



For Immediate Release

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Enzi: HELP Democrats' Bill a Prescription for Failure

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.) today slammed the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee's rubber stamp approval of a healthcare reform bill that nonpartisan experts at the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) say will drive up health care costs, increase the national deficit by more than \$1 trillion and force millions of Americans to lose the health care they have and like.

“Based on everything the President has promised and said he wanted in a health care reform bill, I don't see how he could ever sign this bill. The HELP Democrats' plan makes a mockery of the President's promises,” said Enzi, Ranking Member of the HELP Committee.

“The HELP Committee bill is a complete failure that would make our health care system even sicker than it is today. I support President Obama's call for a bill that will bring down costs, let Americans who like the care they have keep it and not drive up the deficit, but this bill doesn't achieve any of those goals,” said Enzi, the Senate's only accountant.

Despite President Obama's promise not to raise taxes on Americans earning less than \$250,000 per year, the bill imposes new taxes on individuals without health insurance. The bill also includes new taxes and mandates on employers that CBO says will cause higher unemployment and lower wages.

“If you like your job, you should be able to keep it. It's hard for me to believe that with unemployment nearing double digits, Democrats on the HELP Committee would even consider putting more jobs on the chopping block,” Enzi said.

The bill lays the groundwork for a government takeover of health care, creating a government-run health plan that many Americans would be forced onto, and giving Washington bureaucrats the power to ration health care.

“No Washington bureaucrat should be able to deny or delay your care,” Enzi said. “That's not the kind of coverage Americans want for their families.

“If we can somehow stay on track in the Finance Committee, and not rush to meet an arbitrary deadline, I think there's still a chance we can have a good, bipartisan bill. The American people won't have confidence in a starkly partisan plan like the HELP Committee bill, and it will likely fail.”

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Prepared Closing Remarks of Senator Michael B. Enzi
HELP Committee Health Care Reform Mark Up
July 15, 2009

Mr. Chairman, , I have been working to reform our Nation's broken health care system since I entered the Senate more than 12 years ago. I had high hopes that this would be the year Democrat and Republican members of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions would work together to provide health insurance to every American. I urged my colleagues to start with a blank piece of paper and develop a bipartisan bill that up to 80 members of the Senate could support.

Unfortunately, the Majority had other ambitions, and the bill this Committee is about to pass will be a party line 13 to 10 vote, the same vote that has occurred on nearly every Republican amendment that has been blocked by the Democrat members. In 12 days of mark-up, we had 45 roll call votes on Republican-sponsored amendments, and only 2 prevailed. Speaker Pelosi's words have made their way across the Capitol and permeated this HELP Committee markup – "we won the election, we write the bills."

President Obama has repeatedly called for a health care bill that will reduce costs. He has called for a bill that will help every American get access to quality health care. A bill that allows people who like the care they have keep it. A bill that will not increase the deficit. Republicans strongly support these goals; unfortunately this bill does not meet them.

I wonder what candidate Obama's reaction on the campaign trail would have been had this bill passed out of this committee last summer, rather than this summer. I wonder how the former Senator from Illinois would have voted given the stark differences between this bill and his campaign proposal.

In my view, and graded on the criteria specified by the President, the bill before this Committee fails on all counts. This bill breaks the President's promises and falls short on achieving the common sense goals that Republicans and the President share. Instead:

This partisan bill adds \$1 trillion to the deficit. Despite the President's promise that health care reform "must and will be deficit neutral," the bill increases the deficit by more than \$1 trillion over 10 years. This on the heels of news last week from the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office that the federal budget deficit was \$ 1.1 trillion for the first nine month of Fiscal Year 2009. That is more that \$800 billion greater than the deficit recorded in the same months last year. According to the CBO, this bill would bend the cost curve the wrong way, driving up the cost of health insurance for most Americans and increasing total spending on health care. The first word in the title of this bill is "Affordable." Unfortunately, with a trillion dollar price-tag, this bill is anything but affordable.

This partisan bill breaks the President's promise "if you like the care you have now, you can keep it". CBO has reported that the bill would force millions of Americans to lose the health care plans they have and like now.

This partisan bill kills jobs and cuts wages. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office concludes that this bill will result in lower wages and higher unemployment. These job and wage cuts would hit low-income workers, women and minorities hardest. It's hard to believe that with unemployment at a generational high, Democrats on this Committee would

even consider putting more jobs on the chopping block. But if you look at the front page of today's Wall Street Journal, you will read the ominous title referring to the House health proposal: "Small Business Faces Big Bite: House Health Bill Penalizes All but Tiniest Employers for Not Providing Insurance"

Despite passage of the "stimulus" bill earlier this year, Americans are facing the highest unemployment rate in 26 years. At the same time, this Committee and the House Democrats are attempting to impose new taxes on small employers that will eliminate jobs for low-income, minority workers.

This partisan bill raises taxes at the worst possible time. Despite several amendments offered by Republican members, which the Democrats defeated on party line votes, the bill breaks President Obama's promise not to raise taxes on individuals earning less than \$250,000 per year. The bill would impose a new tax on people without health insurance.

This partisan bill mandates that Washington bureaucrats ration care. The bill lays the groundwork for a government takeover of health care, giving Washington bureaucrats the power to prevent patients from seeing the doctor they choose and obtaining new and innovative medical therapies.

This partisan bill traps low income Americans in a second tier health care program. Despite several amendments, the other side refused to give Medicaid patients the choice to access higher quality care.

The other side claims to support giving patients' choices, when the choice is a new government run health plan. At the same time, they refused to give low-income Americans the chance to get out of one of the worst health programs in the country. Instead of giving the lowest income Americans the choice to enroll in private insurance with generous subsidies, the Majority forced them to stay in a program where 40 percent of physicians will refuse to see them and the care they receive will be worse than what is available through private health insurance

Instead of reducing health care costs, this partisan bill spends billions of taxpayer dollars on new pork barrel spending. The bill would build new sidewalks, jungle gyms and farmers' markets, and creates an \$80 billion slush fund for additional pork barrel projects.

This partisan bill preserves the costly, dangerous medical malpractice system. Again, despite several blocked attempts by multiple Committee Republican members, the bill fails to reduce medical lawsuits, which drive up health care costs and force doctors to order wasteful tests and treatments to cover liabilities.

This partisan bill worsens doctor shortages. According to an analysis by the Department of Health and Human Services, the bill would worsen the nation's primary care physician shortage by providing fewer medical students with financial assistance in return for working in underserved areas.

Mr. Chairman, I don't even think we need to consult the Committee Clerk to know this bill breaks the record for the longest markup and the most amendments filed. Because Republicans were shut out of the drafting process, we were forced to file hundreds of amendments. I appreciate the acknowledgement of Senator Dodd, in his acceptance of Republican amendments, that the underlying bill was hastily written and filled with technical

errors. Unfortunately nearly all of the accepted Republican amendments merely tinkered around the edges. All of the substantive, bright idea amendments suffered the failing fate of a party line vote.

Mr. Chairman, I hope that when this partisan process fails, we can get back to work for all the American people and write a bill that garners the support of both parties. I passionately want to reform our health care system to improve quality, reduce costs and increase access. I think that this legislation fails to meaningfully address these goals, and sticks the American people with a bill that we cannot afford. For these reasons, I urge my colleagues to oppose this bill. I thank the Chairman, and I am ready to proceed to a vote.

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