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House of Representatives

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Opening Statement

Ranking Member Raja Krishnamoorthi

Subcommittee on Healthcare, Benefits & Administrative Rules

Hearing on “Examining IRS Customer Service Challenges”

March 8, 2017

Thank you, Mr. Chairmen Meadows and Jordan, for holding this important hearing on a topic that is so familiar to so many Americans: IRS customer service.

Many of the individuals I represent encounter challenges when dealing with the IRS. These individuals are hardworking, honest Americans who are doing everything they can in order to comply with their tax obligations.

I have seen some of these individuals go to great lengths to fulfill their responsibilities: contacting the IRS and others for help, providing what seems like an endless stream of documentation to the agency and their employers in order to get on an installment plan, and in some cases, even digging into their hard-earned retirement savings to pay their outstanding tax debts.

So while IRS says that it is working hard to improve customer service, it can be difficult for many of these individuals to believe.

As our nation’s tax code becomes increasingly complex, the burden placed on those trying to maintain tax compliance also increases. It is absolutely critical that IRS have the appropriate channels to assist these well-meaning taxpayers and processes in place to rectify situations in which these channels fail.

For that reason, I hope we can shed some light on the processes currently in existence at the IRS for assisting customers before, during, and after the filing season. All customers deserve to have their questions answered in a timely, effective, and respectful manner. What does it take to make that happen?

As the Oversight Committee, we have a responsibility to ensure that government works effectively and efficiently, and is responsive to the citizens it serves. We should encourage agencies to take a hard look at themselves and identify areas that are working as well as those that need improvements. We should encourage agencies to adopt best practices from other areas of government and the private sector. And we should certainly encourage agencies to listen to feedback from those on the other side of the table.

Only after doing that can we can have a meaningful discussion of what needs to be done and what resources need to be devoted in order to make our systems succeed.

I hope that these are discussions we can have today, and look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.

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