

institution that is critically important to so many of our job creators, big and small businesses in Connecticut and around the country.

He opposed emergency funding for the victims of Hurricane Sandy, despite the devastation caused by this terrible storm, which was unleashed in Connecticut and nearby States.

He has questioned the need for government-funded research, despite the myriad advances in science and medicine that have come from government laboratories and research institutions.

His record shows that he would be the wrong person for this job, harming our safety net and our fiscal stability. I oppose his nomination, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the remainder of my postcloture debate time to Senator SCHUMER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. COONS. Mr. President, I yield my postcloture debate time to Senator SCHUMER.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has that right.

Mr. COONS. With that, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

NOMINATION OF NEIL GORSUCH

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, as I did last week and as I will continue to do until he is confirmed, I rise to support the nomination of Judge Neil Gorsuch to serve on the Supreme Court. Judge Gorsuch is an accomplished, mainstream jurist. I look forward to helping make sure he receives an up-or-down vote here on the Senate floor.

After meeting with Judge Gorsuch and learning more about his judicial philosophy, I continue to be impressed by his humble respect for the law and by his commitment to service.

Before the Judiciary Committee begins our hearings, I want to highlight aspects of his jurisprudence that qualify him to serve on our Nation's highest Court and make him an ideal candidate to fill such a consequential position.

Earlier this month I spoke about his fitness to fill Justice Scalia's seat, as well as his respect for the separation of powers. Today I would like to focus on his approach to religious freedom.

I have always supported religious freedom as a universal principle. It doesn't matter if we are defending our own First Amendment right to the free exercise of religion here at home or standing up for the religious freedoms of people under repressive regimes abroad, our country has always valued the right of individuals to practice their faith as they please.

Just as religious freedom is part of our national character, it also provides insight into the character and judicial philosophy of a prospective justice. When I had the privilege of meeting

with Judge Gorsuch last week, I asked him about his thoughts on religious freedom. I was struck by his ability to plainly articulate his understanding of the law and the Constitution. He explained his religious liberty opinions by telling me that he simply went "where the law led him." His explanation was indicative of his fundamental approach to interpreting the law. Judge Gorsuch doesn't make the law; he follows the law. He reads the Constitution as the Framers understood it. He interprets laws the way they were written.

Lately, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle have been vocal about the importance of respecting our independent judiciary. I couldn't agree more. They have decried the perils of discriminating on the basis of religious belief. Well, they are in luck. The Supreme Court nominee before us would be a staunch defender of independent courts and religious freedom. All they have to do is help us confirm him.

I don't blame them for wanting to do their homework on a Supreme Court nominee. They should, as should we all. They will find that studying Judge Gorsuch's record will make for enjoyable reading.

On the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals, Judge Gorsuch has authored a number of judicial opinions respecting the fundamental principles of religious liberty. His most notable was a concurring opinion in the Hobby Lobby case. In this landmark legal case interpreting the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, Judge Gorsuch ruled that the Federal Government cannot force individuals to assist in conduct that violates their deeply held religious convictions. I note that this law used to be noncontroversial. The Religious Freedom Restoration Act was introduced by Senators Ted Kennedy and then Congressman CHUCK SCHUMER. It was passed almost unanimously in 1993 and signed into law by President Bill Clinton.

In his concurrence, Judge Gorsuch wrote: "The [Religious Freedom Restoration Act] doesn't just apply to protect popular religious beliefs: it does perhaps its most important work in protecting unpopular religious beliefs, vindicating this nation's long-held aspiration to serve as a refuge of religious tolerance."

Religious tolerance—that is what our country stands for, and that is what Judge Gorsuch stands for. Judge Gorsuch's position was later vindicated by the Supreme Court. The Court agreed that it is the government's job to protect an individual's ability to practice their religion, not to instruct them on how to practice their religion.

In closing, let me reiterate that I believe Judge Gorsuch is a mainstream jurist who will uphold the Constitution to ensure justice for all, regardless of an individual's religious beliefs or which administration is in power. As someone who embraces religious freedom, it is a privilege to support and

confirm a judge like Neil Gorsuch, who respects this central constitutional principle. As I have said before, and I will say again, Judge Gorsuch deserves fair consideration by those who serve in this body, and he deserves an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. He should be confirmed overwhelmingly, and I am confident he will be.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF ANDREW PUZDER

Ms. WARREN. Mr. President, on December 8, Donald Trump nominated Andrew Puzder to serve as Secretary of Labor. He was scheduled to come before the HELP Committee tomorrow for his confirmation hearing. There is some reporting suggesting that he is having some second thoughts, and I sincerely hope that is true. The reasons Mr. Puzder is a terrible choice for this job are literally too numerous to cover fully, but I will at least give it a start.

If you work for a living, the Labor Secretary is very important to you. This person is responsible for protecting the interests of 150 million American workers. He will be the person responsible for enforcing the law that ensures that employers actually pay workers for every hour they work and setting the standards to prevent workplace injuries and even deaths.

Unfortunately, Mr. Puzder is not the kind of person the American people can trust to stand up for workers. Since 2000, Mr. Puzder has served as the CEO of the billion-dollar company CKE Restaurant Holdings. You may know it better as the parent company of Carl's Jr. and Hardee's. These two fast-food chains are known for paying very low wages to workers. Mr. Puzder has a long record of cheating workers out of overtime. He has paid out millions of dollars to settle claims when he was caught cheating. We are not talking about isolated incidents. They reflect the kind of business Mr. Puzder built. Mr. Puzder is a frequent political pundit and commentator who has vocally opposed higher minimum wages. He has also strongly opposed new overtime protections that would give 4 million workers an estimated \$1.5 billion raise in a single year.

Mr. Puzder also delights in expressing personal disdain for his workers. He bragged in his very first memo as CEO. He wrote that he wanted "no more people behind the counter unless they have their teeth." Ha, ha. He said he would like to replace his workers with robots because "they are always polite, they always upsell, they never take a vacation, there's never a slip-and-fall, or an age, sex or discrimination case."

The Senate has an obligation to hear from those who are best qualified to

tell America about Mr. Puzder's suitability to be Labor Secretary and to stand up for American workers—his own workers. That is why many of us asked the chairman of the HELP Committee to include Mr. Puzder's workers in his confirmation hearing. When the chairman refused to do so, we just went ahead and convened our own forum to allow those workers a chance to speak.

Seventeen Senators attended. Those 17 Senators heard from Laura McDonauld, who worked as a general manager at Carl's Jr. in Tucson, AZ, for 20 years. For years, she was forced to work extra hours without pay. Employees like Laura are the subject of a major lawsuit against Mr. Puzder's company, CKE, regarding unpaid overtime.

Those 17 Senators heard from Lupe Guzman, who is a single mother who has devoted the last 7 years of her life to Carl's Jr. in Las Vegas, NV. She has worked the graveyard shift for rock bottom wages. Seven years of loyalty, and Lupe is still paid so little that she is on food stamps to feed her kids. Lupe sat in front of the U.S. Senate and wept openly about her terrible treatment at the hands of Mr. Puzder's company.

The Senators also heard from Roberto Ramirez, who has worked in the fast food industry for over 20 years, mostly at Carl's Jr. in Los Angeles, CA. He worked regularly off the clock at Carl's Jr., meaning they didn't pay him. Roberto even had a full paycheck stolen by his manager.

For every Laura, Lupe, and Roberto, we found dozens of workers who were afraid to speak out about the terrible conditions at CKE. We compiled some stories from folks brave enough to speak up into a 20-page report detailing firsthand accounts of the men and women who work for Mr. Puzder. Those stories are horrifying, and I will read some of them later today.

Mr. Puzder's company has a truly atrocious record of treating his own workers terribly. Indeed, he has dripping disdain for people who work for a living. This alone disqualifies him to be Secretary of Labor.

But there is more. In recent weeks, it has come out that Mr. Puzder employed an undocumented immigrant in his household for years, and he didn't pay taxes on that employee. Yep, you heard that correctly. The Trump administration, which bellows about building a wall and pounds its chest about ripping millions of families apart with a deportation force, threatens millions of DREAM Act kids with deportation, has no problem putting a guy in charge of the Labor Department who cheats on his taxes and employs undocumented workers. The hypocrisy of that is pretty stunning, even for the Trump administration.

And then there is the controversy over alleged spousal abuse. Over 25 years ago, Mr. Puzder's first wife appeared on an episode of Oprah Winfrey in a show about spousal abuse. I have

watched the episode in which she appeared, as I believe every Senator should. I found it extraordinarily troubling.

Alongside his company's poor record of treatment of female employees, his highly explicit and sexualized ads, and his snide comments about sex discrimination, there is ample evidence that Mr. Puzder is a terrible choice to head the agency charged with ensuring that women and men are treated fairly in the workplace.

I understand that no matter who President Trump picks to run the Labor Department, I am probably going to have a lot of issues with that person, but this is different. Andrew Puzder should not be the Labor Secretary. And if you ask the Senators in this body—Republicans and Democrats—if you ask them behind closed doors with the cameras turned off, you will have a hard time finding people who think this divisive nomination is good for the country.

It has been suggested that Mr. Puzder is "tired of the abuse" that he has received during this confirmation process. Well, I think the workers at his companies are pretty tired of the abuse they have received while being at the mercy of an employer who doesn't care about them at all and who goes out of his way to squeeze them out of every last dime. That is literally the opposite of what we need in a Labor Secretary.

I was prepared to question him on these issues tomorrow, but I hope it is true that he will withdraw his nomination before then.

Mr. President, I also rise today to express many concerns over the appointment of Congressman MULVANEY as Director of the Office of Management and Budget and to urge my colleagues to seriously consider these issues before voting to confirm him.

One of the best ways to understand what a nation stands for is to look at its budget. It is all right there. The budget tells who counts, it tells who gets a chance, and it tells who gets cast aside.

The OMB Director prepares the President's budget. He safeguards the President's promises by turning them into real commitments backed by your tax dollars.

During the campaign, President Trump promised over and over again that he would protect Medicare and Medicaid. He didn't imply it; he didn't drop hints about it. No, he made the clearest, plainest possible promise. He said: "I am not going to cut Medicare or Medicaid."

But since the election, he has done a complete 180. He put up a transition team website that just dripped with code words for cuts, saying that he would modernize and maximize flexibility for these programs. Gone were the unambiguous promises to protect Medicare and Medicaid.

Then he started nominating people who have made it their life's work to gut Medicare and Medicaid. His Sec-

retary of Health and Human Services has proposed cutting more than \$1 trillion from these programs, and now his nominee for OMB Director is someone who wants to cut Medicare and Medicaid to the bone.

Congressman MULVANEY has voted to increase the retirement age for Medicare. Hey, you have paid into that program with decades of hard work? Too bad, just keep waiting.

He also wants to privatize Medicare, and he wants to slash and burn his way through Medicaid—a program that is a lifeline for millions of people—for parents of people in nursing homes, for people with disabilities, for premature babies.

In his confirmation hearing, Congressman MULVANEY was asked whether he would set aside his rightwing ideology to fulfill the President's campaign promises to protect Medicare and Medicaid. The Congressman could not have been clearer in his response: Forget all of that. Nope, not interested. MULVANEY is still a true believer in Medicare and Medicaid cuts, and whenever he has the President's ear, he will continue to advance his own radical ideas for burning down these indispensable programs.

President Trump also promised that he would not cut Social Security. He guaranteed it. Here is his quote—many times: "We're going to save your Social Security without making any cuts," he said.

Here was his closer on that: "Mark my words."

OK. Nice words. But he could have picked someone—anyone—to run his budget, and instead he picked Congressman MULVANEY—one of Congress's most partisan crusaders against the Social Security program. He wants to raise the retirement age to 70. Heck, this is a person who calls Social Security a Ponzi scheme, and, boy, he is not messing around, either.

During his confirmation hearings, Congressman MULVANEY doubled down on his promise to rob American workers and retirees by gutting Social Security. When pressed by Republican Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM about whether he would urge President Trump to reconsider his promise not to cut Social Security, hey, MULVANEY said that he absolutely would.

Is this just a mistake? Did President Trump just pick Congressman MULVANEY by accident? The Congressman certainly doesn't seem to think so.

At his hearing he said: "I have to imagine that the President knew what he was getting when he asked me to fill that role."

Yes, MULVANEY himself believes he is being brought in to push for cuts in Medicare and Medicaid.

Trump reverses his promise, a second person determined to cut Medicare and Medicaid makes it into a key government role, and who will pay the price? America's seniors, that is who.

Apparently, Congressman MULVANEY isn't satisfied with cutting benefits for

Americans who have worked and paid into the program for their entire lives. When it comes to abandoning American workers and families, for him, that is just the beginning.

He has also called the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau “a sick, sad joke.” Maybe he should spend a little more time talking to his constituents and a little less time talking to bank lobbyists.

The CFPB has helped thousands of people in every State—including dozens of people in Congressman MULVANEY’s own district—recover unauthorized fees on their credit cards and checking accounts. It has helped them to correct errors on their credit reports. These are students, seniors, servicemembers, and veterans, who may have spent months haggling with their bank or student loan servicer over a wrong charge, only to get quick and complete relief after they went to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

In total—the agency has only been up for about 5½ years now—it has forced the largest banks across this country, many of those who have been out there cheating consumers, to return nearly \$12 billion directly to the people they cheated. That is \$12 billion that was stolen by big banks, by payday lenders, by debt collectors, and is now back in the pockets of the people who rightfully earned it.

The only sick, sad joke is that Congressman MULVANEY thinks we should turn the big banks loose to prey on American families once again.

Under Congressman MULVANEY’s budget, Americans who have been cheated and scammed by huge financial institutions will just be cast aside. Families who work hard for every dollar, only to have some ruthless corporation steal their savings right out from underneath them, will be cast aside. And the millions of Americans who have worked for decades planning to collect Social Security or Medicare when they retire will be told to just wait four more years. They will be thrown straight to the curb. None of that—none of that—is what America stands for.

That is just the stuff that directly contradicts the President’s campaign promises. The stuff that is totally in line with the President’s campaign promises is genuinely scary too.

On the campaign trail, Donald Trump stated that he “may cut the Department of Education.” Will Congressman MULVANEY stand up for students? Unlikely.

Congressman MULVANEY’s record shows that he is fine building a Federal budget that crushes students who are trying to get a college education. Students already pay too much for student loans, and Congressman MULVANEY’s solution is to force students to pay more. He supports forcing more college students to borrow more money from private banks that charge sky-high interest rates without any of the basic protections Federal student loans have.

He clearly wants to let private banks and Wall Street squeeze as much cash out of hard-working students as humanly possible to build their profits. In fact, Congressman MULVANEY wants to help these giant banks out even more by taking a sledgehammer to the Federal student loan program and making Federal loan terms lousy for students. That is why he repeatedly voted to eliminate subsidized student loans for low-income students and why he helped block legislation to allow borrowers to lower their monthly payments by refinancing their student loans to lower interest rates. Not only has he voted to increase the interest rates the government charges students, he has also voted to cut Pell grants to poor college students. If Congressman MULVANEY had his way, millions more hard-working students would be shoved even deeper into debt at the start of their working lives just because they couldn’t afford the high cost of college. Under his budget, students will just be cast aside.

In his confirmation hearing, Congressman MULVANEY also said he is “in lockstep” with Donald Trump’s plans to grow military spending, but he said he would pay for that increase in funding with deep cuts to domestic programs that working men and women around the country depend on—programs that could easily include Head Start, which provides opportunities for low-income children; the disaster aid, which supports families in crisis after a hurricane or tornado; or resiliency programs to protect America as worldwide climate changes.

Listen to that again. The children who attend Head Start can stay home so Donald Trump can divert more money to military spending. The people who get buried in a 100-year snowstorm can stay buried so Donald Trump can divert more money to military spending. The people who live near coasts and rivers and streams can be washed away by rising oceans and other waterways so Donald Trump can divert money to military spending—and this nominee, Congressman MULVANEY, is in lockstep to make it happen.

Under President Trump’s new one-in, two-out Executive order, it is Mr. MULVANEY who would have discretion to give each agency a regulatory budget and to approve any proposed regulations that increase that budget. The order is supposedly designed to make life easier and to make government work better, but Congressman MULVANEY isn’t interested in making government work better, and he is certainly not interested in making life easier. In fact, he has spent his entire political career working to cripple the agencies that protect American families—American workers, American consumers, and American small businesses. Nowhere is this clearer than in his attacks on the Federal agencies that protect consumers, that preserve our environment, and that help keep

our country safe. He has worked to starve agencies of the resources they need to do their jobs, voting to cut funding to law enforcement, voting to gut the Social Security Program, and voting to completely defund the organization that provides critical legal services to low-income American children, families, seniors, and veterans.

But it is not enough for him to starve agencies to the breaking point. He has also supported radical bills to stop agencies from issuing regulations that keep our air clean, our food safe, and our economy from suffering another devastating financial crisis. Congressman MULVANEY wants to require agencies to adopt a bill that imposes the least costs on big businesses, even when those costs are about making sure companies don’t cut corners by cheating, poisoning, and killing people. Look, if it is cheaper for a corporation to kill you than it is for the corporation to redesign the product or clean up their mess, Congressman MULVANEY stands with the corporation. I am sure he would be willing to say something nice at your funeral about how your contribution helped give the corporation record profits.

If all that wasn’t bad enough, Congressman MULVANEY is ready to rock and roll on secret money in politics. Washington is already awash in dark money, but that is not enough for Congressman MULVANEY. He has worked to open the doors even wider to secret spending in politics. Over and over, he has voted to shield the identity of political donors, keep them secret. For example, he opposed a rule that required corporations applying for government contracts to disclose their political contributions. Again, just think about that one for a minute. He doesn’t want corporations that bid for government contracts to be forced to tell when they give money to help targeted government officials. We already have a problem with money in politics. MULVANEY just wants to make it worse.

Congressman MULVANEY’s record shows one thing. He will make sure our Federal Government works well for giant corporations and billionaires who don’t like to play by the rules, and he will cast aside the rest of the public to do that. That is definitely not what our Nation stands for.

I understand Democrats and Republicans have different priorities when it comes to the Federal budget. I get that, but when one person wants to slash Social Security for American retirees, to cut Medicare for senior citizens, to gut health benefits for low-income families, to drive up the cost of paying for college, and to gut programs that help families in crisis and low-income children, all in the name of making life even easier for giant corporations and billionaires—well, I think it is clear that his priorities do not include the safety and security of millions of Americans. That is a priority that should be at the top of all of our

lists in the Senate, Republican and Democratic.

I will stand with the Americans whom Congressman MULVANEY will cast aside as Budget Director, and I will vote no on his nomination.

MICK MULVANEY wants to slash benefits under Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and countless other programs. These are just numbers to him, but behind those numbers are real people. Real lives are at risk with every decision he will make as the Budget Director. So what I want to do is take the time I have remaining and share the stories of just a few of the people who would be affected.

Lea from Plymouth wrote to me, worried that Congressman MULVANEY would cut Social Security for her and for others in Massachusetts. Lea had an interesting suggestion. Here is what she wrote:

I have just sent off an email message to Representative Mulvaney regarding his spearheading of the cutting of Social Security benefits.

I challenged him and many of his colleagues to do this: Live on an income like mine—of \$1,219.80—for one month.

Having received my first increase of \$2.50 in several years, it was offset by a Medicare cost increase of \$11.50. Do the math.

I hope you and the other Democratic members of both houses fight like hell to raise our benefits.

We are definitely in for a bumpy ride for the next 4 years. As the saying goes . . . "it ain't going to be pretty!"

Thank you for listening.

Thank you, Lea. Thank you for writing.

I also heard from Janneke from Williamstown, who is worried about several nominees working to cut Social Security. Here is what Janneke had to say:

It is terrifying to consider either of these nominees, Price or Mulvaney, being confirmed for the position to which they have been nominated. They will work to undo, not to strengthen, social security. This is a profoundly disturbing possibility.

I urge you to do everything you can to oppose their confirmation!

Thank you, Janneke. I will. I will keep fighting for your hard-earned benefits.

Janet from Florence also reached out to me. She shared the inspiring stories of her and her husband, and then she told me how worried she is that cuts to Social Security and Medicare could be coming under Congressman MULVANEY's watch. Here is what she wrote:

I am 60 years old and have always been employed—in higher education jobs where I worked hard and long for modest wages, frequently the case in women-dominated professions.

My husband is a childcare worker who works with infants and toddlers. The work we do is meaningful and makes a societal contribution.

At 60 and 64, we have always lived like graduate students. We shop at the Goodwill, cook from scratch, bring our lunch, and drive old cars—and bike and walk. We will each be working until age 70, or longer, if our health permits. This is fine. We are for-

tunate to live as we do. But with market-based retirement funds and with family members needing our support, we need Social Security, which is NOT BROKEN, to remain, and be strengthened. And we need access to health care, for ourselves, children, and grandchildren.

This is a plea from the fading middle class to oppose the Price and Mulvaney nominations. We—and people far less fortunate than we are—need your stout support.

Thank you, Janet. Thank you and your husband for all you do for your community. I promise I will do my best to protect your benefits.

I have received hundreds of these types of letters—letters from constituents who are scared that cuts to Medicaid and Medicare could endanger their basic ability to survive, letters from constituents who have seen how important these services are to thousands across the State and millions across the country, constituents who aren't sure where to turn and whom to blame. They just know they cannot afford to lose these benefits, like a woman from Somerville, who wrote to me about the work she does as an intensive care coordinator. Here is what she had to say:

I am an Intensive Care Coordinator through Riverside Community Care, a statewide human service agency that delivers crucial mental health services to at-risk youth. In my program, the Guidance Center Community Service Agency, we specifically provide Child Behavioral Health Initiatives (CBHI) services to youth in Cambridge, Somerville, Medford, Malden, Waltham, Woburn, Wilmington, and other northern towns.

I am extremely nervous that the new presidential administration will attack Medicaid and put our programs in jeopardy.

If you're not familiar with the CBHI wrap-around model, I can briefly explain why these services are so important. One: we serve youth in poverty. Two: our services are community based, so we go to the homes of the families we're serving, so they don't need to rely on transportation. Three: we are a form of outpatient care that prevents youth who are suicidal/homicidal from needing hospitalization. Or, if they are hospitalized, helping the family develop a plan for when they're discharged. Four: Although the child with mental health diagnosis is our identified client, the services benefit the whole family. We understand that taking care of children with special needs is taxing, so we identify resources and services for parents as well. Five: we work with state departments like Department of Children and Families, Department of Health, and Department of Developmental Disabilities. Six: our model works. I myself rarely close a case without having had at least one goal (identified by the family) met and there are growing statistics about the benefit of having us in place.

I hope you can bring this argument where it needs to go to ensure that we have a future here in Massachusetts.

I want to say on this one: Thank you. Thank you for writing, and thank you for the work you do.

I am doing my best to bring this story. This is a story everybody in the Senate should listen to. It is a story about how we reach out to those who most need us and provide the kind of care they need.

Thank you. Thank you for your work, and thank you for writing.

I also received a letter from an occupational therapist from Massachusetts. She told me all about the important work she has been doing and how Medicaid has been crucial to that work. Here is what she had to say:

As a constituent and occupational therapy practitioner, I am writing to you to express my concerns about a major restructuring of the Medicaid program.

Medicaid is an essential safety net program for the most vulnerable in our society. In 2015, 39% of children received health insurance either through the Childrens Health Insurance Program or through Medicaid. More than 60 percent of nursing home residents are supported primarily through Medicaid. Additionally, Medicaid provides health care services and long-term services and supports to more than 10 million people living with disabilities, and 1 in 5 Medicaid recipients receive behavioral health services.

Restructuring of the Medicaid program through per capita caps or block granting and significant cuts to the Medicaid program would jeopardize the long-term health and independence of current Medicaid beneficiaries. Thus I urge extreme care and caution when considering a major restructuring of the program or other significant changes, waiver of mandatory services, or dramatic cuts.

Thank you for all the work you do, and thank you for writing and making this important point about who uses Medicaid and how critical it is to the basic support services that we provide.

Another constituent wrote to me about the amazing work that she does in the Boston area for those with severe mental illness and how Medicaid and Medicare help these people. Here is what she had to say:

I work with people with severe Mental Illness in the greater Boston area. A majority of my patients receive their therapy and medication through Medicaid and Medicare. Even the thought of losing coverage heightens their anxiety. If coverage is reduced or co-pays raised, they stand to lose not only therapy and group interventions but also the medication which is essential to avoiding higher levels of care. Given the high rate of co-occurring physical and mental health issues, the general health of my patients will be severely compromised with any reduction in access to care.

Nearly 1 out of 3 people covered by Medicaid expansion live with a mental health or substance use condition and people with marketplace insurance plans have fair and equal mental health coverage. With this coverage, people have access to mental health services that support recovery.

As a constituent, I would like you to keep in mind that Medicaid or insurance marketplace plans are helping all of those who struggle with mental illness who, with accessible supports, can lead healthier lives.

Again, thank you for the work you do, and thank you for writing. It is a powerfully important point.

Congressman MULVANEY wants to slash these programs. That is why I will be voting against his nomination.

I also received more personal stories from people like Michael from Acton, who told me about his son. Here is what he wrote:

My particular concern is the attack on the ACA and Medicaid and Medicare.

My biggest worry is my 27 year old son, Adam, who was born with microcephaly. He

is a very loving person with a great smile, but functions roughly at the level of a 12 month old. He currently lives in a group residence and goes to a day habilitation program during the week. Both of these programs are funded in part by Medicaid. If Medicaid funds are cut, I worry that the day-hab program will not be able to continue or, at the least, will operate at a much reduced level. This would seriously degrade the quality of Adam's life. I worry what will happen at his already understaffed residence.

As it is, the staff at Adam's residence and day-habilitation programs are paid very little wages to do very tough jobs. Because of this, there is already a constant problem of finding enough people to staff these. . . . jobs if they are paid less or have to do even more work because of lower staffing levels[.]

The prospect of what is coming scares me. What will my son's life be like?

Thank you for writing, Michael. I appreciate it. I will be out there fighting for Adam. I hope we can get a lot of people in the Senate to do that as well. Thank you.

We also heard from Daniel Mumbauer, who is president of the High Point Treatment Center in Massachusetts. Daniel has experienced firsthand how Medicaid funds can change the lives of thousands of people in Massachusetts alone. This is what Daniel wrote:

On behalf of High Point Treatment Center, I am writing to urge and request your support in protecting the Affordable Care Act and preserving Medicaid expansion in the 115th Congress.

High Point served over 30,000 individuals last year. We provide substance use disorder and mental health services to adolescents and adults.

Recent health insurance data show that Americans with mental health and substance use disorders are the single largest beneficiaries of the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion. Nearly one in three who receives health insurance coverage through Medicaid expansion either has a mental illness, a substance abuse disorder, or both. By repealing the Medicaid expansion, this population of vulnerable Americans would be left without access to lifesaving treatment, driving up costs in emergency department visits and hospital stays.

I am also writing to urge your support for the protection of the Medicaid program from proposals to restructure Medicaid as a block grant or capped program. These proposals would reduce federal investment in Medicaid and leave millions of Americans without access to needed mental health and addictions treatment in our communities. Please work with your colleagues to protect our nation's most vulnerable patient population and preserve their access to treatment.

Thank you, Daniel. Thank you very much for writing, and thank you for the work you do.

Congressman MULVANEY wants to eviscerate health programs that would help Michael's son and the thousands who are treated at the High Point Treatment Center. That is exactly the opposite of what we should be doing.

I have also heard from many constituents worried about losing their Social Security benefits under the new administration, like Kensington from Hatfield, who is terrified that his mother, who depends on Social Security, will lose her benefits. Here is what he wrote:

Last night scared me for the first time. My mother is 69 and depends on Social Security for her income and has severe COPD and relies on medicare and medicaid for prescriptions and medical supplies to help her breath[e]. She was crying and is afraid of losing everything and that she will die. I know it's extreme thinking, but without her medicine and income it is unfortunately the truth. I didn't know what to say to comfort her and that scared me! What can I say to ease her mind and let her know that she will be OK. Will she be OK?

Thank you, Kensington, for your note. Your mother is right to be worried, and that is why I am fighting this nomination.

I have so many more stories—many, many stories—that I could read, but I am running out of time here.

I want to say that MICK MULVANEY is dangerous to the American people, and he is dangerous to the Federal Government. He will slash programs right and left without worrying about the living, breathing people whom he is hurting in the process. That is why I will be voting against his nomination as Director of the Office of Management and Budget and why I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Let's make sure that MICK MULVANEY never ends up as the head of the Office of Management and Budget, never is in a position to put together a budget to cut Medicare and cut Medicaid. Let's make sure that we keep our government, our Medicare, our Medicaid, and our Affordable Care Act working for the American people. That is what I will keep fighting for.

Mr. President, I yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. TOOMEY). The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, every day we continue to set new records for how long it takes for the new President to get his Cabinet in power—in office—and the responsibility to carry out the things that the President said that he wanted to do when he was elected.

In the great history of confirming people, from the Garfield administration in the 1880s until Franklin Roosevelt in 1932, the entire Cabinet in that whole period of time was confirmed on the first day. Now we are in the longest period in the history of the country since George Washington was President to try to get a Cabinet in place, not to mention all of the other jobs that go along with confirming the Cabinet. It is a good thing and no wonder that a few years ago the Senate looked at the numbers of people we had taken responsibility to confirm and said: Now, which of those do we really have to confirm and which of those would we only confirm if someone in the Senate believes we have to have a hearing on that level of person and that agency at that time?

We tried to streamline a process that we all know needs to be streamlined, but with only a couple of exceptions, every nominee so far has been the most dangerous nominee of all time for whatever job it is. There must be fill-in-the-blank speeches back there some-

where that go from one to the next: This would be the worst person who could ever possibly hold this job.

In the case of Congressman MULVANEY, it appears to be because he wants to try to do things that allow our entitlement programs to survive; he wants to do things that allow the deficit at some point to be eliminated. And no matter what point that is, that point would be too early for some of our friends on the other side.

Interestingly, as we talk about the Affordable Care Act, which has turned out to be very unaffordable for almost any family on the individual market and many families who had insurance that worked for them before—the Affordable Care Act cut Medicare in the plan by \$500 billion over 10 years. We hear speaker after speaker on the other side say: We would never do anything to cut Medicare. I argued vigorously against those cuts when they occurred.

As we move forward, I think we ought to be very thoughtful that we restore the cuts in areas where clearly it is not working the way people thought the Affordable Care Act would work. The person in charge of the numbers, the person in charge of the balance sheet, the person who calculates the costs should be someone with the capacity to do that. The President has decided, and the Senate, when finally allowed to vote, will determine that person is Mr. MULVANEY.

NOMINATION OF SCOTT PRUITT

Mr. President, the other thing we hope to do this week is to get to the EPA Administrator. I have a hard time imagining that anybody had more future damage lined up for the economy than the past Administrator of the EPA. Rules like the clean power rule—all these rules almost always have a good name. Clean power, who wouldn't be for that? I am certainly for clean power, but the clean power rule, in virtually every State in the country, would have increased utility rates from the middle of the State of Pennsylvania to the western edge of at least Wyoming, if not beyond that.

Fifty percent of the power produced by coal-powered utility plants, most of which are cleaner than any utility plants that use coal have ever been or are anywhere in the world today, many of which are almost new, many of which aren't paid for—and, of course, who pays for that utility plant, whether you use it or not? It is the family who pays the utility bill. There is no mythical somebody else who will pay this bill. So if you shut down a plant sooner than you should, somebody has to pay for that.

You could write those same rules if your goal were to eliminate coal. That is a different debate. It is a debate we could have at another time. If your goal were to eliminate coal, you could write those same rules. If the rule simply said: When the utility plants you are using right now, which meet all the current standards, which are, in many cases, the cleanest coal-fired plants