

February 3, 2025

Dear Senator:

The undersigned organizations urge you to oppose the nomination of Russell Vought for director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Mr. Vought was the OMB acting director then OMB director for the final two years of President Trump's first term, from January 2019 to January 2021. During that time, he was a key architect of "Schedule F," a plan to dismantle and undermine the nonpartisan, performance-based federal civil service. Moreover, his dangerous attitude toward constitutional principles and his public statements attacking civil servants demonstrate his unsuitability for such a leadership role in any administration.

Schedule F, which the new administration has promised to reimplement at the earliest opportunity, would authorize agencies to involuntarily transfer their employees into new positions stripped of due process protections, and make them fireable at will. This policy would allow any president, Republican or Democrat, to purge federal agencies of nonpartisan experts, leaving some agencies and departments gutted, while packing others with subservient ideologues. As OMB director during President Trump's first term, Mr. Vought sought to strip protections from 88% of the agency's workforce to serve as a model for other agencies to follow.<sup>1</sup>

Reclassifying significant numbers of federal employees into political positions ushers in a government system that prioritizes partisan and ideological goals over the constitution, rule of law, and serving in the public's best interest. It also enables an administration to punish employees who refuse to pledge their loyalty to a political party, ideology, or certain beliefs, silencing any would-be whistleblowers who may otherwise have come forward to reveal waste and fraud. If he succeeds, the people most harmed will not only include federal employees, but people in communities across the country who rely on basic services, benefits, and protections, provided by federal employees to live safe and healthy lives.

Americans widely favor maintaining a nonpartisan performance-based civil service. Recent polling shows that:

- 88% of Democrats and 87% of Republicans believe that a nonpartisan civil service is important for having a strong American democracy.

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<sup>1</sup> Erich Wagner, "OMB Reportedly Designates 88% of Its Employees for Schedule F," *Government Executive*, November 23, 2020, <https://www.govexec.com/management/2020/11/omb-reportedly-designates-88-its-employees-schedule-f/170275/>.

- 95% of voters believe civil servants should be hired and promoted based on their merit rather than their political beliefs.
- 90% of voters believe civil servants should serve the people more than any individual president.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond Vought’s plans to dismantle the performance-based civil service, Vought believes that “we are living in a post-Constitutional time.”<sup>3</sup> This translates into support for a series of policies that would make the president ever more powerful at the expense of Congress and the judiciary. Under his direction, OMB held up military aid to Ukraine prompting President Trump’s first impeachment, during which Vought himself denied a Congressional subpoena.<sup>4</sup> The Government Accountability Office concluded that OMB violated the Impoundment Control Act by withholding the assistance.<sup>5</sup> During his Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee and Senate Budget Committee confirmation hearings, Vought again affirmed his opinion that the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act is unconstitutional.<sup>6</sup> Recent attempts by OMB to institute a vast “federal spending freeze” underscore our belief that Vought will assist President Trump to undermine and subvert Congress’s power of the purse.<sup>7</sup>

Vought also supports the president invoking the Insurrection Act to detain and deport immigrants, as well as to target civil society protesters. The Insurrection Act allows the president to deploy military troops within the country in particular circumstances. Vought has stated that the president should be able to use the military to shut down demonstrations, holding up the protests that followed the murder of George Floyd in summer 2020 as a time when President Trump should have been able to deploy the armed forces. He has also worked in the past to create new, “legal” justifications for authorizing military force along the southern border by recasting migration as an invasion.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Partnership for Public Service, *The State of Public Trust in Government 2024*, (2024) <https://ourpublicservice.org/publications/state-of-trust-in-government-2024/>.

<sup>3</sup> Russell Vought, “Renewing American Purpose,” *The American Mind*, September 29, 2022, <https://americanmind.org/salvo/renewing-american-purpose/>.

<sup>4</sup> Isaac Arnsdorf, Josh Dawsey and Dan Lamothe, “Trump alumni warn he could deploy troops against Americans,” *Washington Post*, October 24, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/elections/2024/10/24/trump-military-president-election/>.

<sup>5</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Decision: Office of Management and Budget—Withholding of Ukraine Security Assistance*, B-33564 (2020), 1, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/b-331564.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> *Nomination of Russell Vought: Hearing before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs*, 119th Cong. (January 15, 2025), <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/hearings/nomination-of-russell-vought/>; *The Nomination of the Honorable Russell T. Vought, of Virginia, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget: Hearing before the Senate Committee on the Budget*, 119th Cong. (January 22, 2025), <https://www.budget.senate.gov/hearings/the-nomination-of-the-honorable-russell-t-vought-of-virginia-to-be-director-of-the-office-of-management-and-budget>

<sup>7</sup> Jeff Stein and Tony Romm, “Trump White House rescinds order freezing federal spending, reversing course,” *Washington Post*, January 29, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/01/29/white-house-budget-office-spending-freeze/>.

<sup>8</sup> Molly Redden, Andy Kroll, Nick Surgery, “‘Put Them in Trauma’: Inside a Key MAGA Leader’s Plans for a New Trump Agenda,” *ProPublica and Documented*, October 28, 2024, <https://www.propublica.org/article/video-donald-trump-russ-vought-center-renewing-america-maga>.

In addition to the concerns noted above, Vought’s long history of hostility toward civil servants should disqualify him from leading OMB. He spoke in favor of using the Holman rule to target the jobs or salaries of individual civil servants.<sup>9</sup> Vought has stated in videos obtained by ProPublica and Documented that “We want the bureaucrats to be traumatically affected. 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” and “We want to put them in trauma.”<sup>10</sup>

We believe that Vought’s record demonstrates that he is unfit to serve as OMB director. If you have questions or want to speak further about these concerns, please contact Joe Spielberger (joe.spielberger@pogo.org). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Project On Government Oversight  
ACCESS REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE  
Accountable.US  
Advocates for Trans Equality  
American Atheists  
American Humanist Association  
American Oversight  
Americans United for Separation of Church and State  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC  
Autistic Self Advocacy Network  
Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative  
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action  
Center for Media and Democracy  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)  
Clean Water Action  
Coalition for Sensible Safeguards  
Coalition on Human Needs  
Collective Power for Reproductive Justice  
Communications Workers Of America  
Council for Global Equality  
Court Accountability  
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)

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<sup>9</sup> Media Matters Staff, “Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) and former Trump official Russ Vought discuss using new House rules to target and remove the anonymity of individual bureaucrats,” *Media Matters for America*, January 12, 2023, <https://www.mediamatters.org/steve-bannon/rep-matt-gaetz-r-fl-and-former-trump-official-russ-vought-discuss-using-new-house>.

<sup>10</sup> Redden, Kroll, and Surgey, “‘Put Them in Trauma’: Inside a Key MAGA Leader’s Plans for a New Trump Agenda,” [see note 6].

Earthjustice  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Equality California  
Fair Fight Action  
Faith in Democracy  
FFRF Action Fund  
Free Speech For People  
Friends of the Earth  
Government Information Watch  
Greenpeace USA  
Human Rights Campaign  
Indivisible  
Japanese American Citizens League  
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights  
National Action Network  
National CAPACD- National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Employment Law Project  
National LGBTQI+ Cancer Network  
National Organization for Women  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Women's Law Center  
NBJC  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
Oasis Legal Services  
People For the American Way  
People Power United  
People's Parity Project  
Positive Women's Network-USA  
Public Citizen  
Sierra Club  
Silver State Equality-Nevada  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
Stand Up America  
State Democracy Defenders Action  
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Western States Center  
The Workers Circle