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 President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 what we see. This regulatory overreach impacts all kinds of Americans, mostly small businesses. This is a big reason why this economy has been stuck in first gear.

When I had my discussions with Congressman MULVANEY, we focused on this issue of growth, and we focused on this issue of overregulation. We haven't had an OMB Director in years who is focused like a laser on growth, like a laser on making sure we don't overburden our economy the way the Federal Government has done for decades. That is exactly what we need right now. We need growth. We need opportunity for Americans. We need the Federal Government to be a partner in opportunity, not an obstacle, as it is in so many States.

For these reasons and because I believe the next OMB Director is going to be focused on these issues—opportunity for Americans and growth for our economy, which sorely needs it—I plan on voting for the confirmation of Congressman MULVANEY, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, as the ranking member of the Budget Committee, I rise in strong opposition to the nomination of Congressman MICK MULVANEY to be the next Director of the Office of Management and Budget, or OMB.

Like many of President Trump's other nominees, my opposition to Congressman MULVANEY has less to do with his extreme rightwing economic views than it has to do with the hypocrisy and the dishonesty of President Trump. The simple truth is that Congressman MULVANEY's record, in many respects, is the exact opposite of the rhetoric that then-Candidate Trump used in order to get votes from senior citizens and working families. Now, if Candidate Trump had run his campaign by saying: I am going to cut your Social Security benefits if elected President, well, you know what, Congressman MULVANEY would have been the exact person that he should bring forth as OMB Director. If President Trump had said: I am going to privatize your Medicare; vote for me because I am going to privatize your Medicare—if that is what he had campaigned on, then Congressman MULVANEY would have been exactly the right choice for OMB Director. If Candidate Trump had said: I want to devastate Medicare, I want to make it harder for poor people to get the healthcare they need, and I want to threaten the nursing home care of millions of senior citizens—if that is what Candidate Trump had said, MICK MULVANEY would have been exactly the right and appropriate leader for the job.

But those are not the words, that is not the rhetoric, and those are not the ideas that Candidate Trump raised during his Presidential race. In fact, Candidate Trump said exactly the opposite on May 7, 2015. We are all familiar with Mr. Trump's tweets. Here is a tweet that he made on May 7, 2015:

> I was the first and only potential GOP candidate to state there will be no cuts to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Huckabee copied me.

So you have Candidate Trump making it very clear that there would be no cuts to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

On August 10, 2015, Trump said:

> [I will] save Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security without cuts. [We] have to do it. . . . People have been paying in for years, and now many of these candidates want to cut it.

On November 3, 2015, Mr. Trump said:

> I will save Social Security. I'll save medicare. . . . People love Medicare. . . . I'm not going to cut it.

On March 10, 2016, Mr. Trump said:

> I will do everything within my power not to touch Social Security, to leave it the way it is . . . it's my absolute intention to leave Social Security the way it is. Not increase the age and to leave it as is.
>
> It is my absolute intention to leave Social Security the way it is. Not increase the age and to leave it as is.

It can't be much clearer than that.

On May 21, 2015, Mr. Trump tweeted:

> I am going to save Social Security without any cuts. I know where to get the money from. Nobody else does.

On January 24, 2015, Mr. Trump said:

> I'm not a cutter. I will probably be the only Republican that doesn't want to cut Social Security.

Those are pretty strong statements. What he just told you, in no uncertain terms, can't be clearer than that. He doesn't want to cut Social Security. He doesn't want to cut Medicare and doesn't want to cut Medicaid. And you know what, millions of people actually believed what he said. They actually thought that Candidate Trump was telling the truth.

But now that the election is over, President Trump has nominated a budget director, Mr. MULVANEY, who would cut Social Security, would cut Medicare, would cut Medicaid, and would threaten the entire security of millions of Americans.

We just heard the exact quotes coming from candidate Donald Trump. Let's now hear the exact quotes coming from Congressman MICK MULVANEY about his views on these very same issues.

On May 15, 2011, Congressman MULVANEY said on FOX Business News:

> We have to end Medicare as we know it.

On April 28, 2011, Congressman MULVANEY said:

> Medicare as it exists today is finished.

On August 1, 2011, Congressman MULVANEY said:

> You have to raise the retirement age, lower a pay-out, change the reimbursement system. You simply cannot leave [Social Security] the way it is.

On May 17, 2011, Congressman MULVANEY said: ''I honestly don't think we went far enough with the Ryan plan'' because it did not cut Social Security and Medicare ''rapidly enough.''

Just 2 years ago, Congressman MULVANEY voted against the budget proposed by House Budget Committee Chairman Tom Price and House Speaker PAUL RYAN, opting instead to vote in favor of an even more extreme budget by the Republican Study Committee. The budget that Congressman MULVANEY supported would have cut Medicare by $69 billion more than the Price-Ryan budget. It would have cut Social Security by $184 billion more, and it would have cut Medicaid by $255 billion more than the budget proposed by Chairman Price and House Speaker RYAN.

In fact, Congressman MULVANEY made it clear during his confirmation hearing in the Budget Committee that he would advise President Trump to break his promises not to cut Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. During that hearing, Senator CORKER called President Trump's campaign promises ''totally unrealistic'' and said that they ''make no sense whatsoever.''

When Senator CORKER asked Congressman MULVANEY if he would advise the President not to follow through on the campaign promises he made to seniors, this is what Congressman MULVANEY said:

> I have to imagine that the President knew what he was getting when he asked me to fill this role. . . . I'd like to think it is why he hired me.

Whoa, what we have been discussing is precisely why so many people have contempt for what goes on here in Congress and what goes on in Washington, in general. What is going on here is that a candidate for President of the United States says one thing in order to get votes, but the day after he is elected, his tune dramatically changes, and he nominates a number of people to his Cabinet and to high-level positions within his administration who intend to do exactly the opposite of what he campaigned on. Once again, Congressman MULVANEY—and I believe he is exactly right—said:

> I have to imagine that the President knew what he was getting when he asked me to fill this role. . . . I'd like to think it is why he hired me.

So the President hires somebody who has been one of the most vigorous proponents of cutting Social Security, cutting Medicare, and of cutting Medicaid after he ran his entire campaign telling the American people he would not cut Social Security, cut Medicare, and cut Medicaid.

Outside of Capitol Hill, where real people live, it turns out, not surprisingly, that the overwhelming majority of Americans—be they Democrats, Republicans, or Independents—are opposed to cutting Social Security. In fact, according to an October 2016 survey by Public Policy Polling, 72 percent of the American people, including 51 percent of Republicans, ''support increasing, not cutting, Social Security benefits by asking millionaires and billionaires to pay more into the system.''

As it happens, that is exactly the heart and soul of the legislation that I will soon be offering. Legislation that I will be offering will expand Social Security benefits, not cut them. It will do so by asking the top 2 percent to pay more in taxes, which, it turns out, is not only the right thing to do, but it is precisely what the American people want us to do. Various other polls have reached similar results. The people of our country—once you get outside the Congress and outside of the Republican caucus, in particular—the American people know that when millions of seniors, disabled veterans, and people with disabilities are trying to get by on $13, $14, $15,000 a year, you do not cut their benefits, while at the same time give hundreds of billions of dollars in tax breaks to the top 1 percent. That is not what the American people want.

In my view, we don't need a budget director like Congressman MULVANEY, who believes that Social Security is a ''Ponzi scheme.'' We don't need a budget director who once voted to declare Social Security, Medicaid, and the U.S. Department of Education unconstitutional. He was in, I believe, the South Carolina State Legislature, State Senate. He actually voted on a vote—which got very few votes—in the South Carolina State Senate. He voted to declare Social Security, Medicaid, and the U.S. Department of Education unconstitutional. This is the person whom President Trump has nominated to become the head of OMB.

So if you believe Social Security is unconstitutional, if you believe it is a good idea to cut benefits for people who will be living on $13,000 or $14,000 a year, I guess Mr. MULVANEY is your choice. If that is whom my Republican colleagues want to vote for, that is their business, but my job and the job of everybody is to make it clear to the American people that the Republicans are far more interested in cutting Social Security and in giving huge tax breaks to billionaires than they are in taking care of the needs of the American people.

We need a budget director who understands that we have a retirement crisis in America today. Today, more than half of older Americans have no retirement savings. That is just an extraordinary reality. Over half of older workers in this country have zero in the bank. Think about what they are feeling when they hear people like Congressman MULVANEY saying: Hey, you got nothing now. You are going to try to get by on $12,000, $13,000 a year in Social Security, and we are going to cut those benefits.

Today, more than half of older Americans have no retirement savings. More than one-third of senior citizens depend on Social Security for all of their income. One out of five senior citizens is trying to make ends meet on income of less than $13,000 a year. I will tell you, I hope people are able to sleep well, people who think it is appropriate to give tax breaks to billionaires and cut benefits for people who are trying to get by on Social Security checks of $13,000 a year.

In my view, we don't need a budget director who believes that ''we have to end Medicare as we know it,'' nor do we need a budget director who has said that ''Medicare as it exists today is finished.'' Let's remember for a moment what things were like before Medicare was signed into law back in 1965. At that point, about half of all seniors were uninsured and millions more were underinsured. Today, thanks to Medicare, about 45 million seniors have health insurance, and the senior poverty rate has plummeted. Seniors are living healthier, longer lives. Thank you, Medicare.

In my view, we do not need a budget director who supports cutting Medicaid by more than $1 trillion, threatening not only the healthcare of low-income people but also the nursing home care of millions of vulnerable senior citizens and persons with disabilities. There are millions of not just low-income families but middle-class families who today are getting help with the nursing home payments for their parents through Medicaid. If you make devastating cuts in Medicaid, you are not only going to take away health insurance from low-income Americans, you are going to put enormous economic stress on middle-class families who will now have to pay the full tab for the nursing home care of their parents.

Finally, there is another issue; that is, Mr. MULVANEY's taxes. After Congressman MULVANEY was nominated to become the next OMB Director, it was revealed that he failed to pay over $15,000 in taxes for a nanny he employed from the year 2000 through 2004. Here is what Congressman MULVANEY wrote in response to a question I asked him on January 11:

> I have come to learn during the confirmation review process that I failed to pay FICA and Federal and State unemployment taxes on a household employee for the years 2000 through 2004. Upon discovery of that shortfall, I paid the Federal taxes. The amount in question for Federal FICA and unemployment was $15,583.60, exclusive of penalties and interest which are not yet determined. The State amounts are not yet determined.

This is a very serious issue. As you will recall, 8 years ago Senator Tom Daschle withdrew his nomination as Secretary of Health and Human Services after it was discovered that he failed to pay taxes for one of his domestic workers.

On this issue, I agree wholeheartedly with Minority Leader Schumer, who said:

> When other previous Cabinet nominees failed to pay their fair share in taxes, Senate Republicans forced those nominees to withdraw from consideration. If failure to pay taxes was disqualifying for Democratic nominees, then the same should be true for Republican nominees.

Mr. President, here is the irony: Over and over again, Congressman MULVANEY has sponsored and cosponsored legislation designed to prohibit people from serving in the government if they fail to pay their taxes. In 2015, Congressman MULVANEY voted for a bill in the House that stated: ''Any individual who has a seriously delinquent tax debt should be ineligible to be appointed or to continue serving as an employee'' of the Federal Government. Congressman MULVANEY cosponsored three bills when he was in the South Carolina State Senate that would have prohibited tax cheats from serving in the South Carolina State government. In other words, it looks like there is one set of rules for Congressman MULVANEY and another set of rules for everyone else.

In light of this information and in light of Congressman MULVANEY's extreme rightwing record of attacking the needs of the elderly, the children, the sick, and the poor, I would urge all of my colleagues to vote no on this nomination.

With that, I yield the floor.

Mr. UDALL. Mr. President, I wish to oppose the confirmation of Congressman MICK MULVANEY as Director of the Office of Management and Budget. I respect Mr. MULVANEY's public service representing the people of South Carolina, who elected him to serve in the State legislature and in Congress. However, the question before us today is whether the Senate should confirm him to one of the most important economic positions in our government—a position that has major ramifications for global financial markets, the United States and New Mexico economies, and the jobs, health care, and retirement security of every American.

Unfortunately, Representative MULVANEY's record shows a shocking willingness to put at risk the security of the public debt of the Nation and endanger essential Federal programs that New Mexicans depend upon. I want to underscore a few of Representative MULVANEY's previous statements made as a Member of Congress.

First, he has supported playing chicken with the debt ceiling over partisan political issues, an action that would jeopardize the U.S. Government's ability to repay the public debt. If the debt ceiling is not raised, Federal officials have said that the revenue coming into the government would not be enough to cover its obligations—potentially disrupting Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, veterans benefits, military payments, student loan payments, and many other government services.

Despite these clear dangers, Representative MULVANEY voted no on raising the debt ceiling every time it came up for a vote in 2011, 2012, and 2013. He claimed that risking disruption to Social Security and veterans benefits was ''a fabricated crisis.'' He went so far as to question the majority leader, claiming that, if the Senate chose to raise the debt ceiling, the majority leader ''should just quit and go home.'' I, for one, will be here to defend the full faith and credit of the United

States' public debt and protect essential government services that our sick, our elderly, and our veterans depend upon.

Putting someone with such strongly held and reckless views into power at the OMB is an endorsement of policies that could cause another global financial crisis—devastating millions of American families. I cannot in good conscience support his nomination for this reason alone.

Second, Representative MULVANEY is a founding member of the group of extreme House Republicans who forced the government to shut down in October 2013 over their blind opposition to the Affordable Care Act. In New Mexico, the impacts of the shutdown were felt immediately as our civilian employees were sent home from military installations, national parks and forests were closed to tourists, and countless other services were halted. The shutdown lasted over two weeks, and Representative MULVANEY and other members of his extreme wing of the House could have ended the shutdown at any time.

Representative MULVANEY claims that he opposes wasteful government spending, but an analysis by Standard and Poor's found that the October 2013 government shutdown cost $24 billion—$24 billion with nothing to show for it. Even Representative MULVANEY admitted that his shutdown hurt people. On October 16, 2013, he told CNN, ''Were people hurt by this? Sure.'' He admitted that, if you were one of the millions of people who relied on the shuttered services, his shutdown hurt you, but Representative MULVANEY showed little remorse. I stand by what I said at the time. Insisting on blind cuts or a government shutdown to prove a point isn't leadership.

Third and finally, Representative MULVANEY is on record advocating enormous cuts to Medicare, and he is a proponent of Speaker RYAN's preferred voucher concept for Medicare. He also has long been hostile to Social Security and voted in the South Carolina State Senate to declare Social Security, along with Medicaid and the Department of Education, unconstitutional.

Workers earn their Social Security benefits through a lifetime of paying into the Social Security system. And it is unfair to delay or cut the benefits they have paid into. Raising the retirement age to 70, as Representative MULVANEY has advocated, would cut benefits by nearly 20 percent for all beneficiaries. Raising the retirement age would be hardest for those New Mexicans who work in jobs that require heavy manual labor, which becomes harder to do as we age. With all the challenges people have saving for retirement, especially as New Mexico continues to struggle to recover, the last thing we should do is raise the Social Security retirement age.

In conclusion, Representative MULVANEY has demonstrated that he has no reservations about using a government shutdown or the public debt as bargaining chips. He has stated that he will push to eliminate Social Security for people under 70. He will slash Federal consumer protections and cut support for small businesses, labor rights, financial oversight, community health, and environmental protection. I have heard from many people and groups—a broad coalition of consumer, small business, labor, good government, financial protection, community, health, environmental, civil rights, and public interest organizations—who oppose the nomination. I stand with them. I strongly oppose Representative MULVANEY's nomination to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget and urge my colleagues to do so as well.

Mr. SANDERS. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, here we are on another evening, debating another Cabinet nominee, addressing the question that Hamilton put before us, which is whether an individual is of fit character to serve in a particular post. This effort, this advice and consent responsibility held by the Senate, is one that was anticipated by our Founders to be used rarely because the very existence of this power, they felt, would ensure that a President would nominate people who are appropriately suited to the post they would hold. So I do find it troubling the number of times I have come to the floor in these last few weeks to speak about a nominee and consider whether they are fit and to find that perhaps the individual is lacking.

Tonight we are considering the nomination of Congressman MICK MULVANEY to head the Office of Management and Budget. This is a powerful organization, and it is a very important position. It plays a critical role in the oversight and management of our Federal budget. It plays a critical role in determining what gets funded and what doesn't get funded. So with that in mind, it is important that we have a robust debate about this position and about this nominee.

To break that down a little bit, the Office of Management and Budget puts together the budget for the President. In doing so, they take the vision our President has articulated, and they build it into a roadmap to accomplish that vision because where you spend money affects what actually happens as we pursue programs here in the United States of America.

It is the Director of the OMB who works to make sure the various pieces of the Federal Government are working together like gears that mesh cleanly together and do not conflict. It is the Director of the OMB who helps to determine the cost of proposed legislation, which can advance or doom any particular proposal. It is the position of the OMB Director to review the impact of proposed regulations, and that can also have a significant impact.

I come to this conversation with a number of concerns, and the first is the position of the nominee on Social Security. For 82 years, Social Security has provided for the American people, and it has helped our Nation prosper.

On the third anniversary of the Social Security Act, in 1938, Franklin Roosevelt pointed out: ''Men and women too old and infirm to work either depended on those who had but little to share, or spent their remaining years within the walls of a poorhouse.''

That is not the vision we have today. Thanks to Social Security, our seniors have a basic income to see them through their golden years. They can live out their lives in relative comfort and security, rather than, as Franklin Roosevelt put it, ''within the walls of a poorhouse.''

In 2016, roughly 61 million Americans received over $900 billion in Social Security benefits. That is a huge injection into our economy, and it is spent almost immediately on fundamental goods. Nearly 9 out of 10 Americans older than 65 receive Social Security benefits, and for one-quarter of our Social Security beneficiaries, including both those who are single and those who are married, Social Security accounts for virtually their entire income. That would be many millions—more than 15 million Americans who would definitely be struggling in the most difficult fashion financially if Social Security didn't exist.

Retired workers and their dependents account for about 71 percent of the benefits paid. Funds also go to disabled workers. Disabled workers and their dependents account for about 16 percent of the benefits. Survivors of deceased workers account for another 13 percent or roughly one-eighth of the benefits paid.

Simply put, Social Security assists our retired workers, our disabled workers, and the survivors of our deceased workers. It is one of the best ideas America has ever put forward, but Congressman MULVANEY doesn't agree. He sees Social Security as a Ponzi scheme. Let me explain what a Ponzi scheme is. A Ponzi scheme is something where the incoming amount raised immediately pays for the benefits of somebody who paid in money previously.

We actually have a Social Security trust fund, which is the difference between MICK MULVANEY's description of Social Security and what we actually have. If we made no changes, no changes at all to increase the lifetime of the trust fund, it would continue to be able to pay 100 percent of the benefits through 2034 and roughly threequarters of all benefits currently promised ever after. That is if we make no changes.

If we make small changes, our Social Security trust fund is solvent for decades and decades into the future. Certainly, I think we should aspire to that vision of a trust fund that has a 75-year horizon, a full solvency.

The issue that Congressman MULVANEY raises, the idea he raises for changing how we adjust Social Security, however, isn't one of increasing the amount of wages that are subject to Social Security tax; it is not one of putting premiums on the income earned through nonwages, which is primarily income raised by wealthier Americans. Instead, it is to say to folks: Just retire later.

When you are a white-collar worker and you work in an office that is nicely air-conditioned and you have had full healthcare benefits throughout your entire life, maybe when you get into your sixties, you say, ''Well, maybe I could keep working a little longer,'' but the reality for a huge percentage of Americans who work difficult jobs, who work jobs where their bodies wear out, they don't have the choice of simply saying: I will retire in another 5 years, because they literally have developed so many issues and challenges that it is impossible to do the same kind of work they did in their twenties and their thirties in their sixties.

So that strategy of moving the goalpost on American workers, many of whom are decades already into the work they are doing, doesn't fulfill the promise and the vision of the Social Security Program.

While Social Security is a great idea, moving the retirement age to age 70—which MICK MULVANEY advocates for, from his view as someone who comes from a job that perhaps isn't as arduous as many jobs in America—is a bad idea.

This vision continues on into Medicare. Like Social Security, Medicare is also a generational promise, a lifeline for countless Americans since President Johnson signed it into law now more than five decades ago. Over 55 million Americans rely on Medicare for their health and their financial security. Roughly, 46 million are older Americans, 9 million are younger Americans with disabilities or certain illnesses.

While this program has worked incredibly well, our nominee wants to ''end Medicare as we know it.'' Those are ominous words for the 55 million Americans relying on Medicare. He also believes we have to raise the retirement age.

He told Bloomberg News in 2011: ''You have to raise the retirement age, lower a payout, change the reimbursement system.''

The problem with raising the retirement age is the same problem we have with Social Security. For American workers working hard in many types of jobs, their bodies are worn out. I used to have folks come to my townhalls and say: Senator, I am just trying to stay alive until I get to age 65, and they would tell me how they had multiple diseases and they were choosing between which disease to treat or how they had a single significant problem, but they were deciding to skip their pills every other day or cut their pills in half or perhaps go a week without their pills at all or how they were choosing not to go to the doctor when they developed a difficulty because they were afraid they wouldn't be able to afford the payment. That is not a healthcare system, but MICK MULVANEY wants to say to those folks: Oh, you reached age 65, too bad. I am providing this healthcare program another 5 years into the future. That is simply wrong, but more than wrong, it is also in direct contradiction to the promises made by President Trump during his campaign.

The contrast is incredibly stark between the President's promise to Americans that unlike so many of the folks in his party, he would not be the one to promote tearing down Medicare and Social Security. He would not be the one to promote advancing the retirement age so people who are struggling have to struggle for another 5 years. So it is a poor fit between this individual and the office and the promises made to the American people.

Another concern I have is in regard to Congressman MULVANEY's advocacy for shutting down the economy. He seems very comfortable playing Russian roulette with our economy. He and a group of other House Members brought our government to a screeching halt in 2013 because they wanted to defund the Affordable Care Act. What is the Affordable Care Act? The Affordable Care Act has enabled 20 million Americans to gain access to healthcare that they didn't have previously.

In my home State of Oregon, the Affordable Care Act has enabled about one-half million people to gain access to healthcare, both through expansion of Medicaid, known as the Oregon Health Plan, and also through the healthcare exchange and marketplace where you can compare one policy to another, shop for the policy that best fits your family, and those of modest means get credit to help pay for those policies so they can actually afford them. It is an affordable care plan that provides for a healthcare set of benefits—benefits such as the ability to keep your children on your policy through age 26, benefits such as not having an annual limit or a lifetime limit on your policy so that when you do get seriously ill, you don't run out of healthcare partway into treating your disease. It is the Affordable Care Act that ends gender discrimination in the insurance marketplaces. It is the Affordable Care Act that says if you have a preexisting condition, you can still get insurance.

I was at a fundraising walk for a woman who had a family member with multiple sclerosis. It was a fundraiser for multiple sclerosis. She said: Senator, this year is so different from last year. That was the year before the Affordable Care Act was implemented. I asked: How so? She said: A year ago, if your loved one was diagnosed with MS and they had insurance, you knew there was a good chance that your insurance was going to run out at the end of the year or they would hit a lifetime limit, and they wouldn't be able to pay for the care they needed. She said: If you didn't have insurance, you now have a preexisting condition that would prevent you from ever getting insurance.

She went on to say that the difference between last year and this year, because of the Affordable Care Act, is that now members in the MS community—those who had the disease and their family members who were supporting them all out at this fundraising walk—now knew their loved one would have the peace of mind that they would get the care they needed. This is what a healthcare system is all about, peace of mind, but MICK MULVANEY wanted to tear away that peace of mind. He proceeded to support a 16-day government shutdown that cost our country $24 billion—and to what purpose? To rip peace of mind away from 20 million Americans.

Back in 2015, he threatened to do it all again. The damage he had done—the $24 billion he had stolen from the American Treasury in the context of damaging the government with that shutdown—he was ready to do it all again in order to make sure Planned Parenthood never gets a dime from the government. To be clear, not a single dime from the government goes to Planned Parenthood for abortions. In fact, the organization that has done more to decrease abortions than any other in our country is Planned Parenthood. The government funds go for different purposes. They go to Planned Parenthood to do cancer screenings, breast cancer screenings, prostate cancer screenings, and a whole host of fundamental basic healthcare. They are the healthcare provider for 2.5 million American women. Just as he was ready to recklessly shut down the government to rip healthcare away from 20 million Americans in 2013, he was ready to defund these essential healthcare clinics serving 2.5 million Americans in 2015. That is a sign of someone who has lost their policy foundations and is acting in an irresponsible and unacceptable manner.

Let's talk a little bit about the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. The CFPB was in response to a big problem in America, which was that we had no one looking out to shut down predatory financial practices. It was the responsibility of the Federal Reserve, but the Federal Reserve had their conversation on monetary policy up in the penthouse—the top level, if you will. That is what the Chairman of the Federal Reserve paid attention to.

They took the responsibility for consumer protection and put them down in the basement, and they locked the door and threw away the key.

Folks kept coming to the Federal Reserve saying: Hey, there is a major concern here. We have these predatory mortgages that have these teaser rates, and they are going to destroy the families who get those mortgages. They are going to destroy their dream of homeownership and turn it into a nightmare. People went to the Federal Reserve and said: By the way, we now have these wire loans, where there is no documentation of income and people are being sold these loans that they have no hope of repaying. In addition, we have another predatory practice called steering payments, which are kickbacks to originators. So they are getting kickbacks to steer people into subprime loans with high interest rates rather than prime loans that they qualify for. What happened? The Federal Reserve ignored all of that. That is the foundation for the collapse of our economy in 2008.

So along comes ELIZABETH WARREN. ELIZABETH WARREN, as an advocate, not yet a Senator, comes to this body and said: We need an agency whose mission is to look out and stop predatory financial practices, a Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and we got it done.

What does MICK MULVANEY say about this effort to stop predatory financial practices? He says it is a ''sick, sad joke.'' So I asked him about this in committee. I said: Really? This is an agency that finally is watching out for working families so they are not prey to predatory, fraudulent practices. And he said: Yes, ''a sick, sad joke.''

I said: You know, they have returned funds to 27 million Americans. What other agency has fought for Americans in that fashion—returned funds to them from folks who were operating in a predatory fashion, to 27 million Americans. I didn't change his view by raising that.

I said: You know, this agency, to those 27 million people, has returned $12 billion. There was $12 billion returned to people who were cheated; isn't that a good thing? But I didn't persuade him.

He said: You know, I don't like the way this agency is set up. I want it to be a commission rather than an individual who heads it, and I want the funds to be appropriated annually by Congress.

I can tell you exactly why he wants those provisions, because that is the way Congress, at the behest of Wall Street, can step on the airhose that supplies the oxygen to CFPB. They can stop the CFPB from functioning as a guardian, as a watchdog for consumers in America by simply defunding it.

We have a President who ran on the principle of taking on Wall Street, but MICK MULVANEY doesn't want to take on Wall Street. He wants to do their bidding, to be able to shut down this agency that is finally fighting for financial fairness for working families. Wait. We have a President who said he is going to fight for working families. MICK MULVANEY should be backing the CFPB. He should be expanding the CFPB. He should be championing the CFPB, but, no, he wants to tear it down. That is deeply disturbing.

I see my colleague, the Senator from Hawaii, who is prepared to make remarks. I am going to wrap up my remarks.

There are more concerns that I have about the policy perspectives and how out of sync this nominee is with the promises the President made to fight for working Americans, the promises he made to take on Wall Street, the promises he made to protect Social Security, the promises he made to strengthen Medicare, not to tear it down. So for all these reasons, I find MICK MULVANEY is not the right person to fill this post, and I encourage my colleagues to vote against confirming him in this capacity.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

ORDERS FOR THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2017

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it adjourn until 10 a.m., Thursday, February 16; that following the prayer and pledge, the morning hour be deemed expired, the Journal of proceedings be approved to date, and the time for the two leaders be reserved for their use later in the day, and morning business be closed; finally, that following leader remarks, the Senate proceed to executive session, as under the previous order.

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

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. GARDNER. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask unanimous consent that following the remarks of Senators SCHATZ, WHITEHOUSE, and HIRONO, the Senate resume morning business and then stand adjourned under the previous order.

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

The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, the Senate is preparing to vote on Congressman MICK MULVANEY to lead the Office of Management and Budget. This nomination may seem like it doesn't deserve a lot of attention because we don't hear much outside of Washington about the OMB, the Office of Management and Budget. It is kind of a wonky, obscure office, with fewer than 500 staff members.

At a time when there are so many looming questions about this Republic, about this administration, it is easy to overlook the Congressman's nomination, but it actually matters very much, particularly at this moment, and that is because the person who controls the budget, the person who has the final say on fiscal and financial priorities for the administration has immense power. This position controls the President's budget, and that means that this person can give the green light to programs and policies across the Federal Government or stop them in their tracks. And because he has a long track record as a legislator, Congressman MULVANEY has already shown what kind of decisionmaker he will be if he is in charge of the Office of Management and Budget, OMB.

I will be blunt. His record and his ideas are worrisome. It should concern every Senator who is worried about some of the biggest issues facing Americans, from Social Security, to public health, to the basic, uninterrupted operations of the government itself. So this vote is a moment of truth. It will determine where we really stand on the issues that shape both individual lives and our country's future.

Let me highlight just four issues to show why this person is the wrong person to run OMB.

The first is Social Security. More than 80 years ago, President Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law. In doing so, he created a national plan to provide economic security for American workers. Since then, Social Security has proven to be the most successful anti-poverty program in our history. Each year, it lifts more than 20 million Americans, including 1 million children, out of poverty.

It is hard to imagine a world without Social Security, but I want everybody to understand that pre-Social Security, we had tens of millions of Americans—more than we do now—who would be in poverty upon retirement. So this program has actually reduced poverty among the elderly more than any other program could possibly have accomplished.

Nowhere is Social Security more important than in Hawaii. More than 200,000 people receive Social Security benefits. For more than one in four Hawaii seniors, Social Security is their only source of income. And the money just isn't enough; it is about $14,000 a year. Just to give folks an understanding of Hawaii, we are considered the second or third most expensive housing market in the United States. We are after New York and sometimes in second place or third place, depending on where San Francisco is, but we are one of the most expensive places to live in the United States. For one in four Social Security recipients, that is all they get—$1,200 a month. Usually that will cover your apartment. That will not cover your electricity, it won't cover your utilities, it won't cover your food or clothing, and it won't cover your healthcare.

Today, most working households have little or no retirement assets at all, and many rely entirely on Social Security. This is partly because employer-provided pensions are becoming a thing of the past. So Social Security is more important than ever. It has become a pillar of our retirement system