

**STATEMENT OF
CONGRESSMAN WM. LACY CLAY, CHAIRMAN
INFORMATION POLICY, CENSUS, AND NATIONAL
ARCHIVES SUBCOMMITTEE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP OF H.R. 3548, “PLAIN
LANGUAGE IN GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS
ACT OF 2007”**

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2008

2154 Rayburn HOB – 2:00 PM

Good afternoon and welcome to today’s markup of H.R. 3548, the Plain Language in Government Communications Act of 2007, as sponsored by my friend and colleague, Congressman Braley.

Over the past two decades, the federal government has undertaken numerous initiatives intended to make government more effective, while also making its programs more effective and efficient.

One critical task was to ensure that our taxpayer funded programs and services became more “user friendly” by producing public information about all programs that is easy to understand and widely accessible for citizens from all walks of life.

The legislation before us today will help meet this goal by requiring federal agencies to use “plain language” in all government documents related to obtaining a government provided service or benefit. Examples of agencies responsible for providing such services or benefits range from the Social Security Administration to the Internal Revenue Service. Oftentimes, these services and benefits are vital to the well being of our citizens, making it imperative that publicly available information about them is clear, concise, and easy to understand by all.

The bill before us moves towards this goal by establishing a sensible definition of what is “plain language,” while providing clear reporting guidelines for agencies to demonstrate compliance to Congress in a timely manner. In short, this bill is a well crafted and sensible measure that will build on past efforts to make agency programs more accessible and transparent for everyone.

I thank Congressman Braley for working with the Subcommittee on this issue, and urge my colleagues to support passage.