

Biden picks ex-West Virginia health official as drug czar

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In this Feb. 10, 2015 file photo, Dr. Rahul Gupta, state health officer of West Virginia, talks in his office in Charleston, W.Va. President Joe Biden is nominating West Virginia's former health commissioner as the nation's top anti-drug official, tapping an official who served on the frontlines of the nation's opioid epidemic. The White House says Dr. Rahul Gupta will be the first physician to lead the Office of National Drug Control Policy, also known as the

"drug czar." Credit: AP Photo/John Raby

President Joe Biden is nominating West Virginia's former health commissioner as the nation's top anti-drug official, tapping a doctor who served on the front lines of the nation's opioid epidemic.

The White House said Tuesday that Dr. Rahul Gupta will be the first physician to lead the Office of National Drug Control Policy, also known as the "drug czar."

The nomination drew bipartisan praise from West Virginia officials. Republican Gov. Jim Justice called it "great news," and Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin said the pick "means someone with firsthand knowledge of the opioid crisis, especially in West Virginia, will be coordinating the national fight against the drug epidemic that continues to ravage our nation."

"Dr. Gupta will bring over a decade of extensive experience combatting the drug epidemic to ONDCP – the office charged with addressing the drug epidemic that has killed over 90,000 Americans just last year," Manchin said in a statement.

Gupta most recently served as the chief medical and health officer at March of Dimes.

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