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Memorandum on Customer Service

March 22, 1995

Memorandum for Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Improving Customer Service

In the first phase of this Administration's reinventing government initiative, I established the principle that government must be customer-driven. Executive Order No. 12862, ''Setting Customer Service Standards,'' called for a revolution within the Federal Government to change the way it does business. The initial agency responses to that order, including the service standards published in September 1994, have begun the process of establishing a more customer-focused government. For the first time, the Federal Government's customers have been told what they have a right to expect when they ask for service.

In the second phase of reinventing government (''Phase II''), this effort should be continued and integrated with other restructuring activities. The first question agency restructuring teams should ask is whether a program or function is critical to the agency's missions based on ''customer'' input. To carry out this Phase II effort and assure that government puts the customer first, I am now directing the additional steps set forth in this memorandum.

Actions. The agencies covered by Executive Order No. 12862 are directed as follows:

1. In order to continue customer service reform, agencies shall treat the requirements of Executive Order No. 12862 as continuing requirements. The actions the order prescribes, such as surveying customers, surveying employees, and benchmarking, shall be continuing agency activities. The purpose of these actions will remain as indicated in Executive Order 12862—the establishment and implementation of customer service standards to guide the operations of the executive branch.

2. Agencies shall, by September 1, 1995, complete the publication of customer service standards, in a form readily available to customers, for all operations that deliver significant services directly to the public. This shall include services that are delivered in partnership with State and local governments, services delivered by small agencies and regulatory agencies, and customer services of enforcement agencies.

3. Agencies shall, on an ongoing basis, measure results achieved against the customer service standards and report those results to customers at least annually. Reports should be in terms readily understood by individual customers. Public reports shall be made beginning no later than September 15, 1995. Measurement systems should include objective measures wherever possible, but should also include customer satisfaction as a measure. Customer views should be obtained to determine whether standards have been set on what matters most to the customer. Agencies should publish replacement standards if needed to reflect these views.

4. Development and tracking of customer service measures, standards, and performance should be integrated with other performance initiatives, including Phase II restructuring. Customer service standards also should be related to legislative activities, including strategic planning and performance measurement under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, reporting on financial and program performance under the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990, and the Government Management and Reform Act of 1994. Operating plans, regulations and guidelines, training programs, and personnel classification and evaluation systems should be aligned with a customer focus.

5. Agencies shall continue to survey employees on ideas to improve customer service, take action to motivate and recognize employees for meeting or exceeding customer service standards, and for promoting customer service. Without satisfied employees, we cannot have satisfied customers.

6. Agencies should initiate and support actions that cut across agency lines to serve shared customers groups. Agencies should take steps to develop cross-agency, one-stop service to customer groups, so their customers do not needlessly go from one agency to another. Where possible, these steps should take advantage of new information technology tools to achieve results.

The standard of quality we seek from these actions and the Executive order is customer

service for the American people that is equal to the best in business.

Independent Agencies. Independent agencies are requested to adhere to this directive.

Judicial Review. This directive is for the internal management of the executive branch and does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable by a party against the United States, its agencies or instrumentalities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

William J. Clinton

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 23.

Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With the College Press Forum

March 23, 1995

The President. Thank you and welcome to the White House. This is, as I'm sure you agree, a fascinating time to be in our Nation's Capital. We are now having a great debate about how we can best assure the American dream for your generation and for your children well into the next century. The choices we make here will have a profound effect on all of your lives.

This is an historic era: We have the end of the cold war, the dawn of the information age, a globalized economy, an explosion of entrepreneurialism, an enormous amount of opportunity. At the same time, we have profound challenges. We have almost 20 years of stagnant incomes in the United States. We have growing inequality of incomes based primarily on educational differentials. We have deep strains within our society and still profound problems related to the breakdown of family and community and the rise of crime and violence. We have challenges abroad in terrorism, environmental destruction, population explosion, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The issue we are most debating around here now in many different ways is what is the proper role of the National Government in working with the American people to meet our challenges. The old view is that Government is inherently a positive force and that there is a one-size-fits-all, big Government solution for every big problem. The new view that's all the rage around here is that the Federal Government is the cause of every problem and if we just didn't have one we might not have any problems.

My view is different from both of these. I ran for President to advance that view, and I still believe it is the proper one. I believe Government does have a role to play as a partner in meeting the challenges of the future with all of the American people. I believe the role of Government is to increase opportunity as we shrink bureaucracy, to empower people to make the most of their own lives, and to enhance our security at home and abroad.

We have to work economically to expand the middle class and to shrink the under class. We have to work to promote mainstream values of work and family and future. We have to do it with a Government that is smaller and less bureaucratic but still effective. The key to our future is our ability to create more opportunity and, at the same time, the willingness of our citizens to assume more responsibility. That's what I have called the New Covenant.

I agree that we have to cut outmoded Government, and our administration has led the way. There are already more than 100,000 fewer people working here for the National Government than there were on the day I became President. We're on our way to the smallest Federal Establishment since President Kennedy worked here.

But I also believe that this Government should invest in your future and in your capacity to contribute and to live up to the fullest of your abilities. Therefore, I support more investments in education and technology and training and empowering people to make the most of their own lives.

I also believe that if you look at the end of 2 years, the evidence is pretty good that our approach is right. We have reduced the deficit 3 years in a row for the first time since Mr. Truman was here. We have 6.1 million new jobs, the lowest combined rates of unemployment and inflation in 25 years, the first time in 20 years the African-American unemployment rate has been under 10 per-