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Subject: Federal Insider: Mulvaney, Trump management pick, lacking on hiring freeze information

## Mulvaney, Trump management pick, lacking on hiring freeze information

By Joe Davidson

Rep. Mick Mulvaney (R-S.C.), nominated to lead the Office of Management and Budget, is seen at his confirmation hearing on Jan. 24. (Jim Lo Scalzo/European Pressphoto Agency)

Rep. Mick Mulvaney's sharp command of many federal budget issues was on display Tuesday, as he engaged in a repartee that resembled a quiz show lightning round with Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.).

But for someone poised to be President Trump's top governmental manager, Mulvaney looked like a losing contestant on key questions involving the people who make government work.

During a morning [Senate Budget Committee](#) hearing, the first of two on his nomination as Office of Management and Budget (OMB) director, Mulvaney, a South Carolina Republican, displayed notable ignorance or lack of preparation on federal workforce topics in the news, including the hiring freeze Trump imposed Monday.

"I found that surprising," Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) said after the hearing, where Mulvaney faltered on several of the senator's questions. Perhaps it shouldn't have been, given Mulvaney's dismal ratings on federal employee union congressional voting scorecards.

Asked by Kaine about the [presidential memorandum](#) ordering the freeze, Mulvaney said: "I'm not familiar with the details," a comment he repeated during an afternoon session with the [Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee](#).

Asked about a Trump campaign pledge “[pitching the false view](#)” that federal employees are corrupt or beholden to special interests, Mulvaney said: “I’m not familiar with the statement.”

Asked if he were aware of news, [first reported in The Washington Post](#) then widely recounted elsewhere, about the Trump transition team requesting the names of Energy Department employees who worked on climate change, Mulvaney said: “I’m not, no sir.”

Asked by Sen. Mark Warner (D-Va.) if he knew that the size of the federal workforce relative to the country’s population is smaller now than it was under President Ronald Reagan, Mulvaney said: “I was not aware of that piece of data.”

We can give him a pass on that last factoid.

It is, however, information Trump administration officials should keep in mind before they spout off about “the dramatic expansion of the federal workforce in recent years” to justify the hiring freeze, as a [White House statement](#) says. Warner is right. There are fewer feds now than under Reagan and the number has barely increased in recent years. More importantly, the number of feds per capita has fallen significantly compared to the nation’s growing population.

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No one expects nominees to know all the details of agencies where they are not yet employed.

But why doesn’t Mulvaney know more about the hiring freeze memorandum, which specifically directs OMB to prepare “a long-term plan to reduce the size

of the Federal Government's workforce through attrition"? It's no shock senators would ask about it. In fairness, even the [administration lacks key details](#) on implementation of its freeze.

Why isn't the Republican congressman aware of a [campaign promise by Trump](#), who was the Republican presidential candidate, to freeze hiring in an effort "to clean up the corruption and special interest collusion in Washington, D.C."? That was part of Trump's "Contract with the American Voter," a major campaign document that broadly and unfairly links feds, and inexplicably federal job applicants, to corruption.

Once he gets up to speed, Mulvaney, who seems to like numbers, would do Trump a solid by getting the White House to focus on data before developing policies and issuing statements as if 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. were just another place to rally his base.

Yet, it is this incoming OMB director who was among the hard-right-wing House members who found the 2013 partial government shutdown an acceptable management tool, as Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.) noted during the homeland security hearing.

"We believe we did it for the right reasons," [Mulvaney said at the time](#) of the shutdown. "We believe it was good policy. We believe good policy makes good politics."

But at some point the politicking needs to give way to thoughtful government management, which the hiring freeze is not.

"President Trump needs to stop campaigning and start governing," said Randy Erwin, president of the National Federation of Federal Employees. "This [hiring freeze] shows he is still campaigning, only now he is doing it at the taxpayers' expense. I do not think President Trump understands the crippling effect a hiring freeze has on the ability of agencies to function, or perhaps he just does not care. Either way, this is bad news for the American people."

It's going to be a tough four years for feds with Trump in the White House and with Mulvaney riding shotgun next door at OMB.

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