



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:
Whitney Hewson
703-883-9000, ext. 130
whewson@meritalk.com

AMERICANS VOTE: MAKE FEDERAL CUSTOMER SERVICE A PRIORITY
Report Reveals Almost Half of Americans Would Pay \$552.3 Million More in Taxes Annually for Better Federal Customer Service

Alexandria, Va., August 31, 2010 – MeriTalk (www.meritalk.com), the government IT network, today announced the results of the “Uncle Sam at Your Service: 2010 Federal Customer Experience Study,” which examines American citizens’ expectations and perceptions of U.S. Federal agencies’ customer service. Whether through Federal student aid, tax processing, disaster relief, or even airport security – U.S. Federal agencies offer services to 307 million Americans¹ every day. Underwritten by RightNow, the study compares “typical” and “best” experiences interacting with both private companies and Federal agencies – and importantly, identifies opportunities for Feds to improve government service.

According to the study, Americans currently grade private sector customer service experiences higher than service received from Federal agencies. The study reveals that Americans want the Federal government to improve customer service, and many are willing to pay for the upgrade:

- 83 percent of Americans say that customer service is something that Federal agencies can improve
- 42 percent of Americans say they would pay an additional \$10 in taxes each year for better government service – \$552.3 million more in taxes annually

This new report comes shortly after the Office of Management and Budget’s “White House Forum for Modernizing Government” earlier this year, which called on agencies to set up a “community of practice” to elevate and professionalize customer service across Federal agencies. In

¹ *U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 U.S. population estimate,
http://www.factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFPopulation?_sse=on

order to allow Federal agencies to fully realize the administration's goals of improving customer service, the new study calls on agencies to focus on customer service basics by:

- Providing consistent service across all communication channels
- Responding to inquiries as quickly as possible
- Remaining compassionate and respectful to all citizen requests

Americans want problems solved quickly, clearly, and with courtesy. Currently, private companies outrank Federal agencies in these categories; however, some agencies are taking great strides to improve service. Despite some improvements, agencies must focus on expanding Web presence and moving more services online:

- 85 percent of Americans want Federal agencies to provide more information and make more services available online
- 63 percent of Americans who interact with agencies over the Web are satisfied with their experiences

Americans want Feds to improve response times and streamline information. Fifty-three percent of Americans feel that Federal agencies can reduce the time it takes to respond to requests and resolve issues. What do Americans think are Federal agencies' barriers for customer service improvement? Most say internal issues are the biggest obstacles, with 40 percent of Americans citing poor staff training, 38 percent citing lack of communication, and 36 percent citing lack of coordination as key challenges impeding improvements.

"The administration has cited improving customer service as a top priority, and Americans concur – many even expressing willingness to pay more in taxes to help improve the customer service they receive," says Kevin Paschuck, vice president, Public Sector of RightNow. "It's time that all Federal agencies make customer service a priority and re-evaluate their practices to ensure citizen satisfaction."

The "Uncle Sam at Your Service: 2010 Federal Customer Experience Survey" is based on an online survey of 1,000 Americans in July 2010. To download the full study, please visit www.meritalk.com/customerservice.

To help Federal agencies further improve their customer service practices, MeriTalk and RightNow will offer a complimentary Webcast on October 6, 2010 at 1 p.m. EDT. The Webcast will feature Federal agency perspective on the 2010 Federal Customer Experience Survey from Sheila Campbell, director, Center for Customer Service Excellence, Office of Citizen Services and Innovative Technologies, U.S. General Services Administration, as well as a private sector perspective offered by Scott McIntyre, former director of business development at Best Buy, one of the private sector companies cited in the study as providing top customer service. To register, please visit www.meritalk.com/customerservice.

About MeriTalk

The voice of tomorrow's government today, MeriTalk is an online community that combines professional networking and thought leadership to drive the government IT community dialogue. Developed as a partnership among the Federal Business Council, Federal Employee Defense Services, Federal Managers Association, GovLoop, National Treasury Employees Union, USO, and WTOP/WFED radio, MeriTalk is a community network. For more information, visit www.meritalk.com or follow us on Twitter, @meritalk.

###