



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI SAYS CONFERENCE AGREEMENT ON COMPETITIVENESS
BILL HAS BEEN REACHED***

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 that conferees from the Senate and House of Representatives have reached a bipartisan agreement on the “America COMPETES Act,” H.R. 2272, a bill to enhance American competitiveness in the 21st century global economy. Enzi served as a member of the conference committee.

“Fifty years after the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik*, we again find ourselves facing an urgent need to boost America’s competitiveness and enhance our education programs – particularly in the areas of math, science, and foreign languages,” Enzi said. “We need to ensure that every American has the opportunity to achieve academically and obtain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the global economy. The America COMPETES Act is a good starting point.”

“The overwhelming support for the America COMPETES Act and the bipartisan, bicameral agreement we have reached are proof positive that when we are willing to set partisan politics aside and work together, we can do great things for the American people. I was very pleased with the bipartisan spirit of this conference, and I hope the House and Senate pass the bill quickly so that we can send it to the President for his signature.”

The America COMPETES Act includes provisions that improve science, technology, engineering, mathematics and critical foreign language education in our nation’s schools, from elementary through graduate school. It supports improvements to teacher preparation programs, establishes stronger links between graduate schools and employers, and provides funding to support students trained at the doctoral level in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Enzi highlighted a number of key factors that illustrate the need to pass America COMPETES, including:

- **Business is spending billions each year to train new employees and remediate the educational skill gaps of those already in the workforce;**

- **The American workforce is aging - 77 million baby boomers are set to retire over the next several decades;**
- **Reading proficiency among 12th graders has declined to the point where just over one-third of them are even considered proficient readers. In addition, 47 percent of those with a college degree are not considered proficient readers according to the most recent National Assessment of Adult Literacy;**
- **The United States has one of the highest college enrollment rates, but a college completion rate average to below average among developed countries in the world;**
- **Four out of every five jobs will require postsecondary education or the equivalent, yet only 52 percent of Americans over the age of 25 have achieved this level of education.**

“The decisions we make about education and workforce development will have a dramatic impact on the economy and our society for generations to come,” Enzi added. “We need to build, strengthen and maintain our educational pipeline, beginning in elementary school. We must also strengthen programs that encourage and enable citizens of all ages to enroll in postsecondary education and obtain or improve their knowledge and skills. The America COMPETES Act is a good beginning. Now we need to finish our work on and pass the Higher Education Act, the Workforce Investment Act and the No Child Left Behind Act,” he concluded.

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