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CRAPO TO CONFRONT HEALTH CRISIS FACING AMERICAN MEN

Introduces legislation to focus on improving health of men

Washington, DC – An alarming proportion of American men neglect their health, and Idaho Senator Mike Crapo wants to change that by establishing an office within the Department of Health and Human Services to focus on men's health awareness. S. 1028, the Men's Health Act of 2003, sets up the Office of Men's Health, which will coordinate and promote men's health issues in a manner similar to an already active Office of Women's Health within HHS. Crapo, who has gained a strong reputation for health activism in recent years, authored the legislation as part of an educational campaign to significantly improve male health, longevity, and quality of life.

"There is a silent health crisis facing American men," Crapo said. "Too frequently, men ignore warning signs of disease and fail to get routine or emergency medical check-ups and attention. And when they do seek care, embarrassment sometimes prevents men from openly discussing health concerns with their doctors. For the last couple of years, I have sponsored health awareness booths at local fairs in Idaho. Without fail, each year, men stop into the booth for a cholesterol screening or prostate test at the urging of their wives or girlfriends, not at their own initiative. For many years, there has been a push for women to recognize gender-specific health concerns, which has resulted in a welcome decrease in many health problems encountered by women. Men need the same encouragement, maybe even a little more, so that they safeguard their health and make the most of modern medical technology and knowledge."

Recent statistics underscore Crapo's concerns. The American Journal of Public Health highlighted specific examples in its May issue: men have higher death rates than women for 15 leading causes of death except Alzheimer's; men's life expectancy remains almost five years shorter than for women; and men are more likely to get high blood pressure or cancer. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the rate of doctor visits for annual exams and preventive services is 100 percent higher for women than for men. Such exams include early detection tests like prostate specific antigen (PSA) and blood pressure and cholesterol screenings.

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According to the Men's Health Network, about 50 percent of all men did not have a physical exam or a blood cholesterol test in the past year. Sixty percent of men age 50 or older were not screened for colon cancer, while forty percent were not screened for prostate cancer in the past year. In Idaho, men are at greater risk for prostate cancer than the national average. In addition, men in the state suffer higher rates of cancer, cardiovascular disease, and chronic lower respiratory diseases, approximately one-third higher than women in Idaho.

"On average, American men live shorter and less healthy lives than American women," Crapo concluded. "The simple fact is that regular medical exams, preventive screenings, regular exercise and healthy eating habits will help save lives. Ultimately that means men will live longer with a higher quality of life. The reflection on society could be higher work productivity, reduced Medicare expenses, and spouses who enjoy a longer life together."

More information about the Men's Health Office and related information can be found at <http://www.menshealthoffice.info>.

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