

# Biden endures 1st Cabinet defeat as Tanden withdraws

TANDEN FROM A1

Tanden is “incredibly grateful for your leadership on behalf of the American people and for your agenda that will make such a transformative difference in people’s lives,” she told Biden.

Her nomination began to collapse last month when Sen. Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.) said he would oppose Tanden for the post, citing her past remarks targeting Republicans. That meant she would need at least one Republican vote to be confirmed in the 50-50 Senate, but potential swing votes including Sens. Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Mitt Romney (R-Utah) also said they would not back her.

Tanden, a veteran political operative who most recently led the liberal Washington-based Center for American Progress think tank, had maintained an active presence on Twitter, frequently criticizing GOP senators.

She has since deleted more than 1,000 tweets and apologized for her past remarks, although Senate Republicans repeatedly seized on her social media posts to criticize her fitness and temperament for the administration

job.

Tanden had called Collins “the worst” and “pathetic,” and said “vampires have more heart than Ted Cruz,” referring to the GOP senator from Texas. Tanden has compared Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) to “Voldemort,” the Harry Potter series villain, and called him “Moscow Mitch.”

In turn, Republican senators faced accusations of a double standard when it came to Tanden and her Twitter posts, considering how often they feigned ignorance about President Donald Trump’s social media feeds during his administration. Trump regularly aimed furious insults at an array of people who angered him, including foreign leaders and Democratic lawmakers.

In recent days, attention had largely turned to Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska), who has been weighing whether to support Tanden and met with the nominee earlier this week. Murkowski had not announced her decision when Tanden withdrew Tuesday.

By the time her nomination was withdrawn, Tanden had held 46 meetings with senators, who were immediately lobbied by in-



ANDREW HARNIK/POOL/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Neera Tanden withdrew on Tuesday from consideration for the role of White House budget director after facing opposition over her past sharp criticism of Republican senators on social media. Above, Tanden testifies at a Capitol Hill hearing on Feb. 10.

coming administration and key advocacy groups once Biden announced her nomination in December.

Tanden had the endorsement of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and powerful labor unions

such as the Communications Workers of America. She also had strong support from leaders and activists representing the Asian American community.

But Tanden, a longtime operative, had taken on any number of powerful figures on Capitol Hill. A centrist Democrat, she had also tangled in the past with Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), who now chairs one of the two Senate committees that took up her nomination.

Sanders was informed by the White House earlier Tuesday that Tanden would be withdrawing from the job, according to one aide familiar with the conversation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the matter. Murkowski had reiterated earlier Tuesday that she remained undecided on Tanden.

Administration officials did not immediately indicate who

Biden would nominate instead of Tanden, although senior Democrats have increasingly talked up Shalanda Young, who had initially been chosen as Tanden’s deputy at OMB. Young is a former staff director for the House Appropriations Committee and has long been respected by senior Republicans as well as Democrats.

Just hours before the White House pulled Tanden’s nomination, Young appeared before the Senate Budget Committee, where she won praise from Democrats and Republicans. GOP senators made it clear they would prefer her for the top OMB job.

Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (S.C.), the ranking Republican on the panel, heaped praise on Young and hinted at her potential elevation, telling her: “You’ll get my support, maybe for both jobs.”

Sen. John Neely Kennedy (R-La.) was more blunt: “You

may be more than deputy.”

While Republicans did not hide their support for her, Young was careful throughout the hearing to compliment Tanden, showing no signs of the impending withdrawal. She said that she and Tanden would “make a great team if both of us were confirmed.”

Democrats on the committee, too, lauded Young’s work in Congress, but they remained united in supporting Tanden.

If Biden taps Young for the top spot, several others could be considered for the deputy role, including Ann O’Leary, a longtime Hillary Clinton policy aide, and Sarah Bianchi, a longtime Biden policy aide.

seung-min.kim@washpost.com  
tyler.pager@washpost.com

Jeff Stein contributed to this report.

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