

send things to the Senate. If you are proud of the step you are taking, send it to the Senate. Let there be a vote of the people's representatives. Let there be discussion. Do we fear discussion? Do we fear debate? Are we so given to the cancel culture that we just say it is our way or the highway?

I would note that submitting these types of agreements for consideration is a bare minimum standard set out in the Constitution, and there is no legitimate reason anyone in this Chamber should object to that. They should welcome respectful, robust debate.

I think we can all agree that this oversight duty is an important one, and I would ask my colleagues to join me in letting the administration know we are not going to abandon it simply because it would make things more convenient for them.

Freedom and preserving freedom are not always convenient. It takes a lot of hard work. It takes this body doing its job. It doesn't take "my way or the highway" Executive orders coming out of the White House.

On Inauguration Day, President Biden promised unity: all for it, wanted to see it, going to work for it—nice words. But so far he has done nothing but hide behind those Executive orders and force through policies that even members of his own party object to.

In Tennessee, I have talked to many who have, for most of their lives, been Democrats, and they are stunned—indeed, they are very concerned—about this authoritarian approach to running the country. Sign an Executive order and be done with it, hearing that the Speaker of the House has a few people who can vote proxy for people, seeing all this fencing around the Capitol causes Tennesseans to say: What in the world is going on up there? This is not how we are supposed to act.

And I will tell you, to my friends across the aisle, one day this tactic is going to backfire on the millions of Americans who are standing up. They are contacting us. They are speaking out. They are having buyer's remorse. It will be something that will backfire because this is not the way we should be running our country.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MARKEY). The Senator from Iowa.

(The remarks of Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 391 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Texas.

TEXAS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, my State is no stranger to severe weather.

In the past few years, we have experienced the devastation of major hurricanes, tropical storms, and tornadoes. But last week brought something entirely new in the form of extreme weather—winter storms, prolonged subfreezing temperatures, and treacherous roadways across the entire State. And unlike, for example, the State of Massachusetts, where that may not be entirely uncommon, we are not used to that subzero freezing weather.

Our State was not prepared, I think it is clear to say, correct to say, for these low temperatures or the devastating impact they would have on our critical infrastructure.

Frozen natural gas wells and wind turbines, among other issues, led to widespread power outages, and millions of Texans were left without a way to keep their family warm throughout the historic low temperatures.

Compounding matters even further, some 12 million Texans faced water disruptions due to the lasting power outages and frozen or broken water lines. Cities across the State issued boil notices, and folks whose taps are still dry resorted to boiling snow as their only option for drinking water or perhaps even to flush the toilets.

The weather created incredibly dangerous conditions for many across the State, especially our most vulnerable citizens. We know of nearly 80 Texans who have died due to this extreme weather, and that number is likely to climb in the days ahead.

These widespread outages will prompt a necessary investigation into the high level of generation failures, as well as the overall security and reliability of our energy grid. We have a lot of work to do to ensure that these deadly mass outages never occur again—no matter what Mother Nature sends our way. There is no reason for millions of people in one of the most energy-rich places in the world to be left without reliable power.

Senator CRUZ and I sent a letter to President Biden urging him to grant Governor Abbott's request for an emergency disaster declaration, and I appreciate the President's quick action to ensure our State could receive the full range of Federal resources to respond to this crisis.

I also worked with the Governor and the Department of Energy to secure an emergency order allowing Texas power generators to increase production, and I appreciate the fact that that, too, was quickly approved.

In times of crisis there is no red team and no blue team, and I want to thank every person who has supported the response to this crisis so far, whether they are Texans or not. I know more will be needed in the days and weeks ahead, and I want to assure the folks back home that I am listening, I am working, and I am here to help any way that I can. And I know that I speak for the entire Texas delegation.

I know there are still many without water and electricity, and I want to as-

sure them that you are the Nation's priority. But in the face of hardship—and, as I started my remarks, we have been through a lot over the last few years—I am always in awe of the way Texans show up and help one another—neighbors helping neighbors. We have seen countless inspiring stories in the past, and this disaster is no exception.

There are stories like that of Ken Everly, an 82-year-old Air Force veteran from Grande Prairie. Mr. Everly is on hospice care. He relies on a breathing machine to keep him alive and a special air mattress that prevents bedsores to keep him comfortable. When his home lost power, Mr. Everly was in serious danger of losing his life. The breathing machine cut off, and the air mattress deflated, leaving him struggling to breathe on an iron bed frame.

His son-in-law Nate pleaded for help on Facebook, and within hours help arrived. Nate said: "I don't know where it came from, but a generator showed up." Thanks to the generosity of a stranger, Mr. Everly once again had his breathing machine operating, a comfortable mattress, and heat in his home.

The best part of that story, though, is that it is not unique. In ways big and small, we have seen other examples of neighbors going out of their way to help one another.

Jeep drivers in North Texas teamed up to offer free rides to and from work for healthcare workers and first responders. Restaurants across the State offered free food to folks without power. And countless Texans shared offers on social media to deliver warm meals, bottles of water, and a range of other supplies to those in need.

One of the big issues that folks back home have faced is a lack of safe drinking water, a need Houston-area breweries stepped up to fill. The breweries already had a supply of clean water on hand for their brewing process, and they spread the word to their communities: Come by with a container, and we will give you some clean water. These breweries collectively donated thousands of gallons of clean drinking water completely free of charge.

Across Texas, churches, schools, nonprofits, community centers, and local organizations opened their doors as warming centers. One of those warming centers is operated by Houston's most beloved furniture store owner, known as "Mattress Mack." Dating back to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Mack has opened the doors of his stores to provide food and shelter to those impacted by extreme weather. Over the last several days, Gallery Furniture, his furniture business, has been open around the clock for Texans to stay as long as they need, whether it is an hour for a hot meal or for several nights.

These stories warm my heart, and they are a reminder of the strength and generosity of Texans and an encouraging reminder of the endless amount of goodwill that still exists in the world. The outpouring of love exemplifies a quote that I heard some time ago

from a Texas county commissioner after one particularly terrible accident in West Texas. He said: "Being a Texan doesn't describe where you're from; it describes who your family is."

Well, I am grateful to those countless Texans who supported our communities across our State during this crisis. First responders and 9/11 dispatchers have gone above and beyond the call of duty. Healthcare workers, fighting a pandemic already, have now had to deal with power outages, staffing shortages, and water disruptions because of the storm. Utility workers and energy providers have worked, of course, around the clock in dangerous conditions to restore power and safe drinking water to Texans. And millions of unsung heroes have helped their fellow Texans get through these dark days: checking on an elderly neighbor, helping drivers whose vehicles were stuck in the snow, welcoming people into their homes, donating supplies to those in need, and so much more.

I would like to offer a special thank-you to members of my staff in Texas who continued working throughout this crisis while battling power and water outages themselves. Because of their diligence, my office has connected Texans in need with local resources to provide shelter, food, and water. We have stayed in contact with State and local emergency officials about the ongoing crisis, and we have assisted local critical care facilities in need, including a large COVID testing lab in Austin. We helped connect it with local resources to receive additional fuel for its generators so millions of dollars of COVID testing materials and pathology tests would not go to waste.

The past year has dealt us a tough hand. I would say that is true for America. But I have faith that we will come through this crisis just as we always have before—together. I continue to say a prayer for those impacted by the storm and assure my constituents, my friends and neighbors in Texas, that I will continue to do everything in my power to help our State recover and rebuild.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. President, on another matter, the Senate will continue to evaluate President Biden's nominees for critical positions throughout the Federal Government. Yesterday and today the Senate Judiciary Committee, on which I am privileged to serve, heard from Judge Merrick Garland and others who have testified in connection with his nomination. Of course, Judge Garland has been nominated to serve as the next Attorney General.

I have said before publicly that Judge Garland is highly qualified for the job. He is a widely respected judge with the right experience and credentials and the right temperament to lead the Department and manage its many critical missions. I was struck by Judge Garland's humility and his humanity. I believe he is a good man and a good person for this job.

But I have to say that I am under no illusion that he is going to be able to stop the policies of this administration, some of which I am not going to agree with, some of which I will fight and try to oppose.

I am encouraged by Judge Garland's pledge to keep politics out of the Justice Department, which is a significant improvement over the past. I know our Democratic colleagues like to act like all of the concerns that we had about the Justice Department were just during the Trump administration, and so I did have to remind them that the Obama administration Justice Department had a few problems of their own.

Nevertheless, Judge Garland, while we don't agree on everything—and it is true of other nominees of the President that I have supported—I don't think that is the standard by which I should provide my consent as a Senator. But I do believe he has the right experience and character to serve.

Unfortunately I can't offer that sort of full-throated, enthusiastic support for the President's nominee to lead the Office of Management and Budget. The announcement of Neera Tanden's nomination managed to do something increasingly rare these days, and that is to put conservatives and progressives on the same side of the argument.

Ms. Tanden has repeatedly made combative, insulting, and flat-out false statements against both Democrats and Republicans. She has referred to Republicans as "evil" and "monsters." She has villainized Leader MCCONNELL and called Senator COTTON a "fraud" and Senator COLLINS "the worst." She has gone toe-to-toe with Senator BERNIE SANDERS, who accused her and her progressive organization of "maligning [his] staff and supporters and belittling progressive ideas."

She has even peddled a completely false conspiracy theory that Russian hackers changed votes in 2016 to help President Trump. In short, Ms. Tanden has consistently made comments that stand in stark contrast to the Biden administration's top goals of promoting the facts and unifying our country.

Last Friday, the Senator from West Virginia, Senator MANCHIN, announced he will not support Ms. Tanden's nomination because of her inflammatory rhetoric that would, he said, have a "toxic and detrimental impact" on Congress's relationship with the Office of Management and Budget. Yesterday, Senator COLLINS, who is known for working across party lines, said she won't support this toxic nomination.

I agree with our friends from West Virginia and Maine, and I think these announcements create a nearly impossible path to confirmation for this nominee. In order to be confirmed, she would need the support of at least one Republican Senator—and more, if there are additional Democrats who share the views of Senator MANCHIN.

Based on her well-documented history of divisive and misleading com-

ments, I think this nominee faces long odds, to say the least. My friendly advice to President Biden is to withdraw Neera Tanden's nomination and select someone who, at the very least, has not promoted wild conspiracy theories and openly bashed people on both sides of the aisle that she happens to disagree with.

If President Biden is truly interested in unifying our country, I would expect him to select an OMB nominee with mainstream views and a proven ability to work respectfully with those who have different views from his or hers.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, "More deaths in 2020 than in any year in over a decade." That is what the Chicago Sun-Times headline read last week. But this wasn't a story about the coronavirus. It was an article about suicide. There were more suicides by Black residents of Cook County, IL, in 2020 than over the past 10 years. All told, 437 of our neighbors in Cook County took their lives.

At the same time, more than 600 Cook County residents died from opioid overdoses between January and June 2020 alone—double the number from a year earlier.

While the human suffering of COVID-19 has captured our attention, as it should, two other deadly epidemics in America still rage on: opioids and the mental health crises.

Even before the virus took its toll, we had been in the midst of the worst drug overdose crisis in our Nation's history, and we are witnessing skyrocketing rates of suicide. But COVID-19 has deepened these epidemics, which sadly feed on isolation and despair.

With the convergence of coronavirus emergencies, we are failing those most vulnerable to addiction and mental health challenges. And like the coronavirus, mental health challenges and addiction can occur with any one of us in any family, in any neighborhood.

Earlier this month, the New York Times profiled three American mothers on the brink of chaos and crisis. The story chronicled the relentless stress and burdens of working mothers over 11 months of this panic—struggling to balance remote learning duties for their kids, keeping their families safe and healthy, keeping food on the table, paying the bills, and knowing that every morning they have to get up and do it all over again that day and the next day, with no end in sight.

One of the mothers described the struggle this way. She said: