

Put the Public in Public Policy

December 2, 2018

"Negotiations are impossible without trust," wrote Leon Panetta in a *Washington Post* op-ed.

What with all his experience, Mr. Panetta has *some* reason to be trusted on his chosen subject, government shutdowns. The California Democrat spent 16 years in the Congress before joining the Clinton Administration as Director of the Office of Management and Budget and later serving as White House Chief of Staff. He was Obama's first CIA Director and then Secretary of Defense.

But not every one of the sage's pronouncements passes muster.

"Never," he advised, "negotiate in public."

He is of course referring to the hilarious chat President Trump had with two Democratic

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leaders . . . and a bland, bored, and blank Vice President Pence.

"The talks to avert a shutdown got off to a terrible start," Panetta argues, "when the



president, during an Oval Office meeting with likely incoming speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Senate Minority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), began arguing his position in front of White House reporters. . . . In all the negotiations on the budget that I took part in as both House Budget Committee chairman and the director of the Office of Management and Budget, not one took place in front of the media. Public shouting matches usually guarantee failure."

The implication? That these previous negotiations were "successful."

To those with careers ensconced in Washington power, they worked out just splendidly, I'm sure. But the aftermath of these private, secretive agreements on the rest of us? It can be quantified: \$21 trillion.

In federal debt.

We do not need more of that "success."

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Yes.

More of that.

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.