
Russ Vought: Blinded Him With Science

Thank heaven for small favors:

> Senators on the Appropriations Committee on Sunday released a stopgap funding bill to avert a government shutdown by Oct. 1 and temporarily block a White House proposal that would fundamentally change how the federal government awards and manages grants.
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> In late May, the Office of Management and Budget released a proposed rule to overhaul the Uniform Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 200) that reshapes how billions of dollars in research, education and public health funding are awarded. The proposal would require all federal grants, including scientific grants, to be approved by President Donald Trump's political appointees to ensure the funding demonstrably "advances the President's policy priorities"....
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> The proposal was met with a groundswell of opposition among researchers, scientists, biomedical organizations and doctors. Public comments were due July 13—a total of 496,805 comments were publicly submitted, the vast majority of them negative, according to a STAT analysis of 52,000 comments that were posted in full.

In typical fashion, Republicans only agreed to block the rule temporarily, which is absurd on a policy level. But of course the Republican Party is absurd on a policy level, so that is par for the course.

It's basically about negotiating strategy. Democrats got this, and so it is one reason why they will allow a continuing resolution to pass in the first place — thereby preventing a government shutdown that the GOP does not want going into what figures to be a bad midterm in any event. But by keeping it temporary, it will allow Russ Vought, who hates science to hold it over the Democrats when this CR expires in December.

Of course, it's not a done deal yet: the GOP House, which also hates science, has not passed this version, and who knows if President Toddler will just have a hissy fit and veto the CR. But you take what you can get.

Or do you? I suppose that the Democrats could say, "no dice — permanent of nothing," and just shut down the government. Thanks to Chuck Schumer's and Hakeem Jeffries' strategy in December, they won the last shutdown politically: everyone knows now that the GOP owns skyrocketing health care costs because Schumer and Jeffries pushed the shutdown over expiring tax credits. But I suppose that the Hill Dems are using Napoleon's maxim: Never Interrupt Your Enemy When He Is Making A Mistake. Trump has worse approval ratings now than he did after January 6th, and is sliding into George W Bush During Great Recession territory: let him do it

I also suspect that with or without the rule, Vought will say that political appointees *must* be able to review grant request because of the Unitary Executive Theory. The argument would go that the Executive is supposed to administer grants; the Executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States; thus he has all the power. That makes a certain amount of sense *if you believe that the Unitary Executive Theory has any validity,* which it doesn't. So to paraphrase Churchill, this isn't even the end of the beginning: it's sort of in the middle of the beginning. I suspect that there will have to be lots of lawsuits on this coming up. But that is how we live now.