

H.R. 6656, Stuck On Hold Act
House Veterans Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity
March 20, 2024

Remarks by Representative Ken Calvert (CA-41)

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Levin, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for holding today's hearing on my legislation, H.R. 6656, the Stuck On Hold Act.

I believe all of us share a bipartisan belief that veterans, seniors, and all Americans deserve the best customer service possible when they call a federal agency looking for assistance. While most agency leaders and employees share that goal, there are occasions where they fall short.

One area that has been notoriously challenging for many federal agencies is how they handle high volumes of telephone calls. Endless hold times can often become a nightmare for callers. This is especially true for older Americans who are less likely to be able to take advantage of information or services available online.

Currently, most federal agencies have yet to develop any government-wide customer service standard when receiving calls from the general public. Every government agency operates their call centers differently, resulting in a wide variety of customer service standards for the American people.

I introduced the Stuck On Hold Act to require both the Veterans Administration and Social Security Administration to implement a more robust, user-friendly call system. Both departments would be required to inform callers of their estimated wait times and, if the wait is estimated to be longer than 15 minutes, give the caller the option of receiving an automated call back when it is their turn in line. With the Veterans Administration and the Social Security Administration processing millions of claims a year, modernization will be the key to maintaining satisfactory call standards that Americans have become accustomed to in the private sector.

Veterans should not be left on hold praying that a federal employee answer is their call. They deserve better for the sacrifices they've made for their country. Let's give them some peace of mind.

Again, thank you for holding today's hearing. I look forward to working with the committee to advance this legislation.