

Sessions remove himself from this matter immediately. If he does not, he will be breaking serious guidelines that have been in place for decades, followed by both Republican and Democratic administrations alike. To disregard or ignore these rules would be a major transgression by this administration, so early in its term, and would bode poorly for the future impartiality of the criminal justice system.

We now know that the President and the Attorney General are meeting today. Of course the President needs to meet with the Attorney General; that is important for national security. But until the Attorney General recuses himself, those meetings raise serious questions. There will be a cloud hanging over every meeting and conversation between the President and the Attorney General until the Attorney General recuses himself. We presume that they would not even think of discussing the investigation—that the Attorney General and the President would not—because if they were to discuss any investigation, it would constitute a massive, massive ethical violation.

Second, to reiterate, from the executive branch point of view, we expect the administration will order all records from administration, transition, and campaign officials to be preserved.

There is real concern that some in the administration may try to cover up its ties to Russia by deleting emails, texts, or other records that could shine a light on these connections. These records are likely to be the subject of executive branch as well as congressional investigations and must be preserved.

Third, campaign, transition, and administration officials must be made available to testify in public, under oath, on these issues.

It has been reported that campaign officials have had constant contact with Russian intelligence officials. They must testify.

Our caucus is united in these three requests, and we hope and expect our Republican colleagues to join in these appeals as well.

Senate Democrats are faithfully committed to keeping this issue above partisan politics. The gravity of this issue demands nothing less.

Throughout the history of this country, the Senate has come together to steer the ship of state through stormy seas when the times required it. Republican Senators like Howard Baker, Hugh Scott, and Bob Dole rose above politics during the Watergate, Iran-Contra, and Whitewater scandals to demand the truth. I am very hopeful my Republican colleagues on the other side will follow in that grand tradition. I am very hopeful the other side wants to get at all the facts, just as our side wants to get at all the facts.

I disagree with my friends on the other side of the aisle often on a number of issues—often, we disagree vociferously—but I have never once doubted their patriotism. This is an issue on which patriotism must prevail over politics because before we are Democrats or Republicans, we are Americans, with respect for the rule of law.

I have a hope and a faith that these reports and revelations will not pit the two parties against one another—that they will unite the parties in pursuit of the full truth.

I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of MICK MULVANEY, of South Carolina, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will now be 10 minutes of debate equally divided.

The assistant Democratic leader.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this may be one of the most important votes in this new session of the Senate relative to the Trump administration. It is a Cabinet position most people are not aware of, except if you work here. It is the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

This individual has the authority to write the President's budget, to establish priorities, and to review Federal spending governmentwide. It is a big job. It is an awesome responsibility. The way it is executed will not only lead to an accounting of our Federal expenditures, but it will have a direct impact on America's economy.

The choice of Congressman MICK MULVANEY of South Carolina for this job is wrong. It is wrong based on his record in the House of Representatives. He was a founding member of the Freedom Caucus in the House of Representatives. That is a group which led to the resignation of Speaker Boehner and continues to tie the House of Representatives into knots. Why? Because they have certain tactics they believe are credible tactics, which Congressman MULVANEY signed up for. Let me give one of them.

They think closing down the government is a good way to get people's attention. Well, they are right. It sure gets attention. But it does it at the expense of innocent people across America—taxpayers, those who are receiving critical programs, and Federal employees who are waiting for their paychecks. Congressman MULVANEY signed up for that.

Once every year or so we have to decide to lift what is called the debt ceiling, which is the indebtedness of the United States, the full faith and credit of our government—really, the credibility of our government when it comes to financing. Congressman MULVANEY, who wants to head the Office of Management and Budget, has said we can default on our national debt, and it really won't cause that great of a problem. That is just the beginning of some of his bizarre views.

He said he wants to end the Medicare program as we know it. He calls Social Security a Ponzi scheme. He has called for a 25-percent reduction in reimbursement for Medicaid; that is health insurance for children, the disabled, and the elderly in America. He also has questioned whether the United States as a government should continue to invest in medical research.

I am not making this up. This man who wants to set the priorities for the Trump administration and deliver the budget for America's future questions whether our Federal Government should invest in medical research.

When it came to paying for natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy—and it happens to every State—he decided that instead of coming to the rescue of people in an emergency, we would have to cut entitlement programs—Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid—as well as military spending, in order to pay for disasters. That is how shortsighted he has been, and President Trump has chosen him to write the budget for America.

I just have to say that his priorities as a founding member of the Freedom Caucus disqualify him for this job, in my consideration. The fact that he would repeal the Affordable Care Act without a replacement and leave some 30 million insured Americans without the promise of healthcare security for their families is another indication of an extreme point of view which should not be defining our government in Washington.

I have no doubt Republicans are going to march in lockstep, with maybe one exception. Senator MCCAIN has said he is going to vote against him. I think they will end up giving President Trump his man as head of the Office of Management and Budget. But we are in for a battle royal over the values in America. You can judge that values of a nation not by political speeches but by our budget.

Congressman MULVANEY will cut some of the most basic and fundamental programs of our government, would endanger our economy by questioning the full faith and credit of the

United States, and is prepared to shut down the government to get his way. That is not a responsible course when it comes to budgetmaking in a great nation like America.

I will be opposing the nomination of MICK MULVANEY to be head of the Office of Management and Budget.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, when I woke up this morning I was remembering some of the Old West stories about catching the culprit and hanging him. Then we got a little more sophisticated out West, and we said: You know, we need to give that person a fair trial and then hang him.

Sometimes I feel like these Cabinet position hearings are exactly that. They let the person ask questions. They ask very leading questions. I am not sure anybody listens to the answers. Then they have to answer a whole bunch of questions. I am not sure anybody reads the answers to those questions, and if they do, any time you read something, there can be a certain bias that is built into it. I am sorry that is happening to Cabinet after Cabinet after Cabinet position.

Traditionally, a President has gotten the Cabinet that he wanted, often in the first week that he was in. Some of them got it on the first day they were in.

This is a key position for the President. But we have to remember that he doesn't get to make any final decisions. He gets to recommend to the President and make a presentation to the President on what there ought to be, and then the President presents a budget.

Looking back over the last 8 years, we have voted on the President's budget. For 7 years, the President got zero votes. That means his budget did not go into place. In the eighth year, he got one vote. I am hoping that Representative MULVANEY can do a considerably better job than that in outlining what our needs are, presenting it to the President, and getting some agreement so that we can get this country on a plan to where we can quit increasing the \$20 trillion debt burden which faces us because of the 8 years of anemic economic and policy growth we have had.

With unprecedented attempts to delay the new Cabinet, Senate Democrats have ensured the President has been without an OMB Director longer than any other President in the past 40 years. The reason I use 40 years is that is as long as that position has been in place.

According to Senate records, from President Jimmy Carter to President Obama, the longest it ever took to approve a first budget director for new Presidents was 1 week—1 week. We are now in week 4 and with little movement. As Majority Leader McCONNELL said last week, this is the slowest time for a new Cabinet to be up and running since President George Washington—and that was last week that he said that.

It is vital we fill this position. I am hopeful Mr. MULVANEY and the OMB will ensure that the taxes of hard-working Americans sent to Washington are spent in the most effective and efficient way. The Federal Government has not been currently focused on making sure hard-working taxpayers get the best deal for their money. A new OMB Director focused on responsible budgeting can help ensure the duplication of government programs and agencies is discovered and it is addressed. This will help the Federal Government to be more accountable and more effective.

I remember walking over to the inauguration next to the new Senator from Maryland, who talked to me about MULVANEY and said that he was kind of impressed that the two of them had agreed on some budgetary principles. That was a bit of a shock to me.

The Government Accountability Office every year outlines tens of billions of dollars in savings that can be achieved through various efficiency measures. OMB can play an important role in ensuring that spending programs don't duplicate each other. That is what MULVANEY is excited about. Additionally, reforming and consolidating these programs can ensure they focus on real needs and be managed with an eye toward real results.

Several years ago, Congress passed a law requiring the administration to list all Federal programs on a central governmentwide website, along with related budget and performance information, maybe saying how many people work there and how many customers they serve. Unfortunately, when the program lists were put online, GAO reviewed the information and discovered that the inventory, in their own words, was "not a useful tool for decisionmaking." That has to change. MULVANEY can change that. Even if the government can't answer that question, we can find strong evidence that the numbers are on the rise, and Mr. MULVANEY will be able to play a crucial role in taming the unchecked growth of the Federal Government.

To conclude, I have full faith in Representative MULVANEY. That is why I am asking you today to take my word for his capability. I do take my word very seriously. Please support Representative MULVANEY for this important position and get this position onboard so we can do the work that we are supposed to do—one of which is to get a budget from the President by today. That is not going to be possible because he doesn't have anybody to do the budget yet. Then, we can get on with the business of this country. We have been working on some bipartisan budget processes that we can do. We will get that done, too, with his help, with the President's help, and with help from both sides of the aisle. We badly need it.

I ask for support for Representative MULVANEY.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I oppose the nomination of Representative MICK MULVANEY to serve as Director of the Office of Management & Budget, OMB. Representative MULVANEY's radical views regarding the fundamental role of government in our society make him philosophically ill-suited to run OMB. I will list a number of those views.

Social Security—In May 2009, Representative MULVANEY was a member of the South Carolina State Senate and voted to declare that Social Security is unconstitutional. He also wants to raise the retirement age to 70. Raising the retirement age to 70 would cut earned benefits by nearly 20 percent for all beneficiaries. With all the challenges people have saving for retirement, the last thing we should do is raise the Social Security retirement age.

Medicare—Representative MULVANEY is on record advocating enormous cuts to Medicare and is a proponent of Speaker RYAN's preferred "premium support," i.e., voucher, concept for Medicare. "Premium support" is a euphemism for privatizing Medicare. Representative MULVANEY said on Fox News, in April, 2011. "We have to end Medicare as we know it." And he indicated that he wants to raise the eligibility age to 67.

Medicare guarantees comprehensive health insurance coverage for almost 50 million Americans. Only 2 percent of elderly Americans are uninsured; nearly 50 percent were before Medicare was signed into law.

Debt ceiling—Representative MULVANEY appears willing to jeopardize the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government. He claims that breaching the debt ceiling would not automatically trigger a default on Treasury debt; he calls such concern "a fabricated crisis." Representative MULVANEY believes the Treasury would be able to "prioritize" payments and avoid a default.

His "pay China first" policy is contrary to the opinion of several recent Treasury Secretaries, would be impossible to execute from a logistical standpoint, and is based on a 1985 Government Accountability Office report the agency has since walked away from. The Treasury Department lacks legal authority to establish "priorities" with respect to paying the Nation's obligations. Each law obligating funds and authorizing expenditures stands on an equal footing, so the Department has to make payments on obligations as they come due.

Debt limit brinksmanship is expensive. According to the Bipartisan Policy Center, the 10-year cost to taxpayers of the 2011 debt limit standoff was \$18.9 billion because of the increased interest rates on U.S. securities issued in 2011. On August 5, 2011, Standard & Poor's downgraded the long-term credit rating of the U.S. government for the first time in history, from AAA to AA+.

Government shutdowns—Representative MULVANEY believes that shutting

down the Federal Government is an acceptable way to do business. He stated on CNN that shutting down the government over funding the Affordable Care Act was “worth it” in October 2013 and embraces the term “shutdown caucus.” In a September 2015 Atlantic article, he argued that shutting down the government is important because it is what “the base of the (Republican) party wants.”

Standard & Poor’s determined that the October 2013 government shutdown cost \$24 billion.

Federal workers—Representative MULVANEY has sponsored numerous bills attacking the Federal workforce, including many that freeze Federal workers’ pay. Federal workers have already “contributed” over \$180 billion to deficit reduction through pay freezes and other measures. He has sponsored the Federal Workforce Reduction Through Attrition Act, the most recent version of which caps the Federal workforce at 90 percent of its current level. A previous version would have mandated that “agencies do not appoint” for 3 years “more than one employee for every three employees retiring or otherwise separating from government service.”

Women’s reproductive health—in September 2015, Representative MULVANEY spearheaded a letter signed by 38 House Republicans—all men—opposing any legislation to fund the government that also continues to fund Planned Parenthood. In an August 2015 email to the Washington Post, Representative MULVANEY wrote that, if the Congress were to shut down the Federal Government over Planned Parenthood funding, “so be it.”

Science and climate change—in a Facebook post from last September, quoted in Vox, Representative MULVANEY questioned the need for government funded research “at all” in the context of doubting the scientific consensus that the Zika virus causes microcephaly.

Representative MULVANEY disputes the overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change. During the Budget Committee’s nomination hearing, when Senator KAINE asked Representative MULVANEY about human-caused climate change, Representative MULVANEY replied, “I challenge the premise of your fact.”

The Union of Concerned Scientists opposes Representative MULVANEY’s nomination, writing:

He has backed legislation to change the regulatory process in ways that would give an even stronger influence to industry, increase political interference and undermine science-based decision-making . . . Too often, the voices of people who will be hurt the most by rolling back science-based safeguards are drowned out by industries. The next OMB director needs to enact science-based laws in a timely manner, with a focus on ensuring benefits for all Americans.

Not surprisingly, Koch Industries has been a primary donor to Representative MULVANEY’s campaigns and his PAC.

Regulations—Representative MULVANEY’s voting record has been hostile to regulatory efforts to improve health, safety, and consumer protections. This is especially alarming because as OMB Director, Representative MULVANEY will oversee the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs. Representative MULVANEY has voted to curtail regulations regarding debit cards, medical devices, public swimming pools, excessive executive compensation, consumer financial protection, energy exploration, investment advisers, mortgage lenders, and so on.

House Republican budget plans—the last time House Republicans brought a full budget resolution to the House floor, Representative MULVANEY voted against it because it wasn’t extreme enough. He supported the Republican Study Committee, RSC, budget instead. Provisions of the most recent version of the RSC budget include: No. 1, a 10-year \$261 billion cut to Social Security by cutting cost-of-living adjustments, COLAs, increasing the retirement age to 70, and “increasing means-testing”; No. 2, \$662 billion in cuts to Medicare by changing the program into a “premium support” model, i.e., “voucher-izing,” increasing the eligibility age, and phasing in means-testing; No. 3, \$1.6 trillion in cuts to Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, CHIP, which would be combined into one block grant program; No. 4, \$925 billion in savings by repealing the Affordable Care Act exchanges; and No. 5, \$2.2 trillion in cuts to undefined “other mandatory” spending. Notably, the budget would not raise one dime in new revenue from the Nation’s wealthiest individuals and largest corporations.

“Nannygate”—Representative MULVANEY failed to pay FICA and Federal and State unemployment taxes on a household employee for the years 2000 to 2004. Representative MULVANEY admitted that the nanny in question worked full time—40 hours a week—for 4 to 5 years.

Representative MULVANEY said that he didn’t believe he owed payroll and unemployment insurance taxes on his nanny because “she simply helped [my wife] with the children. We considered her a babysitter.” This is despite the fact that, as the owner of several small businesses, he knew to pay these taxes for his other full-time employees.

As a State Senator in South Carolina, Representative MULVANEY sponsored the following three bills: No. 1, to prohibit candidates from the ballot for the State legislature if they had not paid all Federal and State income taxes over the past 10 years; No. 2, to prohibit candidates from the ballot for State office if they had not paid all Federal and State income taxes over the past 10 years; and No. 3, to prohibit the governor from appointing anyone who had not paid all Federal and State income taxes over the past 10 years.

Representative MULVANEY voted for H.R. 1563, Federal Employee Tax Ac-

countability Act of 2015, which authorizes “the head of an agency to take personnel actions against an agency employee who willfully failed to file a required tax return or willfully understated federal tax liability.” It is worth noting here that Federal workers have a lower percentage of tax noncompliance than the general public—a 3.1 percent delinquency rate versus 8.7 percent. And Representative MULVANEY sponsored the Spending Reduction Act of 2011, which would have made people with “seriously delinquent tax debts” ineligible for Federal employment.

Representative MULVANEY is the wrong choice to run the OMB,

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I know MICK MULVANEY. We served together for 6 years in the House of Representatives. I have always found him to be a straight shooter. And he was a champion of budget transparency. I also respect him for taking on some budget fights even when they were not popular with his Republican leadership. We worked together to ensure honest budgeting when we joined in efforts to prevent the use of overseas contingency operations funding as a slush fund for unlimited Pentagon spending.

I have deep concerns, however, about many of the positions that Mr. MULVANEY has taken over the years on matters vital to the Nation.

He has proposed radical measures that would undermine our fundamental safety net. He has said, “We have to end Medicare as we know it.” And he criticized Congressman PAUL RYAN’s already harsh budget because it did not cut important programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid fast enough.

Mr. MULVANEY has taken too cavalier an attitude toward the threat of default on U.S. Government obligations. He called the need to raise the debt ceiling a “fabricated crisis.” And he has repeatedly introduced legislation to prioritize payment of obligations to bondholders—who are often foreign—over other government obligations, including those to our veterans—in effect paying China first. At his confirmation hearing, he did not indicate that he has changed his view. The failure of the U.S. Government to pay its debts would wreak havoc on the economy.

Similarly, Mr. MULVANEY has been far too flippant about budgetary confrontations. He was a leader of a group threatening to shut down the government in order to defund Planned Parenthood, saying, “If we can do that while still funding the rest of the government, fine. If we cannot, and there is a lapse in appropriations, so be it.” And when asked if the 2013 government shutdown fight over Obamacare was worth it, he said it was.

Mr. MULVANEY has shown too great a willingness to eliminate government functions that protect consumers or help create jobs. Speaking of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, he said, “I don’t like the fact that CFPB exists.” And he referred to legislation

reauthorizing the Export-Import Bank as “a piece of crap.” Those were his words.

At his hearing, he did not appear to have a grasp of the size of the Federal workforce, and that it is smaller than any time during the Reagan administration. He did not seem to realize that the share of the population employed in the Federal Government is at the lowest point on record, since reliable data first became available shortly before World War II. These are fundamental facts the OMB Director should know.

Because of these concerns, I will be unable to support Mr. MULVANEY’s nomination.

The Director of the Office of Management and Budget is a key player in setting the Nation’s economic policy. The Director of OMB produces the President’s budget, enforces funding laws that Congress enacts, and oversees the regulations that protect Americans’ health, safety, and environment through the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs.

If the Senate confirms Mr. MULVANEY, I will watch with great interest how he reconciles his past positions with his new responsibilities representing the administration and the American people. I hope that he will respect the hard-working Federal employees who serve our Nation. In his new position, I do believe that his personal relationships with Members of Congress will prove useful, and I will look for areas where we can work together.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I yield back the time.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. All time is yielded back.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Mulvaney nomination?

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I ask for the yeas and nays.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second?

The clerk will call the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 51, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 68 Ex.]

YEAS—51

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| Alexander | Fischer | Paul |
| Barrasso | Flake | Perdue |
| Blunt | Gardner | Portman |
| Boozman | Graham | Risch |
| Burr | Grassley | Roberts |
| Capito | Hatch | Rounds |
| Cassidy | Heller | Rubio |
| Cochran | Hoeven | Sasse |
| Collins | Inhofe | Scott |
| Corker | Isakson | Shelby |
| Cornyn | Johnson | Strange |
| Cotton | Kennedy | Sullivan |
| Crapo | Lankford | Thune |
| Cruz | Lee | Tillis |
| Daines | McConnell | Toomey |
| Enzi | Moran | Wicker |
| Ernst | Murkowski | Young |

NAYS—49

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|------------|----------|--------------|
| Baldwin | Brown | Casey |
| Bennet | Cantwell | Coons |
| Blumenthal | Cardin | Cortez Masto |
| Booker | Carper | Donnelly |

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| Duckworth | Leahy | Schatz |
| Durbin | Manchin | Schumer |
| Feinstein | Markey | Shaheen |
| Franken | McCain | Stabenow |
| Gillibrand | McCaskill | Tester |
| Harris | Menendez | Udall |
| Hassan | Merkley | Van Hollen |
| Heinrich | Murphy | Warner |
| Heitkamp | Murray | Warren |
| Hirono | Nelson | Whitehouse |
| Kaine | Peters | Wyden |
| King | Reed | |
| Klobuchar | Sanders | |

The nomination was confirmed.
The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SULLIVAN). The majority leader.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote on the nomination, I move to table the motion to reconsider.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is on agreeing to the motion to table.

The motion was agreed to.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be 10 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to the vote on the motion to invoke cloture on the Pruitt nomination.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President and colleagues, if I could have your attention, please. Five minutes please. Two years ago, the Center for Media and Democracy filed a petition under Oklahoma FOIA law called the Oklahoma Open Records Act. For 2 years, the appeal of that petition was blocked. Earlier this year, a lawsuit was brought to require the release of thousands of emails from the AG’s office in Oklahoma with the fossil fuel industry, oil companies, coal companies, and the like. Six hours from right now, an expedited hearing will take place in the district court of Oklahoma.

Earlier this week, nine members of the Environment and Public Works Committee wrote and asked the judge who is going to preside over that hearing today to move forward expeditiously, and she is. We also wrote and asked the majority leader to delay the vote on cloture for Scott Pruitt until a week from Monday. He has declined.

Thomas Jefferson used to say: If the people know the truth, they will not make a mistake. Colleagues, we need to know the truth. Speaking of the truth, there is an old saying that says: People may not believe what we say. They will believe what we do.

As a candidate, as nominee, and President-elect, Donald Trump has made clear his job, his goal is to downgrade and to destroy the Environmental Protection Agency. Like a lot of things he says, we asked: Did he mean it? With the nomination of Scott Pruitt to lead the EPA, it is clear he did.

In Mr. Pruitt, Trump has found someone who, as AG of the State of Oklahoma, shut down your environmental protection unit in that office. He went on to raise millions of dollars

for fossil fuel industries and other sources used to sue the Environmental Protection Agency because of their efforts to reduce methane emissions, their efforts to stop cross-border pollution, their efforts to cut methane emissions, their efforts to fight smog, haze, and ozone. Under Attorney General Pruitt’s stewardship in Oklahoma, child asthma is well above the national average. Fish advisories in lakes in Oklahoma have more than doubled. All 16 counties in Oklahoma that are evaluated by the American Lung Association for clean air received an F last year—every one of them. Earthquakes have risen over the last dozen years in Oklahoma, from one or two per year to one or two per day. That is only the earthquakes that exceed 3.0 on the Richter scale.

When we asked Scott Pruitt today to name one battle he had led to reduce pollution in his State, he cited the issue involving the Illinois River, which we later learned was actually much more the work of his predecessor than it was his. When I asked him to name one environmental rule and regulation that he supported, he declined to do so. We are coming off of yet another hottest year on record. They are experiencing monsoon-like rains in California this month after years of drought. Temperatures in Alaska are so warm, we are not sure some years that they are going to actually have the Iditarod dog race, sea levels are rising from New England to Miami, there is a huge crack in the ice in Antarctica, and Scott Pruitt raises questions about the validity of the science around climate change. In last year’s election, a lot of people said: We want to take our country back. To what? The Cuyahoga River which caught on fire; the L.A. smog that was so bad, when I ran it hurt my lungs.

Some say: Is it possible to have clean air and clean water with a strong environment? That is nonsense. We can have both. Since Richard Nixon signed into law creating the EPA, guess what. GDP in this country has grown by 200 percent or more. Since losing 5 million jobs in the great recession, we added 16 million jobs, the unemployment rate is down by half.

We still have work to do, my friends. There are communities in the United States where water is unsafe to drink. There are millions of kids and grandkids who have asthma. We have fish advisories that abound from sea to shining sea. The sea level is rising up and down the east coast. State Route 1 in my State, our major highway, was shut down again last week, not because of a huge storm but just because of sea level rise.

Let me close by saying that when our grandchildren ask us years from now what we did about it, I want to tell them we did the right thing. We did not back down. We stood our ground. We voted to face this challenge to our people and to the planet, and to overcome those challenges.