

Madam Speaker, the private sector has raised the bar for customer service, and citizens expect the same from their government.

The American people rely on Federal agencies to provide important services and information, but these agencies often fall short of providing the customer service taxpayers deserve. H.R. 538 ensures the Federal Government keeps pace with the public's expectations and delivers better value to the taxpayers.

Agencies currently have discretionary authority to include "courtesy demonstrated to the public" in employee performance appraisals and to reward superior performance. While some agencies have incorporated customer service standards in employee performance expectations, they do not always require good customer service to the public.

Under this bill, OMB and agencies will develop performance measures and standards for agency customer service, with employees at all levels held accountable for achieving results.

Taxpayers should have high expectations of government. Agencies must deliver services efficiently and at low cost. Federal employees must provide effective service to customers. H.R. 538 will help ensure agencies streamline service delivery and improve the customer experience.

CBO has said there are no costs associated with this bill and, in fact, any savings incurred are due to be put toward paying down the Federal deficit. The Oversight and Government Reform Committee worked on a bipartisan basis to advance this legislation. I supported it when it passed by voice vote in committee, and I urge its adoption today.

I reserve the balance of my time.

□ 1250

Mr. CLAY. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 538, the Government Customer Service Improvement Act. This is a good-government bill that will improve the way Federal agencies interact with the people they serve.

I yield 5 minutes to my friend, the gentleman from Texas, the author of the bill, Mr. CUELLAR.

Mr. CUELLAR. Again, the gentleman from Missouri, I thank you so much for the leadership. And I certainly want to thank also Mr. WALSH from Illinois, who actually called me before this, which it is rare to have somebody from the other side call and say, How can I help you on this bill? So I find that refreshing and I want to say thank you for working with us and folks on this side of the aisle.

This bill, the Customer Service Improvement Act, is a bipartisan bill that has folks like MCCAUL, DUNCAN, GOODLATTE, and other folks supporting this particular bill. I certainly want to thank Chairman ISSA and Ranking Member CUMMINGS for their work, as

well as the members of the committee, and for passing it from the Oversight and Government Reform Committee unanimously in April.

The primary goal of the Federal Government is to serve the taxpayers. This commonsense, bipartisan bill seeks to establish, monitor, and improve customer service across Federal agencies. It ensures that taxpayers get the quality of service that they deserve when interacting with Federal agencies. Too often we hear that veterans are waiting for months to get critical medical services or that seniors are waiting for months to get their retirement benefits. These are just two examples where millions of Americans that rely on Federal agencies have to wait on vital services, which is why we must usher in a new chapter to accelerate response time and overall performance for a better customer experience. With a sweeping 79 percent of Americans dissatisfied with Federal Government service, according to the 2011 Federal Customer Service Experience Study, we must all work together to make sure that Uncle Sam and Americans work together.

This bill is simple and necessary. First, H.R. 538 improves customer service standards across the board. It does this by requiring the Office of Management and Budget to develop performance standards to determine whether Federal agencies are providing high-quality customer service and improving service delivery to agency customers. According to a 2010 GAO report, Federal agency customer service standards were often not made easily available for customers to find and access or were not made available to the public at all. In other words, we provide customer service; and if somebody wants to know how that agency is providing the service and the standards, it must be made available.

Second, the bill raises the bar for enhancing quality and access to customer service. This is accomplished by requiring agencies to collect information from the customers regarding the quality of the service. Again, this must be a way that we raise that standard.

Third, it puts a face on accountability. The bill requires that each agency designate an employee to be its customer relations representative. So when somebody is dealing with a Federal agency, we must know who they can complain to, who they must talk to in order to provide that customer service. Just like in the private sector that strives to provide excellent customer service that they bring in order to get more business, the Federal Government must do the same thing.

As the gentleman from Illinois said, there's no cost on this according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office. And, again, I would ask that we all work together to provide better service.

Mr. WALSH of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I urge all Members to support me in support of this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CLAY. Madam Speaker, again, I urge the House to adopt H.R. 538, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WALSH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 538, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN TERRORIST ATTACKS—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 112-138)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs and ordered to be printed:

*To the Congress of the United States:*

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, within the 90-day period prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. Consistent with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* the enclosed notice, stating that the emergency declared with respect to the terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, is to continue in effect for an additional year.

The terrorist threat that led to the declaration on September 14, 2001, of a national emergency continues. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect after September 14, 2012, the national emergency with respect to the terrorist threat.

BARACK OBAMA.  
THE WHITE HOUSE, September 11, 2012.

CONTINUATION OF THE NATIONAL EMERGENCY WITH RESPECT TO PERSONS WHO COMMIT, THREATEN TO COMMIT, OR SUPPORT TERRORISM—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 112-139)

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*To the Congress of the United States:*

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides