

1.30.25 Padilla Remarks at Budget Committee Vought Press Conference

Thank you, Senator Luján, and I want to begin by also expressing my condolences to the victims of the crashes last night, their families. Over the coming days, we'll hear the names, and we'll hear the stories of those that have perished. And yes, Senator Luján, it comes at a time where we're still grappling with the impacts of these unprecedented and devastating fires, plural, in the Los Angeles region. And I think that couldn't underscore the stakes here any more.

In a time of crisis, when people turn to not just local leadership, but to their federal government to be there for them, it is unconscionable that in those moments, there's efforts to promote funding freezes, hiring freezes, and in so many ways, go back on our fundamental obligations to our constituents and to the American people.

The past few days have been anything but business as usual. I agree: this is an attempt at a one-man government shutdown, brought to us by President Trump — an effort to block billions of dollars approved by Congress, directed by Congress, funds that would support families recovering from catastrophic wildfires, funds for law enforcement agencies that we rely on to keep our communities safe, funds to support nutrition programs for children and families that depend on us for their next meal. And you see a much longer list, just a very partial list here on the board.

But it's because of that real-world impact that Americans from throughout the country, they knew immediately what was at stake, and so many of them jumped into action, speaking out, writing our offices, calling our offices, to share their concerns, their questions, looking for guidance, looking for help.

And it's in that context that our Republican colleagues have the audacity, the nerve, to move forward with President Trump's nominee to lead the very agency responsible for the chaos and the heartache, and not even with the courage to agree to Senator Merkley's request to do this in a committee hearing room where we can have this conversation and vote in public. They're literally in a back room, not accessible, not visible.

What are they trying to hide? What are they afraid of? And so, yes, we are here in this room today because this kind of behavior cannot be business as usual. This is not the Senate. The stakes are too high. The impacts too real.

Now, as others have said, during his previous tenure at OMB, Russell Vought tried to repeatedly politicize, withhold, and slow the distribution of federal funds, including disaster relief, including foreign aid. Through his conduct, he has demonstrated that he holds himself above the law, above the Constitution, and above the funding decisions made by Congress. Maybe that's why President Trump likes him so much.

But for any of my colleagues, not just Democrats, but our colleagues on the other side of the aisle too, who have worked so hard to secure funding for their constituents back home, they too should be concerned. They too should be alarmed. Consider Mr. Vought's work from the first Trump Administration, his role in crafting Project 2025, and his arrogance during the

confirmation hearing last week. It's clear he is coming after Congress's constitutional authority, and he intends to repeat the events of this week over and over again if he's confirmed.

And I say it's "if" because there is still time. To my Republican colleagues: there is still time, you have the power to stop this if you have the courage to do so. Don't give up that power to President Trump. Use that power for your constituents and for our country. Thank you.