



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI STRESSES NEED TO ADDRESS THE HEALTH EFFECTS OF  
GLOBAL POVERTY***

**Washington, D.C.** – At today’s Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee hearing on climate change and public health, U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), Ranking Member of the HELP Committee, said that Congress should focus its efforts on solving the health crises around the world related to poverty and a lack of clean water.

“We face very real and immediate challenges with malaria, air pollution, and HIV/AIDS today,” Enzi said. “For me, the health effects of climate change are inextricably intertwined with poverty. What we do today to provide clean water, clean energy, and public health infrastructure in the developing world will reduce poverty, combat the health problems that many face today, and will lessen any potential future health effects that may come about because of climate change.”

Enzi noted that more than one billion people – approximately one-sixth of the world’s population – do not have access to safe drinking water today.

“I believe access to clean water is the keystone to our efforts to fight the health effects of global poverty,” Enzi said. “Water is a bridge to health and health is a bridge to peace and prosperity, for all people on this planet.”

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**Opening Statement of**

**U.S. Senator Michael B. Enzi  
Ranking Member**

**Senate Committee on  
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions**

**AClimate Change: A Challenge for Public Health®**

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I resent spending time to create a problem rather than solving ones we already know about. Taking this approach will stop some solutions while we debate climate change instead of solving health problems, regardless of their direct or indirect causes. In other words, although this hearing is centered around climate change, I think it makes more sense to focus on challenges that are prevalent today, like the need to provide clean water to prevent disease.

In the United States, and especially Wyoming, we are very blessed. We have an abundance of resources – natural, human, intellectual and financial. But it is not that way everywhere. We have a moral obligation to help those less fortunate than ourselves.

Whatever the health effects of climate change may be, Americans are resilient, and we have the resources to adapt. The witnesses today will talk about how climate change may cause disease, air pollution, and extreme weather events. Some of their assertions may come to pass; others will not. Regardless, I am not sure that the devastating impacts they describe will dramatically affect the people in Wyoming and in the United States as a whole.

We will develop drugs and vaccines to deal with new diseases. We will come together as communities and as a nation to develop new prediction tools to better understand weather risks. We will invent new technologies, such as sea water desalting techniques, to adapt to a changing world. Take another industrialized country, Australia for example. That country desalts at night with wind power. I agree that the decades ahead of us hold challenges. But we have to face and meet these challenges.

For me, the health effects of climate change are inextricably intertwined with poverty. What we do today to provide clean water, clean energy, and public health infrastructure in the developing world will not only reduce poverty, but will mitigate the health problems that many face today and will lessen any potential future health effects that may come about because of climate change. I believe access to clean water is the keystone to these efforts. Water is a bridge to health and health is a bridge to peace and prosperity, for all people on this planet.

In sub-Saharan Africa, climate change could make access to water even more difficult, and survival more precarious. But before we get ahead of ourselves on solving a problem that may come about because of climate change, we must remember that more than one billion people in the world today do not have access to safe drinking water – that's approximately 1/6th of the world's population.

We cannot wring our hands and say “the problem is too big” and turn our backs to focus only on ourselves. The technology exists to put clean water into the hands of all people. Simple interventions are available. I can name two – the Safe Water System and

Lifestraw. The Safe Water System is a suite of approaches suitable for the developing world. Lifestraw is a portable, personal instant water purification device that requires no power or spare parts, but can filter at least 700 liters of water.

By helping other nations become more prosperous in the cleanest, most efficient way possible, we will mitigate the effects of climate change. As a member of the Senate, I have long opposed any measures to deal with climate change by shutting down our economy and I oppose trying to deal with climate change by shutting down someone else's economy. It is the height of arrogance to tell impoverished people that they must remain impoverished because we developed in an inefficient way. Instead, there is an obligation to take what we have learned, and help others out of poverty. And access to clean water is the first step.

Yes, climate change could be a challenge for public health in the future, but we face challenges with malaria, air pollution, and HIV/AIDS today. We need to do more in many areas of public health, but we cannot be so narrow-minded as to focus only on ourselves. We need to shine the light on the global public health challenges we face to see our way forward.

I have a number of statements from outside groups, and I ask Unanimous Consent that they be entered into the record. I look forward to the testimony today.

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