

Conservative Action Project

The Conservative Action Project (CAP), founded in 2008 by many conservative leaders with former **Attorney General Edwin Meese III** serving as the Founding Chairman. CAP is currently chaired by **The Honorable Becky Norton Dunlop** and is designed to facilitate conservative leaders working together on behalf of common goals. Participants include the CEOs of over 100 organizations representing all major elements of the conservative movement-economic, social and national security.

Memo for the Movement

The Senate Must Swiftly Confirm Russ Vought

October 25, 2017
Washington, DC

Conservatives have expressed concern over the Senate's slow pace in confirming President Trump's nominees. At first, it seemed that this was a tactic of Senator Schumer and his loyal Democrats. Then, it seemed that Republican Leader McConnell was responsible by reducing Senate work schedules to 2.5 days a week.

Now, even the mainstream media reports that some of these nominees are being blocked from consideration by members of the President's own party. Specifically, Sen. John Cornyn (R-TX) is refusing to allow consideration of the nomination of deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Russ Vought, who is a veteran of Capitol Hill and formerly staffed Vice President Pence when he was in Congress, in addition to working for former Sen. Phil Gramm, and Rep. Jeb Hensarling, both Texans. Cornyn's hold should be concerning to conservatives for the following reasons.

First, Sen. Cornyn is a member of Republican Senate leadership and it is his job to aid the President of his own party to confirm qualified nominees. Vought is more than qualified for the position — indeed, Cornyn has raised no objection to Vought's ability to perform in the role to which he is nominated. He is a conservative held in the highest esteem by his peers. He has an unquestioned record of expertise in budget and policy issues combined with his history of honorable service in key roles in the House and Senate. Without a substantive objection to the nominee's qualifications, President Trump should expect the Senate's Republican leadership to quickly confirm this nominee.

Second, Sen. Cornyn has publicly stated he is blocking Vought's confirmation, not because of any concerns with his qualifications or policy views, but instead for the unrelated issue of demanding more federal funding. Texas is already receiving aid in the \$36.5 billion supplemental funding bill that recently passed the House, and is under consideration by the Senate. Yet, Cornyn wants more. In taking this position, Cornyn appears to be playing politics and one-upsmanship with his fellow Texans, Governor Abbott and Senator Cruz, both of whom have helped to bring about appropriate and constructive federal support in response to this natural disaster. This behavior by Senator Cornyn is unbecoming a Senator who wants to be the next Republican leader in the Senate and who professes to be a principled conservative.

Third, however, is the fact that Cornyn is blocking the confirmation of a nominee who has been repeatedly attacked for his religious beliefs. At Vought's confirmation hearing in June, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) claimed that Vought was not qualified for a position within the government because of his Christian faith. With his comments, Sanders overtly violated Article IV of the Constitution, which prohibits religion as a threshold test for public service. In making these comments, Sanders crossed into territory that is dismaying in its intolerance and shocking in its intention. The only answer to such an outright and unconstitutional expression of bigotry is swift confirmation of Vought's nomination by the Senate. Yet, by blocking this nomination, Sen. Cornyn is complicit in support of Sen. Sanders' position by holding Vought's nomination hostage.

The Constitution gives the Senate the responsibility to advise and consent on presidential nominees. This is a critical role that conservatives have continually used to stop unqualified nominees, or those nominees which senators believe will advance bad policy or fail to uphold the Constitution. But, Sen. Cornyn's actions are not based on this.

What Sen. Cornyn is engaged in is not principled leadership. It is not majority party leadership.

We call on Sen. Cornyn to lift his hold on the nomination of Russ Vought, once again stand for principle, provide the kind of leadership expected from the #2 Republican in the Senate and prevail on Majority Leader McConnell to schedule a vote on this nominee without delay.

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