



For Immediate Release

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***ENZI QUESTIONS FDA NOMINEE ON
FLU, TOBACCO, OTHER CRITICAL ISSUES***

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.), today said Dr. Margaret Hamburg, nominee for Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), if confirmed, will face unprecedented challenges to public health, from bio-defense and preparedness to possibly regulating tobacco, and added that Congress, FDA, and the Administration will need to work cooperatively to meet those challenges.

“With the current pandemic flu threat looming, many Americans are concerned about the supply of flu vaccines and treatments. What will you do as commissioner to help ensure that our country is prepared for this and other public health emergencies?” Enzi, Ranking Member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, asked at today’s HELP Committee confirmation hearing for Dr. Hamburg.

Enzi expressed concern about a bill to require FDA to regulate tobacco, which the HELP Committee plans to mark up next week.

“FDA approves cures, not poisons. Pending legislation would require FDA to regulate tobacco, a product with no health benefits, but with deadly risks. Wouldn’t it send a poor public health message to have an implied FDA seal of approval on a deadly product?”

“FDA resources are already stretched too thin – I have serious concerns about adding tobacco to the list of products the agency must regulate.

“I want to thank Dr. Hamburg for her previous public service and her willingness to serve again,” Enzi said. “I look forward to working with her, if she is confirmed, to protect and promote the public health, and to restore FDA’s status as the gold standard for regulatory agencies.”

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Statement of Michael B. Enzi (R-WY)

**Confirmation Hearing of Dr. Margaret Hamburg
to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs**

May 7, 2009

I would like to begin by thanking Senator Murray for calling this hearing today, and by welcoming Dr. Hamburg. I would also like to thank Dr. Hamburg for her previous public service, and her willingness to once again go through the process of Senate confirmation. The vetting process for executive nominees is thorough, and not without some degree of personal and professional sacrifice. Thank you for your willingness to serve.

Dr. Hamburg is an internationally recognized leader in public health and medicine, and an authority on global health, public health systems, infectious disease, bioterrorism and emergency preparedness. This background is especially important given that the swine flu (H1N1 influenza) has been on the front pages for nearly two weeks, and spread across several continents during that time. Dr. Hamburg, you have a tremendous amount of experience with emergency preparedness. Given this developing story, today I would like to learn more about your priorities for FDA in the area of bio-defense and pandemic flu preparedness.

The FDA has a very broad and critical mission in protecting the public health. You will be in charge of an agency that regulates \$1 trillion worth of products a year. The FDA ensures the safety and effectiveness of all drugs, biological products such as vaccines, medical devices, and animal drugs and feed. It also oversees the safety of a vast variety of food products as well as medical and consumer products, including cosmetics.

As Commissioner of the FDA, you will be responsible for advancing the public health by helping to speed innovations in its mission areas, and by helping the public get accurate, science-based information on medicines and foods.

Another core mission of FDA is approving drugs and ensuring their safety. However, the FDA can't ensure the safety of deadly products such as tobacco—it kills people, not cures them. Yet next week this Committee is set to consider legislation that would require the FDA to regulate tobacco. At a time when federal dollars are stretched and resources are limited, I have serious concerns about adding more statutory responsibilities at FDA. In addition, given the recalls of spinach, peanuts, and tomatoes over the past two years – FDA's resources are already stretched too thin on the food safety front. Dr. Hamburg, today I would like to hear more about your views on why the FDA should regulate tobacco.

I represent a state that has substantial agricultural interests. Food safety and food labeling are critically important to me and my constituents. I look forward to hearing from you what the agency plans to do to continue protecting the American food supply.

Dr. Hamburg, if confirmed, I look forward to working with you, Senator Kennedy and with the other Members of this Committee to protect and promote the public health, and to restore the FDA's status as one of the strongest regulatory agencies in the world. I have no doubt that, with the right leadership in place and with Congressional oversight, the FDA will again be the gold standard and our regulatory process the envy of the world.

I look forward to hearing your testimony today.

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