the long term care of emergency responders and recovery workers who answered the call on 9-11, we need to know which illnesses are likely to affect which groups of people – now and in the future.” Enzi said.

“I was deeply moved by the courage and character of the 9-11 heroes, and I look forward to working with Chairman Kennedy, Senator Clinton, Mayor Bloomberg and others to find the facts, and make sure assistance is delivered to the people who need it most.”

Opening Statement of Senator Michael B. Enzi (R-WY)

**“The Long-Term Health Impacts from September 11:
A Review of Treatment, Diagnosis, and Monitoring Efforts”**

“Thank you, Senator Kennedy, for holding this important hearing. On September 11, 2001, we all watched in horror the destruction of the World Trade Center. We saw the worst of humanity that horrible day. In the hours, days and months following the attack, we also saw the depth of compassion that Americans are capable of showing each other.

I was deeply moved by the courage and character of the emergency responders, recovery workers, and volunteers from New York and around the country. When Americans cried out for help, these heroes did not pause to ask if it would be safe. They rushed to help their neighbors, and many paid a terrible price.

Today, we will consider the long-term health problems of these brave citizens who answered the call. As many will remember, the destruction of the World Trade Center created a huge toxic dust cloud. That cloud consisted of pulverized sheet rocks, metals, plastics, as well as many other toxic materials. Emergency responders and recovery workers breathed in the dust as they searched for survivors and cleaned up the destruction. In addition, many people living or working in lower Manhattan also were exposed to that dust.

Some people exposed to the dust developed pulmonary illnesses with asthma-like symptoms, sinus problems, and painful heartburn. For example, the Fire Department of New York currently provides treatment to 1,000 firefighters for 9-11 related pulmonary conditions.

I am committed to working with Senator Clinton, Chairman Kennedy, Mayor Bloomberg, and others to craft the best long-term solution for 9-11 heroes' healthcare. Our work is already underway. As Chairman, I instructed my staff, along with staff from the offices of Senators Clinton, Kennedy, Coburn, Murray, Voinovich and Schumer, to visit New York City last October to begin gathering facts from the Fire Department, many other City departments, the Red Cross, Bellevue Hospital, Mt. Sinai Hospital, New York citizens, and others. We've subsequently sought guidance from labor groups, and technical experts. I expect this collaboration to continue across the aisles and among all key stakeholders.

A good solution must rest solidly on the facts. I salute Mayor Bloomberg's World Trade Center Health Panel, which has made significant progress in compiling the facts related to the health effects of 9-11. It is a good starting point, but more work is still left to be done.

First, we need to learn even more about the affected population and about the health effects of long term exposure to the toxic 9-11 dust, including illnesses that may materialize later. I am interested in hearing from our scientific expert witnesses regarding which illnesses are likely to affect which people now and in the future.

Second, we also need to make sure our efforts dovetail with Federal, State, City, employer, union, and other benefits programs already in place. Several of our witnesses today will discuss how workers compensation, health insurance, disability, and related "benefits programs have served – or have failed to serve -- 9-11 victims. We should leverage any well-crafted benefit delivery systems already in place. It would be foolish not to harness all available resources.

Finally, the facts must determine the funding. Our witnesses will describe a complex healthcare challenge with a lot of moving parts. Let's not put the cart before the horse. I understand there are immediate, short-term needs, and we will certainly discuss that. But to find a responsible long-term solution, we will need to work together to assess long-term needs. We owe our heroes of 9-11 a long-term fiscally responsible solution."

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