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Legislation Introduced by Chairman Braley Would Ease the Burden on Small Firms

Washington, Feb 26 - What if instead of “push down and twist,” the instructions to open a bottle of aspirin were written in language so technical and dense that a doctorate in mechanical engineering was required just to remove the lid? That is the sort of situation our nation’s entrepreneurs face as they navigate a maze of intricately worded paperwork to comply with federal requirements. Today, the Subcommittee on Contracting and Technology heard testimony from Chairman Christopher Cox of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and from a panel of small business experts. All witnesses underscored the importance of “plain language” in federal documents, and noted that making clear communications a priority for government would help foster success for America’s small businesses.

“In just one year, the time that small firms had to spend filling out complex forms increased by almost 10%. In the business world, this means serious and unnecessary cost,” said Subcommittee Chairman Bruce Braley (D-Iowa.) “Every minute small businesses spend dealing with complicated paperwork is time they can’t dedicate to growing their business.”

Congressman Braley has introduced H.R. 3548, The Plain Language in Government Communications Act. His legislation requires the use of clear, easy to understand language in any government document relating to benefits or services. The bill would ensure documents are written in comprehensible language and are designed to be easily accessible to entrepreneurs who lack technical or policy backgrounds.

“Writing government documents in plain language will increase government accountability and will save small businesses time and money,” said Chairman Braley. “The Plain Language in Government Communications Act will ensure that entrepreneurs are able to quickly and easily understand government documents. Easy-to-understand government documents will lessen the burden on small businesses so they can focus their energy on growing our economy.”