

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: