

Senator Jay Rockefeller
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Hearing on the “Nomination of the Honorable Sylvia M. Burwell to be
Director, Office of Management and Budget”
Statement as Prepared for Delivery
April 9, 2013

Mr. Chairman, fifteen years ago, I was honored to introduce Sylvia Mathews during her nomination hearing to become Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Today, I could not be more proud to testify again on her behalf for the even more prestigious role of Director.

As we are debating the best course for our country’s economic future, we need smart, strong leadership at our federal budget office. Sylvia Mathews Burwell is absolutely the person for this job. I urge this Committee to swiftly consider and confirm her as the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

I have known Sylvia her entire life and her proud parents for years. Cleo and Bill set an incredible example for their two daughters, Sylvia and Stephanie. I have attended church and been with them at many major milestones including the wedding reception for Sylvia and her husband, Stephen. I have a deep abiding respect and fondness for the Mathews family. They are truly great Americans and West Virginians.

I can tell you that Sylvia is brilliant. She won’t tell you that because she is modest, but I will. Sylvia graduated from Harvard and was a Rhodes Scholar, but she has never forgotten her West Virginia roots, and the people she and I are both driven to serve.

She is humble, she is hard-working, she has integrity, and she remains devoted to helping our nation’s hard working families achieve the American dream, just as her Greek immigrant grandparents did so many years ago.

Sylvia is a proud native of Hinton, West Virginia – a historic railroad community nestled in the mountains of Appalachia that has had more than its fair share of economic hardships.

Though she could have made a fortune in the corporate world, Sylvia has spent the majority of her life in public service or working at organizations that are dedicated to lifting up struggling families and communities.

Sylvia previously served in the Clinton Administration as Staff Director for the National Economic Council, Chief of Staff to Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, Deputy Chief of Staff to the President, and Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

She was central to crafting the Clinton budget in the late 1990s that led our country to three budget surpluses in a row and to record growth.

And there is no doubt that she is the person to tackle the challenges of today. Debts and deficits are staggering. The tax code is riddled with complexity and loopholes, and while the economy is improving, growth is much too slow for my liking.

Our country needs someone with the experience and the intellect of Sylvia Mathews Burwell at the center of the great debates to come over the next four years.

After her time in the Clinton Administration, Sylvia turned to philanthropic work as President of the Gates Foundation's Global Development Program and most recently the Wal-Mart Foundation.

Not only does Sylvia understand budget issues, but she wants to put that knowledge to good use and really help people in need. That is what makes her entirely right for this job. It is not only about the numbers and line items; it is about the people who are impacted by them.

Sylvia is a true business and economics expert. But she is not someone who looks at those issues in a vacuum. She understands deeply the impact they have at home in West Virginia and on the people and places like ours across the country.

Though she has travelled the world and earned great renown, Sylvia still possesses the same qualities she did as the star student from Hinton I met so many years ago.

The people of West Virginia are incredibly proud to call her one of our own. And I am proud to introduce her to this Committee today.

Thank you.