



For Immediate Release

Contact: Craig Orfield
(202) 224-6770

Wednesday, August 1, 2007

HELP COMMITTEE ADOPTS ENZI AMENDMENT TO BAN CLOVE FLAVORED CIGARETTES

Washington, D.C. - The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee today accepted an amendment to ban clove flavored tobacco offered by U.S. Senator Mike Enzi (R-WY), the panel's Ranking Member. Enzi's clove amendment was added to a flawed Democrat bill, S.625, which would have allowed clove flavoring while requiring FDA to regulate tobacco but failed to give the agency the full authority it would need to effectively combat tobacco use.

"While I still believe that this bill is fundamentally flawed, I am glad we were able to add this amendment to strengthen it," Enzi said. "Unscrupulous tobacco companies use flavors like clove and menthol to get kids hooked on cigarettes. I am pleased that we have come to an agreement to ban clove, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to find a way to eliminate menthol as well."

The bill as originally introduced included clove in the list of banned flavorings, but the bill's sponsors later removed it. The Enzi amendment restores the ban on clove.

Clove oil acts as an anesthetic and numbs the mouth and throat, making the smoke seem less harsh. This makes it easier to take up the deadly habit, especially for young people. Enzi said that menthol has a similar numbing effect, and he hopes to work with colleagues to add menthol to the list of banned flavorings. Menthol flavor is used as a marketing tool by Big Tobacco to target and lure young smokers, and is widely consumed by young African-Americans.

"We know that Big Tobacco targets African-American youth by aggressively marketing menthol cigarettes to them," Enzi said. "So why does this bill ban almost every type of flavoring in tobacco products *except* menthol? Supporters of this bill claim they want to protect youth from the dangers of smoking, but the only people they will protect by continuing to allow menthol flavoring is Big Tobacco."

Enzi noted a recent study by researchers at the University of Massachusetts that demonstrates how quickly youths can become addicted to cigarettes. According to the study, young smokers can begin craving nicotine only two days after they first inhale.

About half of young smokers show signs of nicotine dependence even when smoking just seven cigarettes a month.

“I was shocked by how quickly young people can become addicted to tobacco, especially menthol flavored tobacco,” Enzi said. “This study affirms my belief that we must do more to make sure that children never start smoking. Unfortunately, the Democrats’ tobacco bill will not go far enough to do that.”

####