

Ranking Member Peters Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing:
Nomination of Mr. Russell Vought
Date: January 15, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Paul.

Mr. Vought, thank you for being here today.

I want to begin by noting that this Committee has moved forward with this nomination on a very expedited timeline that has given Committee members a short amount of time to adequately review all the documents and information our committee requires before a hearing.

We have a Constitutional duty to thoroughly review the backgrounds, experience, and qualifications of nominees to lead our federal government agencies and provide transparency and accountability to the American people.

While I recognize that this isn't your fault, Mr. Vought, we all should be able to agree that the Committee needs sufficient time and access to this information to effectively carry out that responsibility. I will continue to review all the information and documents provided so far, and I intend to seek additional information about your background ahead of any Committee vote on your nomination.

The Office of Management and Budget or OMB is a critical office in the Executive Office of the President—with significant responsibilities ranging from developing and executing the budget to improving agency performance and reviewing regulations.

Mr. Vought, you have previously served as both the Director and Deputy Director of OMB. Unfortunately, your record and actions in these roles raise serious concerns about how you'll lead this critical agency that touches every single part of the federal government.

Above all I am concerned by the actions you took that demonstrate a total disregard for following the laws Congress passes particularly regarding how to spend taxpayer dollars.

The Constitution as part of the key checks and balances of our democracy gives Congress the responsibility to decide how federal resources should be spent. Federal courts have consistently affirmed this is Congress' role not the President's.

As a member of the U.S. Navy Reserve – and again as a member of the U.S. Senate I swore an oath to uphold and follow our Constitution. It is my expectation that if confirmed you will do the same.

Yet during your time at OMB, you consistently ignored laws passed by Congress that directed how taxpayer dollars should be spent.

In 2020, an investigation by the Government Accountability Office found that OMB, under your leadership, broke the law eight times by directing certain federal agencies to continue to operate during the 2018-2019 shutdown.

GAO also found that under your leadership, OMB violated the law by withholding vital security assistance to Ukraine that Congress explicitly provided putting our national security at risk.

In 2021, the Inspector General for the Department of Housing and Urban Development found that again under your leadership OMB inappropriately delayed disaster relief funding for Puerto Rico following the devastation of Hurricane Maria.

OMB knowingly delayed getting critical resources to communities following a disaster even after Congress passed a law specifically requiring the funds be disbursed on time. As communities across the country continue to face devastating natural disasters, including recent wildfires, I find it very concerning that you played a critical role in slowing down federal disaster assistance.

I'm deeply concerned by another action you pushed for during your time at OMB to replace nearly 50,000 nonpartisan, career civil servants with appointees whose only qualification was their political loyalty.

This would have removed employees who have years of knowledge and expertise and posed a grave threat to our national security. More than 70 percent of the federal workforce serves in agencies that are critical of our national defense and national security.

Last September this Committee held a hearing on this issue. We heard testimony from former national security officials who served under Presidents of both parties about how removing nonpartisan, career experts would slow down vital services to the American people make us less prepared when disasters or emergencies strike and undermine the public's trust in government.

In fact, you have even referred to the dedicated public employees who secure our borders respond to emergencies and ensure that Americans can get key services like Social Security checks on time as "villains."

Statements like that reflect a troubling disregard for the dedicated civil servants who work tirelessly to support our government and serve the American people.

Mr. Vought, you are one of the architects of Project 2025 which sets forth a blueprint for implementing these unlawful and dangerous plans under this new administration.

Leading the Office of Management and Budget is an enormous responsibility. Given your record, I have serious questions about whether you can be trusted to carry out the laws that Congress passes.

I appreciate you being here with us today to answer these and other questions about how you intend to manage the operations and budget of the federal government if confirmed to this role. Thank you.