



STATEMENT ON OMB DIRECTOR NOMINEE JIM NUSSLE

September 4, 2007

As the Senate prepares to vote later today on the nomination of Jim Nussle to serve as the director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), OMB Watch urges Senators to reflect on the significant budgetary and regulatory management review powers of the agency and on the ongoing oversight responsibility that Congress has regarding OMB.

~ ~ ~

Whatever the nominee's record with respect to cooperation and compromise in the budget-making process during his tenure as chair of the House Budget Committee, we are hopeful that Mr. Nussle will approach the task of completing work with Congress on the FY 2008 federal budget in a constructive spirit. We will be watchful to see how he proposes to put the country's fiscal house in order over the longer range while restoring adequate levels of investment in children's health care, education, nutrition programs, housing, environmental protection, and home energy assistance. We also hope he will respect the will of Congress to set spending priorities and adhere to fiscally responsible policies by pursuing a tax policy tempered by the need to restrain and reverse projected deficits.

We urge Congress to focus particularly on Mr. Nussle's efforts to strengthen accountability of the budget process and improve transparency, for example, by expanding the scope and functionality of the OMB earmarks database to include executive as well as legislative earmarks. It will also be important to pay close attention to OMB's crafting of workforce management policy, particularly regarding public-private work competitions.

We are equally interested in OMB's regulatory and management responsibilities. Mr. Nussle will inherit a new regulatory review executive order, Executive Order 13422, which took effect on July 24. E.O. 13422 expands the power of agency Regulatory Policy Officers (RPO) and requires these RPOs be presidential appointees. The E.O. states that "no rulemaking shall commence" without approval from the RPO, putting these political appointees in a position of unquestioned power. If these changes must take effect, we urge Mr. Nussle to work with Congress to hold the RPOs accountable for their decisions. Overall, we encourage Mr. Nussle to work toward ensuring greater transparency within the agencies and the White House and to stimulate public participation in the rulemaking process.

We also encourage Mr. Nussle to withdraw the proposed risk assessment bulletin as the National Academies of Science and Congress have recommended. We believe Mr. Nussle should lead an OMB respectful of agencies' scientific and technical expertise and to focus on providing adequate resources rather than additional analytical burdens.

We remind the Senate that the OMB director has significant powers to oversee executive branch operations from budget to regulation to transparency to management. We encourage the Senate to take this opportunity to review the responsibilities of the OMB director and to hold Mr. Nussle accountable for his performance in the months ahead.

Celebrating 20 years: Promoting Government Accountability and Citizen Participation - 1983 - 2003.

1742 Connecticut Ave NW
Washington, DC 20009



tel: 202.234.8494
fax: 202.234.8584



email: ombwatch@ombwatch.org
web: <http://www.ombwatch.org>