

**Statement Of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.)
On The Nomination Of Mick Mulvaney To Be Budget Director
of the Office of Management and Budget
February 16, 2017**

Today, the Senate considers Congressman Mick Mulvaney to be the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). In this role, he will wield significant influence over budget priorities for the Trump administration, and his views will impact the day-to-day lives of millions of Americans. From protecting Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare, to funding education or supporting state and local law enforcement, Mr. Mulvaney will advise the President on what rises to the top and falls to the bottom. Unfortunately, Mr. Mulvaney has a troubling history when it comes to standing up in support of the programs that many of us care deeply about. He prioritizes budget cuts over the social safety net that stands between most Americans and insecurity in older age, or the ravages of poverty. It is for this reason that I cannot support his nomination.

Throughout his tenure in Congress, Mr. Mulvaney championed efforts to balance the budget on the backs of the middle-class. He supports raising the Social Security retirement age to 70 and reducing benefits. He believes we have to “end Medicare as we know it,” and wants to raise the Medicare retirement age to 67. His appointment will be a boost for those calling for block-granting Medicaid. Vermonters, like millions of Americans, rely upon these programs for vital assistance each and every day. If Mr. Mulvaney carries these views with him to the OMB, and there is no reason to think that he will not, the health and well-being of millions of Americans will be in jeopardy. Combine this with an administration that supports tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, and it is a recipe for disaster. We need to have a serious conversation about how to balance the budget, on that we can agree, but we cannot ask hardworking Americans to bear the brunt while the wealthiest one percent get richer. Unfortunately, the nomination of Mr. Mulvaney is a strong signal from the Trump administration that this is where they are headed.

As Vice Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am also concerned about Mr. Mulvaney’s record when it comes to the budget and appropriations process. The OMB Director is the Federal Government’s top manager—not only do they develop our Federal budget and spending priorities, but they also have government-wide responsibility to keep our Federal agencies operating efficiently and effectively. Whoever fills this position must have a deep appreciation for the role government plays in the day-to-day lives of the American people, and the appropriations process through which these programs are funded. Unfortunately, this nominee demonstrates neither.

Mr. Mulvaney has a history of advocating for government shutdowns for partisan political gain. In 2013, he embraced the term “Shutdown Caucus” during the House-led campaign against the Affordable Care Act which led to a sixteen-day government shutdown. He also pushed for a shutdown over defunding Planned Parenthood, calling it “one of those line-in-the-sand type of issues.” He has a record of opposing appropriations bills and opposing compromise. Congress has already imposed over \$2 trillion of cuts on so-called discretionary programs, cuts that will have consequences for the middle class for generations. Yet, Mr. Mulvaney wants even deeper cuts. This is a troubling background for someone being asked to wield great authority over the

budget negotiations for the White House.

I am equally concerned with Mr. Mulvaney's casual attitude towards the prospect of the U.S. defaulting on its debts. During his tenure in the House, he voted against increasing the debt limit four different times, calling the potential for a U.S. default a "fabricated crisis." This simply does not comport with reality. Perhaps his views will suddenly change when he transitions from Congress to the Executive branch, but when offered an opportunity to provide reassurance on this point, he again stated that he did not believe that "breaching the debt ceiling will automatically or inevitably" lead to "grave worldwide economic consequences." This is nothing short of alarming. The U.S. could reach the debt ceiling as early as March 15. Is Mr. Mulvaney willing to let our Nation go over the fiscal cliff on a discredited belief that default will not lead to grave economic consequences? To do so would be to gamble with our country's financial security and along with it the savings and retirement investments of millions of Americans. It is not a risk we can take.

Mr. Mulvaney's views on the prospect of a U.S. default are particularly alarming given that President Trump has made clear that he has no appreciation for our country's obligations to pay our debts. During the campaign Mr. Trump suggested we could renegotiate the terms of our debts, or even walk away from some of our obligations, and be none the worse-for-wear. The U.S. Treasury is not one of Mr. Trump's failing businesses for which he can simply file bankruptcy and walk away. The President needs a top budget advisor who will make these points clear. I do not believe Mr. Mulvaney is the right person for the job.

For all of these reasons I cannot support the nomination of Representative Mick Mulvaney to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

#####