

would rather have a sense of purpose that the job that they are doing is very meaningful.

So, in essence, what it says is that if we get rid of the bureaucracy, our Federal employees will be more motivated to do a good job knowing that they are fulfilling a purpose. Yet we continue to throw bonuses at them over and over again, Mr. Speaker.

I just have a hard time going back home, as a number of my colleagues would go back home, and defending these excessive bonuses.

I would urge all of the folks here, all of my colleagues, to join with me in supporting this critical bill, the Common Sense in Compensation Act, H.R. 1541, as amended.

I yield back the balance of my time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. MORAN. Mr. Speaker, for the last four years, Congress has frozen federal employee pay.

And this year, we are at it again, extending the freeze.

Congress has also increased federal employee pension contributions for new hires without a corresponding increase in benefit.

And, through furloughs, we are essentially imposing a 20% pay-cut and continuing to punish these people who took an oath to support and defend our country.

All of this has added up—Over the last four years, Congress has reduced federal employee pay and benefits by \$118 billion. Per capita, that's nearly \$50,000 per employee—far more than any other American has been asked to contribute towards deficit reduction.

I take issue with the practice of continuing to punish a workforce that is predominantly composed of hardworking Americans, simply because they happen to work for all of us.

Your public servants have already been injured financially by a series of spirited provisions that are now law.

The bills before us today would strip the ability of managers within the federal government to reward our federal workers. In fact, they end up punishing some of our highest performing federal employees.

The Congressional Budget Office has confirmed that federal employees in highly skilled professions could earn much more in the private sector.

The Federal Salary Council issued a report in 2012 finding that federal employees were being paid nearly 35% less than similar occupations in the private sector.

Why do they choose public service? Clearly, not for monetary gain—they do it for love of country and the opportunity to make peoples' lives better.

But they have families to feed, mortgages to pay, and children to send to college. Where does it end?

From my first job as a budget officer at HEW through to my service today, nearly 40 years later, I have witnessed countless occasions where the federal government and federal employees have been a positive force, improving the lives of their fellow Americans.

No matter how many times the House majority says the government cannot solve problems, cannot create jobs or cannot help the American people, it will never be so.

Why does this Congress insist on continuing to punish federal employees for their service to the American people?

Bearing a disproportionate share of deficit reduction has directly hurt them and their families. It's time to stop singling them out.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1541, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GOVERNMENT CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2013

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1660) to require the establishment of Federal customer service standards and to improve the service provided by Federal agencies, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1660

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Government Customer Service Improvement Act of 2013".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) AGENCY.—The term "agency"—

(A) means an Executive agency (as defined under section 105 of title 5, United States Code) that provides significant services directly to the public or other entity; and

(B) does not include an Executive agency if the President determines that this Act should not apply to the Executive agency for national security reasons.

(2) CUSTOMER.—The term "customer", with respect to an agency, means any individual or entity that is directly served by an agency.

SEC. 3. DEVELOPMENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS.

(a) GOVERNMENT-WIDE STANDARDS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall develop Government-wide standards for customer service delivery, which shall be included in the Federal Government Performance Plan required under section 1115 of title 31, United States Code.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—The standards developed under paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) Government-wide goals for continuous service improvements and efforts to modernize service delivery; and

(B) where appropriate, Government-wide target response times for telephone calls, electronic mail, mail, benefit processing, and payments.

(b) AGENCY STANDARDS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Performance Improvement Officer for each agency shall establish customer service standards in accordance with the Government-wide standards developed under subsection (a), which shall be included in the Agency Performance Plans required under section 1115 of title 31, United States Code.

(2) REQUIREMENTS.—Agency standards established under paragraph (1) shall include, if appropriate—

(A) target call wait times during peak and non-peak hours;

(B) target response times for correspondence, both by mail and electronic mail;

(C) procedures for ensuring all applicable metrics are incorporated into service agreements with nongovernmental individuals and entities;

(D) target response times for processing benefits and making payments; and

(E) recommendations for effective publication of customer service contact information, including a mailing address, telephone number, and email address.

(c) CUSTOMER SERVICE INPUT.—

(1) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall establish a Customer Service Feedback Pilot Program. The pilot program shall include participation by the Internal Revenue Service and a minimum of two additional agencies selected by the Director and shall continue for a period of at least three years. The Director shall require participating agencies to implement a customer service feedback system to collect information from customers of the agency regarding the quality of customer service provided by the agency, including—

(A) information on the extent to which agency performance complies with the Government-wide standards developed under subsection (a); and

(B) feedback on the quality of customer service provided by the agency employee or employees with whom the customer interacted.

(2) LIMITATION.—An agency may not publish or make publically available information collected under the feedback system that is specific to a named employee.

(3) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IN PERFORMANCE REPORT.—In developing the performance report made available by the agency under section 1116 of title 31, United States Code, each agency—

(A) shall include the information collected under this subsection; and

(B) may include aggregate data collected under paragraph (1)(B) without including names of specific agency employees.

(4) REPORT TO CONGRESS ON CUSTOMER SERVICE FEEDBACK PILOT PROGRAM.—Not later than two years after the implementation of the Customer Service Feedback Pilot Program established under this subsection, the Comptroller General shall submit to Congress a report assessing the pilot program and a recommendation on whether such program should be expanded Government-wide.

(d) ANNUAL PERFORMANCE UPDATE.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall include achievements by agencies in meeting the customer service performance standards developed under subsection (a) in each update on agency performance required under section 1116 of title 31, United States Code.

SEC. 4. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL.

Compliance with customer service standards developed under this Act shall be included in employee appraisal systems established by agencies, including the performance appraisal systems referred to in chapter 43 of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 5. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT UNIT PILOT PROGRAM.

(a) ESTABLISHED.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall establish a pilot program, to be known as the Service Improvement Unit Pilot Program (in this section referred to as the "pilot program"), to provide assistance to agencies that do not meet the Government-wide standards developed under section 3.

(b) **PERSONNEL.**—The heads of agencies with expertise in change management, process improvement, and information technology innovation shall detail employees to the Office of Management and Budget to work on the pilot program, based on the expertise and skills required to address service improvement goals.

(c) **RESPONSIBILITIES.**—Under the pilot program, the Office of Management and Budget shall work with agencies that are not meeting the customer service standards developed under section 3 to improve and modernize service delivery to develop solutions, including—

(1) evaluating the efforts of the agency to improve service delivery;

(2) developing a plan to improve within existing resources and by drawing on expertise and assistance from other agencies (including the Office of Management and Budget) where necessary;

(3) monitoring implementation by the agency of the plan developed under paragraph (2) until the customer service standards are met; and

(4) submitting to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget monthly reports on the progress being made to improve service at the agency until the customer service standards are met.

(d) **REPORT.**—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall submit to Congress a report on the accomplishments and outcomes of the pilot program and any recommendations relating to achieving the customer service standards developed under section 3.

(e) **SUPPORT.**—The Administrator of General Services shall provide administrative and other support in order to implement the pilot program under this section. The heads of agencies shall, as appropriate and to the extent permitted by law, provide at the request of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget up to 2 personnel authorizations who have expertise in change management, process improvement, and information technology innovation to support the pilot program.

(f) **TERMINATION.**—The authority to carry out the pilot program shall terminate 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act.

SEC. 6. RETIREMENT REPORTING.

(a) **DEFINITION.**—In this section, the term “agency” has the meaning given that term in section 551 of title 5, United States Code.

(b) **REPORTS.**—

(1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in paragraph (2) and not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, and every month thereafter, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall submit to Congress and the Comptroller General of the United States, and issue publicly (including on the website of the Office of Personnel Management), a report that—

(A) for each agency, evaluates the timeliness, completeness, and accuracy of information submitted by the agency relating to employees of the agency who are retiring; and

(B) indicates—

(i) the total number of applications for retirement benefits, lump sum death benefits, court ordered benefits, phased retirement, and disability retirement that are pending action by the Office of Personnel Management; and

(ii) the number of months each such application has been pending.

(2) **SUSPENSION OF REPORTING REQUIREMENT.**—Paragraph (1) shall not apply to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management for any month immediately following an 18-month period in which the average

processing time of applications described in paragraph (1)(B) reaches 90 days or less.

(c) **MODERNIZATION TIMELINE.**—The Director of the Office of Personnel Management shall establish—

(1) a timetable for the completion of each component of the customer-focused retirement processing system of the Office of Personnel Management, including all data elements required for accurate completion of adjudication; and

(2) the date by which all Federal payroll processing entities will electronically transmit all personnel data to the Office of Personnel Management.

(d) **BUDGET REQUEST.**—The Office of Personnel Management shall include a detailed statement regarding the progress of the Office of Personnel Management in completing the customer-focused retirement processing system of the Office of Personnel Management in each budget request of the Office of Personnel Management submitted as part of the preparation of the budget of the President submitted to Congress under section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code.

SEC. 7. NO INCREASE IN EXPENDITURES.

No additional funds are authorized to carry out this Act. This Act shall be carried out using amounts otherwise authorized or appropriated.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the bill under consideration.

The **SPEAKER** pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

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

Americans depend on Federal agencies for certain vital services. Failure by Federal agencies and employees to process in a timely manner requests for help or information can result in frustration and financial hardship.

Poor customer service should not be tolerated at the IRS any more than it is at the private sector companies that must continually earn the right to serve its clients.

H.R. 1660 helps ensure our government is more responsive to the public by establishing customer service standards and performance expectations for each agency. It will enable citizens to provide direct feedback concerning specific agency employees—including at the IRS—and have that feedback considered in employee evaluations that impact the awarding of bonuses.

H.R. 1660 puts taxpayers first by holding Federal workers accountable for their interactions with the public.

I reserve the balance of my time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 1660, the Government Customer Service Improvement Act, and I yield myself such time as I may

consume. I thank Representative CUELLAR, my friend from Texas, for his leadership and his persistence in advocating for this bill.

The Federal Government provides services that significantly impact the American people. There are many dedicated Federal employees who perform their jobs with professionalism and distinction.

But there are areas in need of improvement. For instance, the Department of Veterans Affairs takes an average of 243 days to process a disability claim, and that is unacceptable.

This legislation would require the Office of Management and Budget to establish government-wide standards for customer service delivery, including target response times for phone calls, emails, letters, benefits processing, and payments.

I thank the chairman of the full committee for working with me during the committee's consideration of this bill. The bill we are considering today includes a pilot project to evaluate customer feedback systems. This was a compromise that will provide a more limited application than requiring every agency to institute their own individual feedback system. I hope the chairman will continue to work with us and all Members on both sides in moving this bill as we go through this legislative process. It is important that we ensure that the bill can achieve its intended purposes without negatively impacting the ability of Federal employees to do their jobs.

H.R. 1660 is a good government bill in the truest sense.

At this point, I would like to yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR), the principal sponsor of this bill.

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the gentleman from Massachusetts for his time, the gentleman from North Carolina also, and I certainly want to thank Chairman ISSA, Ranking Member CUMMINGS, and the staff, both the Democratic and Republican staff, for helping pass this bill out of the Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and all the work and the compromises we worked out to make sure that we got a bipartisan bill.

The primary goal of the Federal Government is to serve taxpayers. Currently, U.S. law does not require Federal agencies customer service standards, which is long overdue.

Every day taxpayers interact with the Federal Government on a regular basis, whether it is through the passport services to travel, student loans through the Direct Loan Program to pay for higher education, health insurance under Medicare to get benefits, or Social Security for retirement planning. All these services are vital to operate a good government, especially in times when Americans are relying more on these types of services.

Too often we hear veterans are waiting months to get critical medical

services or Federal employees experience long waits for their retirement benefits. These are just two examples, but millions of Americans rely on Federal agencies for vital services, which is why we must usher in a new chapter to accelerate response time and overall performance for better customer experience.

With only one-third of Americans holding a favorable opinion of the Federal Government, according to a 2012 report from the Pew Research Center, this is a necessity that we must change. The bill is simple and necessary.

First of all, H.R. 1660 improves customer service standards across the board. It does this by requiring the Office of Management and Budget, the OMB, to develop performance standards to determine whether Federal agencies are providing high-quality customer service and improving service delivery to agency customers.

Second, the bill raises the bar for enhancing quality and access for customer service. This is accomplished by requiring agencies to collect information from their customers regarding the quality of service and ensures that there is customer feedback, which will be used to develop the standards.

This bill also requires the development of a customer service feedback system, the results of which must be included in annual performance reports. Just like the private sector strives to provide excellent customer service in business, the Federal Government should also embed better service to bring efficiency.

H.R. 1660 has no cost.

This bill also has precedent. We passed this last session, and now we are hoping that with enough time that we are passing this, we'll get it over to the Senate so we can get it passed.

This effort to examine agency customer service is also bicameral. Senator WARNER and Senator JOHNSON dropped a companion bipartisan bill, as well.

H.R. 1660 seeks to operate a better Federal Government to provide the taxpayers—who fund them—better quality service, which they deserve.

I thank you for the time, and I encourage my colleagues to support and pass this bill.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Texas for his foresight in bringing forth this bill. I certainly appreciate the fact that we need to be providing better customer service to those who call in and talk to employees on a regular basis. I commend the gentleman from Texas for that.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LYNCH. At this point, I have no further speakers, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Speaker, we have had some vigorous debate. Really what this is about is the American people back home. It is about doing the responsible thing for them to see that

government actually works and that we are willing to stand up with the people back home to do what is best and right and return government back to “we the people.”

It has been great to hear some of the arguments from my colleagues opposite. I thank the gentleman from Massachusetts, the passion with which he has argued these points; and I look forward to working with him in a bipartisan way on some of these issues that he has highlighted.

I urge all the Members to join me in support of this bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. MEADOWS) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1660, 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.

STOP PLAYING ON CITIZENS' CASH ACT

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2769) to impose a moratorium on conferences held by the Internal Revenue Service, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2769

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Stop Playing on Citizens' Cash Act”.

SEC. 2. MORATORIUM ON IRS CONFERENCES.

The Internal Revenue Service shall not hold any conference until the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration submits a report to Congress—

- (1) certifying that the Internal Revenue Service has implemented all of the recommendations set out in such Inspector General's report titled “Review of the August 2010 Small Business/Self-Employed Division's Conference in Anaheim, California”, and
- (2) describing such implementation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROSKAM) and the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the subject of the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

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

H.R. 2769 offers the House an opportunity to go back to our constituents

who are asking this question when we are out and about at home: What in the world is the House of Representatives doing about the IRS scandals? There is a series of scandals that we've heard about that we've heard testimony from in both the Ways and Means Committee, on which I and the ranking member serve, and also the Government Oversight Committee—and my suspicion is maybe some other committees of the House. But when our constituents say, “What in the world are you doing?”, this bill that we are discussing is part of that remedy.

Here is one of the things that we have come to learn, Mr. Speaker:

We've come to learn that the Inspector General, the Treasury Inspector General for tax administration, did an audit; and in the course of the audit discovered that there were funds that were being misused in the context of conferences. Some of them were conferences that looked at, even in the most favorable light, even if you were looking at it in the most favorable light from an IRS point of view, were clearly gratuitous and an abuse and overspending. Some of this had to do with videos that were videos of parodies of the television show “Star Trek” and, actually, I think a bunch of nonsense. Some of it had to do with the purchasing of trinkets. Some of it had to do with overspending. So the Inspector General very clearly said, Look, there has to be a remedy here.

What the House is proposing in consideration of this bill is that all of these IRS conferences have to stop—hit the pause button on all of them—until the recommendations of the Inspector General are met. When the Inspector General then reports to Congress that those recommendations that would stop the nonsense have been fulfilled under a new set of criteria, the IRS says that they've met these, the Inspector General certifies it, then the conferences can go on.

□ 1530

I think it's thoughtful. I think it has been approached on a bipartisan basis. I have been very encouraged by the spirit with which the Democrats and Republicans on the Ways and Means Committee have worked together to investigate and inquire of the IRS but not just looking through the rearview mirror. Looking through the rearview mirror, yes, but also saying: What did we learn? How do we prospectively make sure that these things don't happen again?

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

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

The bills today and the bill on Friday on ACA are more about politics than policy—politics at any cost by the Republican majority. They want to change the subject from their inability to legislate and their refusal to go to conference on a budget so that we could implement long-term deficit reduction and not threaten our economy