

a “Ponzi scheme.” When I asked Representative MULVANEY about his views during this hearing, he confirmed to me that raising the retirement age is a central piece of what he calls Social Security reform.

I could not disagree more. Michigan workers have worked their entire lives and have contributed out of their paycheck to the Social Security trust fund. I simply cannot vote for someone who takes pride in telling these Michiganders—construction workers, nurses, autoworkers—that they need to spend another 5 years on their feet after a lifetime of hard work.

Social Security is not a Ponzi scheme, and labeling it as such shows callous indifference to Michigan families. Social Security is one of the most successful programs in our Nation’s history. Confirming Congressman MULVANEY to lead the Office of Management and Budget is a direct threat to the financial security of millions of seniors and retirees.

If you believe Mr. MULVANEY’s proposals on Social Security are wrong-headed, just wait until you hear his views on Medicare. He has vowed to “end Medicare as we know it.” He has said the plans of House Speaker PAUL RYAN, which called for drastic cuts to Medicare, didn’t go far enough.

During the first term of President Reagan, a saying entered into the public discourse as the newly elected President was staffing up his administration: “Personnel is policy.”

While President Trump said on the campaign trail that he opposes changes to Social Security and Medicare, personnel is policy. While the title of the job, “Director of the Office of Management and Budget,” might conjure up images of a bureaucratic backwater for many Americans, make no mistake, we are currently debating who will hold one of the most powerful positions in this new administration—and personnel is policy.

Let’s be clear. Congressman MULVANEY’s nomination presents a direct threat to Medicare and to Social Security. While his positions on these critical programs are enough to warrant my “no” vote, let’s examine how we might address other aspects of the Federal budget.

We don’t need to work at the Office of Management and Budget or be an accountant to know that President Trump’s budget priorities simply do not add up. The Federal debt and deficit are serious issues, but we haven’t seen one serious proposal from this administration on how we reach fiscal sustainability. It is the job of the OMB Director to help bring some sense to these proposals.

What are the proposals? They include \$10 trillion in tax cuts; \$40 billion on a border wall—with some kind of IOU from Mexico; drastically increasing defense spending; \$1 trillion on infrastructure; and a campaign promise to never, ever touch Social Security and Medicare.

It simply doesn’t add up. Either President Trump is planning to grow our debt and deficit to dangerous levels or he is going to ask his advisers which of his many campaign promises he should break. Given Representative MULVANEY’s belief that deficits can be solved by cutting benefits for seniors and slashing investments in basic science and research, he is not the person I want in the position of OMB Director.

This role is also not just about expenditures and revenue. As a senior member of the President’s economic team, you need a steady hand to help lead the government of the world’s largest economy. Given the disarray that we are now seeing in the White House, I am convinced now more than ever that Representative MULVANEY is not that steady hand to help lead fiscal policy in this Nation.

In 2013, Representative MULVANEY supported and helped lead the effort for a government shutdown. Let me repeat: He helped lead the effort to shut down the U.S. Government. More specifically, he helped lead the effort to shut down the government because the Senate would not agree to defund Planned Parenthood.

In his confirmation hearing, he had a chance to explain this position. Our ranking member, Senator MCCASKILL, asked him flat out: Do you still believe that the 2013 government shutdown was good policy?

His response: Yes, ma’am. It was polite, but wrong. Polite isn’t enough. We simply cannot have these views in the highest levels of government.

This spring, on April 28, funding for the Federal government expires. Critical programs, from childcare to scientific research, will halt unless there is an agreement in place. It is hard to have confidence that this administration will come to a reasonable agreement when their nominee for the highest budget position believes it is “good policy” to shut down the Federal Government.

This will not be the first, or last, potential budgetary crisis the OMB Director could face. Sometime this summer, the U.S. Congress will need to address the debt ceiling in order to meet our previously agreed-to financial obligations. If we do not come to an agreement, the effects on the global economy will be devastating. We risk permanently downgrading our credit rating and setting off a worldwide financial crisis.

Representative MULVANEY on many occasions has doubted the need to raise the debt ceiling. He has doubted that the U.S. Government should meet our financial obligations. This makes me doubt his very basic qualifications to serve as the Director of OMB.

This is far beyond partisan politics. This is the fiscal health of our Nation that will be at stake—truly, the full faith and credit of the U.S. Government. If Congressman MULVANEY, as the highest ranking budget official in

the Nation, is not going to advocate on behalf of this commitment, who will?

I am also worried that Congressman MULVANEY simply lacks the ability to see how fiscal and financial decisions impact working people. He looks past them and doesn’t give them a second thought. During his confirmation hearing, I offered Mr. MULVANEY the chance to explain why he did not pay payroll taxes for the nanny who took care of his children. To be frank, I was shocked by his response. To him, there was a “differentiation,” in his mind, between the employee who was spending 40 hours a week helping to raise his triplets and the employees who spent 40 hours a week in his law firm. To him, the white collar workers in his law firm were employees, and his nanny was not. I am shocked that Mr. MULVANEY did not realize that childcare is work, and it is some of the hardest, most important work there is. Whether a nanny, babysitter, or childcare provider, this employee mattered, and he looked past her and didn’t give her a second thought—until he was nominated to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

I don’t believe my colleagues should give him the opportunity to advance his extreme positions on Medicare and Social Security and look past hard-working Michiganders. I will oppose Representative MULVANEY’s nomination, and I urge my colleagues to join me.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. PERDUE. Mr. President, I rise tonight to speak about the opportunity our country has to move this country forward.

I appreciate the comments by my good friend from Michigan. I appreciate all the comments in this hallowed ground called the U.S. Senate. But I have to say that while I agree on some points, I disagree on others.

The one I am really troubled by tonight is the fact the other side is creating the ultimate shutdown in government right now. We had an election. Our democracy has worked. We have a new person in the White House. We have a new direction for our country. Yet this person in the White House cannot even get his team approved in the U.S. Senate.

After some 27 days, I think President Obama had 26 of his Cabinet and other appointees already confirmed. At this point, President Trump has only 13 of his nominees. Quite frankly, had we not turned the Senate on 24/7 over the last few weeks, it would be until June or July of this year before we could get the full slate of just the 15 Cabinet officers confirmed. That is no way to run the Federal Government and, indeed, shows the hypocrisy of the other side. They complain about shut down this and shut down that. What is happening right now in the U.S. Senate is that the

other side is shutting down this administration from getting on with the people's business of what they elected him to do.

Today, after 8 years of failed fiscal policies that have produced the weakest recovery in 70 years, the lowest GDP growth on a per capita basis in our history, a devastating time that left 4 million women in poverty after the last 8 years and left many people struggling to get from payday to payday—after those 8 years, tonight I am actually very encouraged to finally be debating pro-growth tax ideas that can actually grow the economy and put people back to work. We now have an enormous moment of opportunity to change the direction of our country and unleash a new era of economic growth and prosperity for every American.

President Trump has repeatedly said that job one is growing the economy. Personally, having worked in most parts of the world in my career, I see this so differently from Washington. My perspective is that of someone who has a global business perspective, not unlike that of our President. I know the way forward is not complicated. We absolutely can grow this economy.

There are three things this administration is already talking about to grow the economy: One, they have said we need to deal with this archaic, outdated, and noncompetitive tax structure that we have; second, we need to push back on these arcane regulations that have sucked the very life out of our economy; third, we need to unleash the God-given energy potential that we have in our country today. The bottom line is we have to create a more level playing field generated by trade negotiations to allow us to compete on a level playing field with the rest of the world.

The first two pieces of these changes are the changes to the Tax Code and rolling back the regulatory regime. Several ideas from both President Trump and Congress have surfaced in recent days to improve our Tax Code: No. 1, lowering individual rates and cleaning up some of the deductions to simplify the individual code; No. 2, lowering the corporate tax rate to become more competitive with the rest of the world and cleaning up corporate welfare deductions that confuse the competition among players here at home and create winners and losers inadvertently; and, No. 3, dealing with the archaic repatriation tax. We are the last country in the world that has this tax, and it penalizes our companies for competing abroad.

These three components of changing the Tax Code will make us more competitive with the rest of the world, stimulate economic investment, and spawn a new era of economic innovation in America. These changes would help millions of Americans who have been crushed by this stagnant economy for much too long.

I am encouraged that today there are so many of my colleagues in Congress

interested in generating new pro-growth ideas. It is a new day in Washington.

I have long been an advocate of simplifying the way we fund our Federal Government. In my opinion, the best way to do that is ideally with a new system, like the fair tax, for example, which would move us to a totally new tax system and completely eliminate the personal, corporate, and payroll taxes we suffer through to date. I think all of these ideas need to be considered, and none should be taken off the table arbitrarily.

Having said that, one idea bears much scrutiny at this point in time, and that is the so-called border adjustment tax now being discussed in Congress. It would hammer consumers, shut down economic growth, and ultimately grow the size of government.

In the last 16 years, under both Republican and Democratic Presidents, the Federal Government has grown from \$2.4 trillion in constant dollars to \$3.8 trillion last year—some 60 percent growth in just two Presidencies, one Republican and one Democrat.

Tax schemes similar to the border adjustment tax in Europe grew the size of those governments in Europe by more than 60 percent. That is the last thing we need to be talking about right now, after we just experienced a similar type of growth in our government over the last 16 years. Growing government with a new layer of complexity on top of our existing income tax system is the last thing we need to be doing at this point in time, when we should be talking about, How do we downsize the Federal Government, make our system more competitive with the rest of the world, create jobs, and create the atmosphere for capital formation and innovation again?

Historically, lawmakers have crammed numerous proposals into single, massive, overreaching bills. It is the Washington way. Those bills have often hurt the very people that they claim to champion. When bad ideas get mixed with good ideas, the bad ideas oftentimes become law. That is exactly what could happen here if changes to the individual code, the corporate rate, the repatriation tax, and this border adjustment tax are combined into one sweeping bill. This is exactly what Washington has historically done, and the results have been devastating.

Each of these proposals could be considered independently and evaluated on their own merits. There is no reason we can't do that. That is not possible today because many people here believe we are locked into the Washington scoring equation instead of looking at the real economic long term value of any of these ideas.

Many other countries, such as the United Kingdom, have faced these opportunities, made decisions, and acted accordingly without combining other extraneous ideas, and the results speak for themselves. Today, the United States is in the least competitive posi-

tion it has been, I believe, in the last 100 years.

In the last 70 years, America has enjoyed the greatest economic miracle in the history of mankind. It was developed on the back of innovation, capital formation, and the rule of law, combined with the best workforce in the history of the world. Those are four things that America possesses uniquely, and which many other countries are working hard to emulate.

For too long, the strength of our economy has been held down by politicians in Washington and the unintended consequences that occur when they try to interfere with the free enterprise system. It is time to trust that free enterprise system to get this economy going again, and change the rules to create a more competitive environment here at home that will allow us to compete overseas on a level playing field. It is time to simplify our individual Tax Code, reduce our corporate tax rates, eliminate conflicting business tax deductions, and eliminate the repatriation tax so we can once again become competitive with the rest of the world.

In recent decades, many other countries have made these changes, and we are losing our competitive edge. Today, I am encouraged to see both Congress and the White House working together on policies that will potentially grow our economy and bring relief to businesses and families who have been crushed by improper fiscal policies that are driven by political attempts to manage our economy.

Now is exactly the time to get these changes right. We have an opportunity to change our Tax Code to a more competitive structure that doesn't pick winners and losers, that doesn't penalize people for successes, and that allows us to compete with the rest of the world on a level playing field.

I like our chances if we can accomplish that, but let's not confuse the issue with what may seem acceptable in Washington but is devastating back home to men and women who are trying to create jobs in their local economies.

We need to free up capital. We need to make sure the rule of law supports the Constitution for every American. The American people deserve Congress treating these issues individually and independently to generate a simplified approach to funding our government and growing our economy.

I hear the other side whine about not hearing any proposals coming out of the White House. Donald Trump has been talking about what he would do with the economy for the past 2 years. There is no mystery. He wants to grow the economy. Job one, he said, is growing the economy. That doesn't mean for the rich. That means for the working men and women of America.

I believe they have a plan. It includes adjusting our tax system, pushing back on unnecessary regulations that are sucking the very life out of our economy and, finally, once and for all,

unleashing this great energy potential that we have.

We already see moves today on some of the regulatory fronts, where we see the new Secretary of HHS issuing a new rule today. We see the new leaders that have been confirmed already taking action in this administration. I, for one, am anxious to move forward with this debate.

I applaud our compatriots in the House for bringing up these ideas. I look forward to an open and active conversation, but now is the time for the other side to begin confirming these nominees so that we can get this economy growing.

I know you also are aware that our military is in devastating shape now after 8 years of disinvestment and 15 years of war. There is enough blame to go around here. This is not about the blame game. This is about getting this economic situation right where we can fund our military so we can defend our country.

I am very concerned that the other side is putting politics in the way of solving some of these problems that we have that are so devastating to men and women who are disenfranchised in our economy and our men and women in uniform around the world who are put in danger every day because we are not funding our military the way we should.

The time for rhetoric has passed. We are already past the tipping point of the most serious, I believe, physical crisis in our history. This debt crisis is very real. We don't need to grow the economy just to grow the economy. We have to grow the economy because it is one of several steps that are absolutely mandatory to solving this debt crisis, and we will not and cannot solve our national security crisis unless and until we solve this debt crisis. I am optimistic tonight because we are beginning to talk about these very issues.

I yield my time.

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.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. PERDUE). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO MONA PAINTER

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, in the past month, I have come to the floor to recognize Alaskans who have generously devoted their time and talents to our State and made it a better place for all of us to live in. It is a great place to live. There is a mystique surrounding my great State—a well-earned mystique. People travel to Alaska from all over the world to discover a part of themselves that craves high peaks, beautiful mountains, streams, and swaths of wilderness.

The real wonders of Alaska are our people—kind and generous people,

many of whom have etched warm homes and welcoming communities out of wilderness. One of those people who has helped make my State truly extraordinary is Mona Painter, our Alaskan of the Week.

Mona, who will be 80 years old soon, first visited Alaska when she was just 11 in 1949. She flew, by herself, with others in a tiny four-engine passenger plane to visit relatives. In the 1950s, she moved to Alaska for good and eventually settled in Cooper Landing. Cooper Landing has about 350 year-round residents, but that number swells in the summer. It has some of the best fishing and rafting anywhere in the world—an astonishingly beautiful place.

It has people like Mona, a devoted wife, grandmother, great-grandmother, and someone, who according to one fellow resident, is “the glue that binds the community of Cooper Landing together.”

She has done so much for this community—volunteering countless hours over the decades to ensure community cohesion in the schools, churches, and various clubs, including the Cooper Landing Community Hall, which serves as the community's unofficial city council.

Since living in Cooper Landing, Mona received an art degree, has taken anthropology classes, and even took a taxidermy class—once practicing her skills on a moose left on the side of the highway.

One of Mona's passions throughout the years has been to keep history alive in Cooper Landing. To that end, she started the Cooper Landing Historical Society and Museum, with which she is still very involved. For years she has devoted her time and energy to collecting bits of history about Cooper Landing and sharing that history with her neighbors, with residents, and with all Alaskans. She is also the founding member of the Kenai Communities Association and helped to spearhead the effort to create a national heritage area in that part of our State.

One of her friends said about her: “The whole essence of her life has been to make this community a better place to live and to restore the history of the community.”

People like Mona make my State great, and I want to thank Mona for all she has done for Alaska, and thanks for being our Alaskan of the Week.

TRIBUTE TO DELYNN HENRY

Mr. President, I want to talk about another Alaskan. She is a great Alaskan, an honorary Alaskan, but to all those who know her, a real Alaskan. So many people in my State know her. So many people in my State love her. I am talking about DeLynn Henry.

When I got elected in 2014, I was looking for important members of my office to staff my office. As we all know on the Senate floor, the scheduler is probably the most important position. I asked around, and the unanimous response was to hire DeLynn Henry. That

is what everybody told me. In Alaska, in DC, hire DeLynn Henry. She is a legend. She will make everybody feel at home.

DeLynn had been the scheduler for former Senator Ted Stevens, a titan of the Senate since 1989. For the past two decades, she has met thousands of Alaskans. She has done the vitally important work of making sure that when Alaskans come to DC—to our embassy here, the Alaskan embassy—they feel welcome, they get to meet with their Senator.

To many of us, including my wife Julie, DeLynn is like family. Her job, which she takes very seriously, is something she has done extraordinarily well—for me and for Senator Stevens—for decades. She is personal and kind. She does everything she can do to make sure that Alaskans feel welcome, part of our family, and feel at home. She has also raised two fine sons, Blake and Graham, and will soon be a doting grandmother.

DeLynn has accepted a job as the scheduling coordinator for our new Secretary of Transportation. I am sad and happy for that. She will be leaving my office. She will be leaving a big hole in my office. We, and so many Alaskans, will miss her dearly, but we know she will be serving Secretary Chao's office with the same warmth and welcoming attitude she has served Alaskans for nearly 25 years.

Thank you, DeLynn, for your years of service to Alaskans. You will always, always have a home with us.

Mr. President, I rise in support of Congressman MULVANEY's confirmation to be OMB Director for many of the reasons that a number of my colleagues have come to the floor and mentioned. The Presiding Officer just talked about some of those reasons. My colleague and friend from Wisconsin did a few minutes ago, also. Those are two issues that don't get talked about enough here and, certainly, weren't talked about enough in the last 8 years; that is, economic growth and the overregulation of our economy.

Again, it wasn't talked about a lot, but we had a lost decade of economic growth. The end of the Bush years and the entire Obama years never hit 3 percent GDP growth in 1 year—never. That is the first President in the history of the country not to do that.

For thousands, millions of Americans the American dream was starting to disappear because nobody focused on the issue of growth. I think in November the American people voted and said: We are not going to give up on the American dream. We want growth. We want opportunity. Why did we have that lost decade of growth where the economy grew at an anemic 1.5-percent GDP growth each quarter?

I think this chart shows a lot of the reasons right here—the explosion of Federal regulations that have literally choked opportunity and economic growth in our country. Year after year—Democrat or Republican—this is