

meetings are. The informal conversations, as well as the formal presentations and poster sessions and everything else that goes into it between scientists from different institutions, lead to new collaborations that have the promise of new discoveries. These are not fancy junkets.

Now, people often ask students, well, what is science. What's so special about science? Why does it work? Well, it works because one of its fundamental tenets is communication.

To be sure, there are various ways to have communication, but scientific conferences are critically important. In a recent op-ed by the presidents of the American Chemical Society and the president of the American Physical Society, they discuss, for example, an anticancer drug that was the result of collaboration between a team of scientists from three laboratories that took place at conferences.

This bill would hinder that kind of collaboration. Just about any scientific society in this country can give you examples where large numbers of federally sponsored researchers go off to conferences. It happens in plasma physics. It happens in microbiology. It happens in AIDS policy and AIDS research.

In a time when the Federal Government should be making science a priority, passing a bill that would make scientists jump through hurdles and get around impediments would, in fact, weaken American scientists, weaken American science, and impede the ability of American scientists to innovate.

That is not wise. This is not the way to build our economy. We should be investing more in research and development, which means, of course, investing in scientists, but also investing in their ability to pursue science.

We should be spending more on international conferences. We should be spending more on national conferences. We should be spending more on national laboratories. We should be spending more on public and private research and development for the sake of jobs, for the sake of our economic vitality, for the sake of the quality of life of Americans. This is not the way to build our economy and to foster innovation.

I urge my colleagues to vote "no."

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

I appreciate the concerns of my colleague, and I would only note that new technology, I think, has made it easier to teleconference and communicate remotely. This not only would save money, which is important, but it has already and will continue to increase the amount of collaboration.

Mr. HOLT. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. WALSH. I yield to the gentleman.

Mr. HOLT. Do you think that the Congress of the United States might do better if we don't meet in person, if we stay home and get on conference calls every once in a while and phone in?

I don't think so. I think the gains that are made in good legislation that come from conferences, as we gather here for votes, on the side between votes, is invaluable. The same can be said many times over for microbiology, for plasma physics, for—let's go through a long list.

Mr. WALSH. Reclaiming my time, again, I would say Congress, in today's day and age, where we hit \$16 trillion in debt last week, Congress, like all institutions in this country, needs to figure out how to work more efficiently and save hard-earned taxpayer dollars.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CLAY. Madam Speaker, I also urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.R. 4631, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WALSH. Madam Speaker, I urge all 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 Illinois (Mr. WALSH) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 4631, 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.

GOVERNMENT CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACT

Mr. WALSH. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 538) 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. 538

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".

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 improving service delivery to their customers; and

(B) standards to be met by Federal agencies in order to provide high-quality customer service and improve service delivery to their customers.

(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. Each Federal agency shall include

this information in its performance report submitted under section 1116 of title 31, United States Code.

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

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.—The head of each Federal agency, acting through its customer relations representative, shall—

(A) 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

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

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

SEC. 4. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL.

Compliance with customer service standards developed under this Act shall be included in the performance appraisal systems referred to in sections 4302(a) and 4312 of title 5, United States Code.

SEC. 5. 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.

SEC. 6. DEFICIT REDUCTION.

Any savings or reductions in expenditures resulting from this Act shall be used to offset the costs of implementation of this Act, and any additional savings shall be used to reduce the deficit.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WALSH) and the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CLAY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois.

GENERAL LEAVE

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

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

There was no objection.

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

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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