

So this does bring about greater transparency. I think it's needed.

There are Members that have been very open also. And this is why we've gone to a prohibition vis-a-vis spouses. There are Members who have been very open about the fact that they pay their spouse on a commission for every dollar they bring into the campaign, and they make the same argument my friend makes, which is it's very out in the open. Everybody knows about it. People that contribute to my campaign know that a certain percentage of that is going to go to my spouse, and they make the same argument; it must be fine since people are aware of it.

But part of the problem is that people making the contributions are aware of it, and so they know that by giving an officeholder a contribution, they're also giving that officeholder a personal contribution through their spouse. And maybe that interest that wants to curry favor with that Member thinks, what better way than giving a contribution where I know actually a part of that's going to go directly into the pocket of the officeholder.

So that's part of the reason why we're here. And I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

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

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

I'm not sure that I would say that the financial pressures we're holding off in the State legislature in Texas is greater. They have a great deal more flexibility in many ways.

But the gentleman, as I understood to say, indicated there's no way to know when a campaign is paying family. And we just had to file financial disclosures. I had to list the sources of income for my wife. And as I understand it, there's also, you would, even if your children or other immediate family members have different names, I can see if there's something that's not required for disclosure in that financial disclosure form that we could have legislation and make that so that it heightens the transparency.

What I disagree with is the overall ban on allowing two people who sacrifice their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor to be able to work together full time to continue to run for office. And there apparently are areas that need to be addressed, that need to be considered. But I come back to the fact that apparently the reason this seems to be rushed into the room is because people more powerful would say, we'll do the little things that may make people feel like we're doing something, but we're not going to address the big issues that really are hurting this body.

But anyway, there are some things that apparently do need addressing. I'm all for transparency. I think sunlight is truly the best disinfectant. But since this bill goes much further than that, then I do urge a "no" vote on this bill.

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

Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. Speaker, I'll close very briefly.

I appreciate the points that my colleague is making. There is a need for transparency, even in the case of a spouse, particularly a spouse that may not carry the same last name as the officeholder.

But more particularly, if a spouse even has the same name, or a son with the same name sets up a company, the company doesn't bear the officeholder's name, there's no way for the public to know that that money is actually going to the family.

But more than that, you know, I think sometimes we get in the habit of thinking about how does this affect us; how does this affect our family; does this seem right to us, rather than how does the rest of the country view this. What does the rest of the country think about this? What does someone out in California or Texas or any of our 50 States think about this?

And I don't think they view it the same way we're discussing here today. I think they look at this and they say, gosh, when I send a contribution to this Presidential candidate or this Senate candidate or this congressional candidate, I expect that to go to the campaign. I don't expect that to go to their family. That's not right. And I don't think they would be moved by saying, well, you know, those officeholders, they often have a difficult financial situation themselves, and certainly many do. But I think that the public has the right to expect that when they support a campaign, when they support a candidate, that the funds go to the campaign, they don't go to the candidate or their family. Or if they're going to go to the family, outside of the spouse, that there's very broad disclosure so that the public can make an informed decision about how they want to use their resources.

That's the purpose of the bill. I urge my colleagues to support it.

Again, I want to thank my colleagues Mr. CASTLE and Mr. PLATTS on the other side of the aisle. I want to thank our chairman and our majority leader and our Rules Committee Chair for their support, as well as the Speaker.

Mr. LOEBSACK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the Campaign Expenditure Transparency Act. I am proud to be a cosponsor of this bill, which prohibits candidates' spouses from being compensated for campaign work.

To put it simply, no candidate or their spouse should ever use campaign contributions for personal gain. To do so would be to break the trust American citizens place in our country's political process.

While most candidates run their campaigns ethically and responsibly, even the suggestion that a single candidate has violated campaign finance regulations or has acted unethically in any way, taints the confidence the American people have in their elected officials. I strongly believe that we must act decisively to bring greater transparency and oversight to the campaign finance system.

I also support fully transparent and publicly financed campaigns. The priorities of my constituents are my priorities as a Member of Congress, and the political process should belong to them. Greater oversight and regulation is vital to ensuring the integrity of the electoral system. This bill is an important step, and I strongly urge its passage.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. BRADY) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2630, as amended.

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

The title was amended so as to read: A bill to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to prohibit certain political committees from compensating the spouse of the candidate for services provided to or on behalf of the committee, to require such committees to report on payments made to the spouse and the immediate family members of the candidate, and for other purposes.”

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

FEDERAL CUSTOMER SERVICE ENHANCEMENT ACT

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 404) to require the establishment of customer service standards for Federal agencies, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 404

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 "Federal Customer Service Enhancement Act".

SEC. 2. DEVELOPMENT OF PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND STANDARDS FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROVIDED BY FEDERAL AGENCIES.

(a) REQUIREMENT.—

(1) PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND STANDARDS.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall develop—

(A) performance measures to determine whether Federal agencies are providing high-quality customer service; and

(B) standards to be met by Federal agencies in order to provide high-quality customer service.

(2) REQUIREMENT TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT CERTAIN INFORMATION.—The standards under paragraph (1) shall be developed after taking into account the information collected by Federal agencies under subsection (b).

(b) CUSTOMER SERVICE INPUT.—The head of each Federal agency shall collect information from its customers regarding the quality of customer services provided by the agency. The information shall be collected through a survey, focus groups, or other appropriate methods. Each Federal agency shall include this information in its performance report submitted under section 1116 of title 31, United States Code.

(c) ANNUAL REPORT.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall issue

an annual report on the success of Federal agencies in meeting the customer service performance measures and standards developed under subsection (a).

SEC. 3. IMPLEMENTATION OF CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS.

(a) **CUSTOMER RELATIONS REPRESENTATIVE.**—The head of each Federal agency shall designate an employee to be the customer relations representative of the agency. Such representative shall be responsible for implementing the customer service standards developed under section 2 and the agency requirements under subsection (b).

(b) **AGENCY REQUIREMENTS.**—

(1) **GUIDELINES AND CONTACT INFORMATION.**—

(A) **IN GENERAL.**—The head of each Federal agency, acting through its customer relations representative, shall—

(i) issue guidelines to implement the customer service standards developed under section 2 within the agency, including specific principles of customer service applicable to that agency; and

(ii) publish customer service contact information, including a mailing address, telephone number, and e-mail address.

(B) **AVAILABILITY.**—The guidelines and the customer service contact information required under this paragraph shall be available on the agency's public website.

(2) **STATIONERY REQUIREMENTS.**—Each Federal agency shall include its address and phone number on any agency stationery. In the case of correspondence originating from a regional or local office of a Federal agency, the agency shall include the address and phone number of the regional or local office on the stationery.

SEC. 4. REPORT BY GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE.

(a) **REPORT REQUIRED.**—Not later than two years after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Comptroller General shall submit to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs of the Senate a report analyzing the information reported by agencies under section 2(b).

(b) **MATTERS COVERED.**—The report shall include—

(1) whether agencies are implementing the customer service standards;

(2) whether there is an increase in overall quality in customer service in the Federal Government; and

(3) any recommendations the Comptroller General may have to improve performance measures and standards for customer service in the Federal Government.

(c) **USE OF REPORT.**—The report may be used by Congress as well as the Director of Office of Management and Budget to update performance measures for customer service.

SEC. 5. INCENTIVES FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE.

(a) **AWARD PROGRAM.**—The head of a Federal agency may establish an awards program to pay a cash award under chapter 45 of title 5, United States Code, to employees for demonstrated excellence in customer service.

(b) **PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL.**—Compliance with customer service standards developed under this Act shall, to the extent practicable, be an element of a performance appraisal system referred to in section 5307(d) of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 6. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) The term "customer", with respect to a Federal agency, means any individual or entity, including a business, State or local government, other Federal agency, or Congress, to which the agency provides services or information.

(2) The term "Federal agency" has the meaning given the term "Executive agency"

by section 105 of title 5, United States Code, except that the term does not include an agency if the President determines that this Act should not apply to the agency for national security reasons.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, the Federal Customer Service Enhancement Act will require Federal agencies to set higher performance standards in delivering customer service. Sometimes we complain about how we are treated, but do not take any action. This legislation is a step in the right direction, and we are doing something about the attitude of government employees.

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We have worked with the GAO, OMB, and the minority, and in particular the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) to improve this bill. We have also incorporated the language from H.R. 2324, a bill sponsored by the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN), who shares the same birthday with me.

This bill is important to highlight the importance that the Congress puts on better customer service. I support its passage and urge my colleagues to do the same.

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

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

First of all, I would like to commend Chairman WAXMAN and my colleague from New York, my longtime friend (Mr. TOWNS), with whom, as he noted, we share the same birthday, for bringing the Federal Customer Service Enhancement Act to the floor today. I also appreciate their efforts as it moved through committee, and I certainly want to thank him for accommodating comments and concerns we raised during the process. As Chairman TOWNS noted, he has included and the chairman has included in this legislation concerns that the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) raised and also has included legislation that I introduced, H.R. 2324, in this bill. As a cosponsor of this legislation, I fully support this bill, and I want to commend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR) for his hard work on this, and we will hear from him in just a few minutes.

The Oversight and Government Reform Committee has always sought to improve the performance of the Federal Government, and as anyone who

has ever worked in the private sector knows, customer service is the life-blood of any organization.

As we often look to the private sector for best practices, I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, that we in the Federal Government are able to capture data on how each and every agency is doing in regard to customer service. The administration continues to work with us on this bill so no unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles are created.

This bill recognizes the importance of the agencies within the Federal Government to be responsive to their various constituencies and for the government to remain accountable to the American taxpayer. Responsiveness and accountability are the things that really are behind this legislation.

I particularly appreciate section 2 in which the Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall develop standards and measures of customer service performance. I think that is very important and is a first. It has not been done before within the Federal Government. And especially, also, the parts in section 3, which incorporate much of my legislation and require customer service information such as a mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address. It requires the appointment of a customer relations representative. And one thing I have noticed, I have gotten letters from Federal Departments and agencies in the past, and there has been no mailing address, no phone number on there, almost as if the people within that Department or agency really didn't want to be bothered by their bosses, bothered by the American people calling on them or finding out how to contact them, and making it very difficult for many people to do so.

Section 5 is another good section of this bill and really is the result of the work of the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX), and that includes some incentives in there to do better jobs. Bonuses to Federal employees will now be based, at least in part, on customer service.

So with all of these things, I think this is good legislation. I ask my colleagues to join me in support of H.R. 404.

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

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR), who has worked very hard on this legislation. And let me also add, it has been a delight to work with him and his staff to bring this legislation to the floor.

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding the time on H.R. 404.

First of all, I want to start off by thanking Chairman TOWNS and his staff. The outstanding work that the chairman has done on moving this bill forward, I certainly want to thank him very much for the work that he has done. I also want to thank Mr. DUNCAN for the work that he has done because

apparently he has done a lot of work on customer service, and I thank him for putting those provisions in my bill also. I also want to thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina, VIRGINIA FOXX. I don't see her here. I know she has put a lot of time in, she and her staff, so I want to thank her in making this a bipartisan bill.

Today Congress takes a major step towards improving how Federal Government interacts with the American people. I think we all want a government that works with the people. I think we all want results-oriented government, and part of the results-oriented government is customer service.

H.R. 404 will raise the level of attention given to how the Federal Government responds to the American public. The bill requires the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the OMB, to develop performance measures to determine whether Federal agencies are providing high-quality customer service to all the agencies to make sure that they have those customer service standards in place. It sets in place standards for Federal agencies to increase the quality of customer service and enhances the access to Federal information and services, like Mr. DUNCAN said a few minutes ago. It is important to know whom we are dealing with at the Federal Government and to make sure that people can access that information and get the quality of customer service that they deserve.

The legislation includes accountability provisions as well as incentives to Federal employees who go above this requirement. H.R. 404 also ensures that the initiatives outlined in this bill achieve their objectives through the use of both external and internal reviews by Congress. That is the oversight that Congress will provide on the customer service provisions that will be provided by the Federal agencies to the American public.

I believe that this bill improves Federal customer service, and this is something that is long overdue. I ask for a "yes" vote on this bipartisan bill, H.R. 404.

Again, Mr. TOWNS, thank you for the outstanding work you have done on this bill.

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

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, I would like to just simply once again thank Chairman TOWNS and also thank the primary author of this legislation, Mr. CUELLAR, for their work in bringing this bill to the floor.

I urge my colleagues to support what I think is very worthwhile and timely legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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

Let me point out when complaints are not promptly resolved, frustrated customers seek redress in different agencies or at different parts or level

of the same agency, resulting in duplicate effort and compounding costs and a waste of time.

Just as costs rise when citizens do not receive reliable information in a timely manner, trust also erodes as citizens become frustrated with a non-responsive bureaucracy. Indeed, there has been a cumulative erosion of public confidence in government.

Please, let's work together to create a more responsive and more accountable government. So I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

I would also like to thank some folks. I would like to thank Congressman WAXMAN, who is the Chair of the full committee, in terms of his support and what he has done to help move this legislation forward. I would like to thank the ranking member of the full committee, Mr. DAVIS from Virginia, in terms of all of his support and help in moving it. I also, I think, indicated earlier on my colleague, Mr. DUNCAN, who has worked very hard to make this a reality. And, of course, I would like to thank Congressman BILBRAY, who is the ranking member on the subcommittee, for all of his support as well, and all the staff members who worked so hard, along with Congressman CUELLAR from Texas, along with Congresswoman FOXX. There have been a lot of people that really put a lot of time and energy into this to try to strengthen this bill. It might not be perfect, but I think it is a giant step in the right direction.

I urge all of my colleagues to support this legislation.

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 404, 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. TOWNS. 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 and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

COMMEMORATING THE 300TH ANNIVERSARY OF NEW MILFORD, CONNECTICUT

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 528) commemorating the 300th anniversary of the Town of New Milford, Connecticut.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 528

Whereas New Milford is located in Litchfield County, on the western border of Connecticut, in the Housatonic Valley;

Whereas the settlement of New Milford began in 1706, when John Noble, Sr., purchased a portion of land known as Weantinogue;

Whereas in 1707, Noble and his daughter settled in New Milford, followed by 12 other families;

Whereas beginning in 1774, New Milford demonstrated its support for the Revolutionary War by providing financial support to the servicemen and sending 285 of its 2,700 inhabitants to battle;

Whereas New Milford was a center of Underground Railroad work in Connecticut, with many of its residents offering their homes as places for slaves to take refuge on their journey to freedom;

Whereas the late 1800s marked the arrival of many new industries and businesses in New Milford, including the manufacturing of furniture, paints, and pottery;

Whereas in 1902, New Milford's worst disaster occurred when a raging fire completely destroyed the town's main business district on Bank Street;

Whereas the population of New Milford stood at 3,000 in 1880 and has grown to nearly 30,000 today;

Whereas at 64 square miles, New Milford is the largest town in Connecticut; and

Whereas New Milford has been modernized through commercial and industrial growth, while retaining its deep sense of history, scenic beauty, and traditional New England character throughout the past 300 years: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) congratulates the Town of New Milford, Connecticut, on the occasion of its 300th anniversary; and

(2) honors the Town of New Milford for its significant history, impressive growth, and considerable contributions to the State of Connecticut and the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) and the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DUNCAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

As a member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I am pleased to join my colleague in consideration of H. Res. 528, a bill that commemorates the 300th anniversary of the Town of New Milford, Connecticut. H. Res. 528, which has 53 co-sponsors, was introduced by Representative CHRISTOPHER MURPHY on June 28, 2007. H. Res. 528 was reported from the Oversight Committee on July 19, 2007, by a voice vote.

Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague, Representative CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, for seeking to commemorate the 300th anniversary of New Milford, Connecticut. I urge swift passage of this resolution.