

**STATEMENT OF SEAN O'KEEFE,
NOMINATED TO BE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT
AND BUDGET FEBRUARY 27,2001 BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. It is an honor and a pleasure to be here. This is a very special occasion for me and my family made all the more memorable by your opening statements and the most thoughtful introductions just offered by two distinguished members. We are the fortunate constituents of Congressman Jim Walsh, a gentleman of the House who serves his district with great distinction and integrity. But, I also count myself among his legion of admirers and friends who are the beneficiaries of his distinguished public service. And to Senator Ted Stevens, I am forever in his debt for the extraordinary friendship he has shown me and my wife, Laura for more than twenty years. He has been my mentor, career counselor, and advocate throughout my professional life - and he has set me straight on more than one occasion - and always with my best interest in mind. I am honored and most grateful to him for his presence and support here today.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to express my gratitude to the Committee for the expeditious consideration of my nomination, having received the formal paperwork just before the scheduled Senate recess and now turning your attention to the matter immediately upon return. This is an extraordinary courtesy and I am most appreciative. During the break, the Committee staff and personal staff expended a lot of effort to prepare for this hearing. They very helpfully met with me just after the recess began to familiarize me with the policies and issues which are of importance to the Committee. Having served on the Senate staff in my public service past, I know what a sacrifice it is to expend precious time during the rare periods when the Senate is out of session. As such, I am particularly grateful to them for their very helpful and dedicated effort.

It is, indeed, a privilege and an honor to be the President's nominee for this challenging post. Few are afforded the opportunity to participate and contribute in such appointed capacities, much less for a third time. I am filled with great anticipation and a very substantial dose of humility for what I know will be an important road ahead. Public service is never to be taken lightly, and particularly so given the challenging portfolio at the Office of Management and Budget.

Having spent the last several years teaching graduate students who are aspiring public servants at the Syracuse University Maxwell School, the nation's top ranked school of public affairs, this is a responsibility to step up and do what I have been preaching. Explaining the stakes involved to my children has been a different challenge. I am so pleased that they are all here this morning. Our oldest, 14 year old daughter Lindsey who possesses the intellectual maturity of twice her age, appreciates the significance and understands that I am afforded an exceptional privilege. But for our two sons, 11 year old Jonathan and Kevin who turns 10 tomorrow, explaining this has required a little imagination. As active youth program athletes in our community, they took aboard the significance when I likened this to the chance to go to "fantasy baseball" camp with the New York Yankees. And indeed, the President has assembled the public service equivalent thereof by his leadership selections. I am excited with the prospect of working for such a distinguished group, most particularly for a gent with the professionalism and intellectual

capacity of Mitch Daniels. It promises to be a great challenge and even greater opportunity for me to learn from him as we forge our partnership in advancement of the President's agenda.

Explaining the significance of this opportunity to Laura, my partner and best friend, was perhaps easiest of all because she is so thoroughly supportive of the President and the policies he plans to champion, she understands the historic significance of this time, and shares my commitment to the importance of public service. But she also fully appreciates the hardships and sacrifice this profession entails. Her willingness to be a part of this public service odyssey, yet again, speaks volumes for her love and extraordinary tolerance - far greater than I deserve in both instances.

This is an important time and important work lies ahead. My fitness for this office is, of course, for this Committee to judge and for the United States Senate to decide. But if I am fortunate to be confirmed, I will do my best.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to be here. I look forward to what I hope will be the first of many opportunities to dialogue with you.