



January 21, 2025

The Honorable Senator Lindsey Graham
Chairman
United States Senate Committee on the Budget
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member
United States Senate Committee on the Budget
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Graham and Ranking Member Merkley:

The [Coalition for Sensible Safeguards](#) (CSS), an alliance of over 200 labor, scientific, research, good government, faith, community, health, environmental, and public interest organizations that represent millions of Americans and advocate for effective regulations to protect the public, strongly urges you to oppose the nomination of Russell Vought for Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

As a coalition deeply committed to ensuring that strong regulations exist to protect the public interest and that the regulatory process is effective, responsive to the public it serves, and transparent, we are deeply concerned about Vought's nomination to once again lead OMB. Mr. Vought previously served as the OMB Director from January 2019 to January 2021.

Vought was a key architect of the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025, a dangerous policy blueprint that calls for concentrating extraordinary power in the Office of the President, thereby defeating our Constitution's system of separation of powers and checks and balances. Of particular alarm, he was the lead author of the chapter regarding OMB and regulatory policy, where the dangerous vision of unprecedented presidential power is articulated. If implemented, his radical and extreme ideological opposition to regulations that protect consumers, workers, the environment, and public health and safety will hurt Americans and their families and lead to

more deregulatory disasters. It is essential that the head of OMB understand and appreciate the role regulation plays in safeguarding the public and improving their everyday lives.¹

In addition to preparing the president's proposed budget, OMB also encompasses the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA). Over the last four decades, OIRA has superintended the implementation of a president's regulatory agenda by executive branch agencies. As such, Vought, if confirmed, would have direct authority over president-elect Trump's regulatory decision-making as well as its cross-cutting regulatory policies more generally.²

We oppose Vought for this important position because he has stated that he wants to vastly decrease funding for critical government agencies by defying congressional budget allocations; has articulated a fundamentally misguided view of government employees and experts that breaks with decades of precedent regarding civil service protections; and has pledged to allow President Donald Trump to exert more control over agencies that Congress specifically created to be independent of presidential influence.³

While the president and OMB have a large role to play in proposing funding plans for agencies, Congress has the ultimate authority to appropriate funds for agencies. These appropriations are "ceilings" and "floors," meaning that a president cannot spend more or less than the amount that Congress has directed. Not only is it clearly within Congress's authority to adequately fund critical agencies that protect Americans and make their homes, environments, and workplaces safe, and the marketplaces in which Americans operate fair, the American public expects that these agencies will fulfill the missions that Congress has already defined for them. If agencies are "defunded," they simply cannot fulfill their missions and do the jobs that Americans expect from them and need to live healthy and productive lives.

Vought has also articulated a plan to undermine and discredit our career civil service. "We want the bureaucrats to be traumatically affected," he has said. "When they wake up in the morning, we want them to not want to go to work because they are increasingly viewed as the villains. We want their funding to be shut down so that the [Environmental Protection Agency] can't do all of the rules against our energy industry because they have no bandwidth financially to do so ... We want to put them in trauma."⁴ These outrageous comments alone should disqualify this nominee to lead OMB. The unequivocal benefit of government experts and staff is extensive, and their work is essential to protecting us all.

Vought has a long history of supporting extreme deregulatory efforts. Vought said that "independent agencies and unelected bureaucrats and experts wield far too much power while the traditional legislative process is a sham. He extended that critique to agencies like the U.S.

¹ Chapter 2 of Project 2025, https://static.project2025.org/2025_MandateForLeadership_CHAPTER-02.pdf

² Project 2025, Chapter 2, https://static.project2025.org/2025_MandateForLeadership_CHAPTER-02.pdf

³ <https://www.govexec.com/management/2024/10/inside-key-maga-leaders-plans-new-trump-agenda/400607/>.

⁴ <https://www.govexec.com/management/2024/10/inside-key-maga-leaders-plans-new-trump-agenda/400607/>;
<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2024/11/trumps-pick-to-lead-his-budget-office-wants-to-use-it-to-deliver-on-magas-big-dreams/>

Department of Justice and the Federal Reserve, whose independence from the White House had long been protected by both political parties.”⁵

Vought has made clear that he takes a misleading, one-sided approach to assessing regulatory decision-making that looks only at costs to the exclusion of clear benefits.⁶ As the head of OMB, which gives him supervisory authority over the regulatory gatekeeping role that OIRA plays, Vought would bring this harmful and misguided regulatory vision, which would enable dangerous industries to seek to maximize profits at the expense of the public interest. Consistent with these anti-regulatory views, Vought used his chapter in Project 2025 to advocate for the REINS Act, a bill that is one of the most radical threats in generations to our government’s ability to issue rules that protect the public.⁷

Further, Vought’s track record as OMB head in the previous Trump administration clearly demonstrates that he is simply unfit to lead the office again. Inspector General investigations confirm numerous instances under Vought’s tenure where OMB inappropriately intervened to override experts at government agencies for political reasons.

First, OMB made key changes weakening regulations from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that would protect Americans from toxic “forever chemicals” *after* EPA had already completed work on the regulation but before the regulation was published in the *Federal Register*.⁸ Such an intervention is highly unusual and a violation of how the regulatory process needs to work to maintain integrity and the trust of the American people.

Second, OMB abused its regulatory review authority to block COVID guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from being released to the public, and then made changes to the guidance that contradicted expert advice from CDC officials when the guidance was finally released.⁹

Third, OMB blocked disaster funds appropriated by Congress to help Puerto Rico recover from Hurricane Maria over the strong objections from officials at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development with responsibility to disburse the aid, who claimed that “OMB’s actions were tantamount to holding disaster-relief funds ‘hostage.’”¹⁰

Finally, OMB prevented EPA career staffers from making public their technical and policy concerns with the Trump administration’s weakening of fuel efficiency standards by requiring such staffers to provide hard paper copies of those concerns during the OIRA interagency review

⁵ <https://www.govexec.com/management/2024/10/inside-key-maga-leaders-plans-new-trump-agenda/400607/>

⁶ <https://rollcall.com/2024/12/02/the-man-with-a-plan-to-upend-government-and-what-it-entails/>

⁷ <https://www.citizen.org/article/the-reins-act-makes-congress-the-publics-adversary/>; pg. 50 of https://static.project2025.org/2025_MandateForLeadership_CHAPTER-02.pdf

⁸ https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-07/epa_oig_20220707-22-E-0052.pdf

⁹ <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-oversight.house.gov/files/2020-10-05.RK%20to%20Redfield-CDC%20re%20OIRA.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.hudoig.gov/reports-publications/report/review-huds-disbursement-grant-funds-appropriated-disaster-recovery-and>

process instead of by email, thereby ensuring those concerns were not entered into the docket and therefore, could not affect the weaker fuel efficiency standards.¹¹

Given this pattern of Vought abusing his authority during his tenure as OMB head, voting to confirm Vought as OMB head again would be tantamount to condoning these abuses of authority and clear the way for the same to occur in the future.

CSS strongly urges opposition to Russell Vought's nomination to lead the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Weintraub". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rachel Weintraub
Executive Director
Coalition for Sensible Safeguards

CC: Members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Budget

¹¹ <https://www.oversight.gov/reports/audit/concerns-about-process-used-safe-vehicles-rule-demonstrate-need-policy-epas-role>