

will do it in a way that is inclusive, that respects the drive for racial justice, because he has lived that movement in his own life—the movement for racial justice. To end disparities and inequities are part of Miguel Cardona's agenda because it is his life. It is in his DNA, and it is part of his heritage and his family. And that is the reason why I am so proud of his success, but also of his vision and his dedication to the future of American education.

I urge my colleagues to vote yes for his confirmation. You will be proud you did, just as I am proud to stand here in support of him. He has lived the American dream, and he will open it through his vision and his courage for countless other young people who desperately need that faith in their country and its schools.

Today, American public education has a future that is bright and promising with Miguel Cardona's leadership. I am proud to say he is a product of Connecticut. His roots are there, and so is his vision and hope and faith.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

TEXAS

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, last Friday, I joined Governor Abbott, fellow Members of the Texas congressional delegation, and several State and local leaders and joined President Biden on his first trip to Texas since taking office on January 20. We only wish it could have come under better circumstances.

Texans, of course, are still reeling from the deadly winter freeze that crippled our critical infrastructure and left millions without power and water. Thousands of Texans are still without clean water and under a boil instruction, and countless others are dealing with the damage caused by burst pipes.

I truly appreciate the President and the First Lady coming to Houston to learn more about the ongoing response and recovery efforts, and I thank the President for answering the request of Senator CRUZ, Governor Abbott, and myself to order a national disaster declaration.

During times of crisis, Texans are always eager to lend a hand to their neighbors, and the last couple of weeks have proved to be no exception. I am always encouraged by those heartwarming stories of folks helping others in ways big and small: welcoming people into their homes, checking on their elderly neighbors, delivering hot meals to those in need, and much more.

So I am glad the President and First Lady were able to see the incredible work also of one of the Houston area's most reliable friends, and that is the Houston Food Bank. For more than 40 years, the Houston Food Bank has fought hunger in the Houston region through a variety of programs serving Texans of all ages. When COVID-19 hit last year, the need for that assistance skyrocketed, as you might imagine.

I was able to visit the food bank last summer to learn more about how they

have adjusted their operations to keep up with the demand, while implementing precautions to keep their volunteers safe and healthy. So I was glad to join the President and First Lady to learn more about the incredible ways that the Houston Food Bank has continued to serve the community in the wake of this winter storm.

As I have said before and, as the President reiterated on Friday in Houston, there is no red team, there is no blue team during a time of crisis.

FEMA officials have said that disaster response efforts work best when they are locally executed, State managed, and federally supported, and I agree that is the appropriate formula. This structure gives local officials the ability to cater response efforts to their specific communities while tapping into the range of resources available from the State and Federal Government.

I want to assure my fellow Texans that I and the entire Texas delegation here in Congress will continue to do everything we can to be responsive to the needs that they have. Part of that, though, is through rapid mobilization of resources. After Governor Abbott, as I said, made the formal request for an emergency disaster declaration, Senator CRUZ and I sent a letter to President Biden urging him to grant that request. And, as I said, he did so without delay.

So this formal disaster declaration has allowed our State to receive a range of resources to respond to the crisis, including blankets, bottled water, generators, and additional fuel. These resources were vital to sustaining hospital operations and supporting the most vulnerable Texans while power and water were being restored.

Senator CRUZ and I also wrote to the President urging him to grant the Governor's request for a major disaster declaration and all types of public and individual assistance for each of Texas's 254 counties. A major disaster declaration opens up even more Federal resources to help communities and individuals recover in the aftermath of an emergency like this. It can include everything from housing assistance for folks who are unable to stay in their home due to water leakage and burst pipes to unemployment assistance to crisis counseling.

So far, President Biden has approved the major disaster declaration for 126 counties, and I know State and local leaders are working with the administration to seek approval for the remaining counties.

Insurance industry leaders believe this could be the costliest weather event in our State's history, and we have to do everything we can to lessen the burden on Texas families.

Of course, my staff and I are in close contact with State and local leaders who are managing and executing the response, and we are constantly looking for ways to assist and move the recovery along.

In the aftermath of these widespread outages, of course, two questions jump out at you: One is, What happened? And, two, how do we prevent it from ever happening again?

We know now, at least so far, that there wasn't a single point of failure. But where it has to do with the power, this was the result of failures in equipment across the State that weren't properly winterized. Natural gas lines, wind turbines, and other power equipment froze, cutting off a huge percentage of our power generation capacity. The remaining generators were overloaded by the sky-high demand of these subzero temperatures, and much of Texas went through rolling blackouts and more.

This storm claimed the lives of nearly 80 Texans. It left millions without power and water for several days. It destroyed homes and businesses and created a sense of fear across the State.

We need to do what we can now to ensure that Texas's critical infrastructure will be able to withstand anything Mother Nature sends our way. It is not just about Texas. It is really about the critical infrastructure throughout the United States.

I am working on a measure to build grid resiliency, so we can maintain reliable power throughout any type of extreme weather. Whether it is a polar vortex or a heat wave or a hurricane or tornado, our grids and energy sources across the country must be able to operate without disruption. This should be a bipartisan priority for folks from every corner of the United States.

In Texas, we are accustomed to our infrastructure being able to withstand the high temperatures we are used to during the summer, but not the rare subzero temperatures that paralyzed the State 2 weeks ago. In other parts of the country, grids may face the opposite problem: They are able to operate during freezing temperatures but not during a heat wave. I am trying to work on a way to get funding to the States to help build grid resiliency in a way that makes sense for each of those specific needs.

Our Nation has had issues with funding grid resiliency and modernization efforts, and this is a good opportunity to make an investment in that infrastructure. My hope is that this will be a big bipartisan effort, including fellow Members of the Texas delegation and colleagues on both sides of the aisle here in the Senate. We need to do everything we can as Americans and Senators to strengthen and modernize our grid before it is tested again. Team Texas will do everything we can to get our neighbors on the road to recovery and prevent us from experiencing widespread outages in the future.

In conclusion, I want to thank everyone who has supported our State in ways big and small over the last couple of weeks and who will no doubt work with us in our efforts to come back stronger in the days that lie ahead.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

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

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

Mr. COONS. Madam President, it has long been said that “neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays” our U.S. postal “couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.” These words, in fact, are chiseled in granite above the entrance to the post office on 8th Avenue in New York City—one of the grandest post offices in our Nation. It is the adopted creed of the faithful and hard-working letter carriers and frontline workforce of our Postal Service.

As I have said before, I have no beef with the men and women of our Postal Service, but I have real and deep concerns about how the Postal Service is being run under the current Postmaster General.

President Biden doesn’t get to choose a new Postmaster General just because he is the new President. In fact, the current officeholder, Louis DeJoy, was chosen by the Board under the previous administration.

Weeks ago, I joined with many colleagues and with Chairman PETERS of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which is responsible for the Postal Service, to send a letter to Postmaster General DeJoy to restore on-time delivery and stop the harmful systemwide changes that have caused unacceptable mail delays.

Sadly, that is not the first time I have had to reach out, with Senators in this body, to the Postmaster General. In fact, on five separate occasions, we have written the Postmaster General, between August and February, last year to this year. We have demanded transparency. We have insisted on the restoration of mail sorting machines. We have asked for assistance with vote-by-mail deliveries and wrote for just simple answers to pending constituent inquiries.

In my hometown of Wilmington, DE, last August, I joined our attorney general, Kathy Jennings, my senior Senator, TOM CARPER, Congresswoman LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER, and a series of union leaders for a day of action to save the Postal Service.

A few days later, I drove myself to our mail distribution center in New Castle after leadership of the Postal Service denied my request to visit. Thanks to having been alerted by some frontline employees, I drove around back and was able to see a dismantled massive piece of mail handling equipment left outside in the rain.

In January and February alone, my office received hundreds of messages from constituents complaining about

mail issues. Since last April, I have heard from nearly 5,000 Delawareans—folks asking for robust funding for the Postal Service, wanting stronger vote-by-mail initiatives, and hundreds and hundreds of them reporting delays in the mail.

I want to take a few minutes, if I might, and just go through some of these concerns I have heard, which, I have also heard from colleagues, are being replicated across our Nation.

Gloria Lester, down in Lewes, in Sussex County, said that mail that previously took just 3 to 4 days is now taking her 4 to 6 weeks. Her bills are due before she even gets the statements. And her husband’s VA medication took a month to arrive from the date they mailed it.

Jim Nichols of Milford wrote concerned about the delay in getting his newspapers, his magazines, and his other periodicals.

And Jim is not alone. I have heard from local and regional newspapers that rely on the Postal Service to deliver out-of-State and out-of-area subscribers.

We have a beach area with a lot of homeowners who live here in our Nation’s Capital or elsewhere throughout the region. And Chris Raush, who is with the Cape Gazette, which gets mailed to folks all over our region, told me some of their out-of-State subscribers don’t receive the paper for a month, and then, when they do, they get a big bundle of old papers. And now with papers not showing up weeks at a time, they have had to tell subscribers this is just out of their control and offer refunds.

Megan Stibbe, of the Delmarva Farmer, another local paper, said that she has “been having a lot of trouble with Delaware deliveries. The postal system,” as she said in writing to me, “is very screwed up right now. Delmarva Farmers have not received their newspapers at all in January.”

I have received dozens and dozens more emails, texts, letters, and phone messages from frustrated constituents.

Dianne Boyle, of Magnolia, DE, felt so strongly about this ongoing debacle of delayed delivery in the Postal Service that she hand delivered her own letter of concern to my Dover office.

Richard Bilkski of Selbyville, a gentleman with real and significant heart issues that require him to be on medication, was down to his very last pill on January 25. After calling and calling and calling, it turned out that his medication had been sitting in the Wilmington post office for 3 weeks.

Toby Rubenstein, from Hockessin, wrote me and said:

I have paid my bills by check all my life. [And now] the Postal Service is so unreliable, that I now have monthly problems paying [my] bills on time. [And] I’m not alone in this.

Claudette Richardson of Newark, DE, wrote me a note saying that she had mailed her sister a Christmas card on December 14, and it arrived February 12.

Marcy Leib Rolmann wrote me and said: Our “mail here in Sussex County as everywhere is horrible, despite our great letter carriers.”

Geiana Hollis of Wilmington wrote to me last month because of her passport sitting idle at a Philadelphia distribution center for 10 days. She was set to travel abroad and had to delay her trip.

Bill Powers, former county councilman I know well from New Castle County, a member of the Farm Bureau, is a longtime turkey grower who now provides fresh eggs for local farmers markets. Bill has experienced significant losses with turkey and chick deliveries and called my office with concerns.

And I want, before I close, to mention one last story, from Trebs Thompson, of Newark, an egg farmer with Whimsical Farms. Trebs wrote:

Largely our postal system has been a jewel. It handles a large volume of mail cheaply, with a high degree of speed and accuracy. Many of us depend on it for government paperwork, medications, orders, payments, and for farmers like me, seeds [and] day-old chicks.

The Post Office has been shipping day-old chicks to farms like mine for over 100 years. Today, all 20 baby hens arrived cold and lifeless. I cried [as I opened the box]. The [postal] supervisor cried. The gentleman who normally delivers my mail apologized profusely, but [it is] not his fault.

Whatever one feels about mail-in ballots or politics, I am asking you to put this aside and do what you can to restore the Postal Service.

Trebs Thompson is right. No farmer should ever have to open a box of dead chicks. No constituent should have to hand deliver a letter to their Senator. Our veterans shouldn’t be going without lifesaving medication.

Postmaster DeJoy appeared before Members of the House last week and apologized for the slow mail delivery and said he has a forthcoming plan, which I am concerned includes further cuts to delivery service.

So let me summarize. My understanding is that DeJoy’s plans for the future of the Postal Service include higher prices and slower delivery. Delawareans are tired, and our Postal Service workers are tired, too, of the constraints placed on them. How will we solve this problem? In my view, we need to confirm as quickly as possible President Biden’s nominees to the Postal Board of Governors: Ron Stroman, Amber McReynolds, and Anton Hajjar—all folks who have deep experience in the postal system. They could get us back on track.

We also have to prioritize investments in the Postal Service. Congress secured \$10 billion for the Postal Service in the unanimously passed CARES Act to provide the resources to maintain operation at a time when families are relying on mail service more than ever during this pandemic.

I will continue to support the Postal Service. I will continue to petition the Postmaster General, and I won’t stop until there is a solution to this critical and pressing issue. Our letter carriers