

that she was “deeply sorry” and that the spill was a “tragic and unfortunate accident.” That is not all; there was no accountability, no reparation, nothing.

How can the American people trust a government agency charged with protecting our environment when the same Agency is responsible for causing even more damage? Actions speak louder than words. This is more of the same from the EPA. They are another arm of the Federal Government looking to bully private citizens, but this is nothing new from the EPA.

Almost a decade ago, a gentleman from my district faced a costly, almost devastating battle with the EPA. Mr. Paul McKnight owned an old cotton warehouse in Senoia, Georgia. After a former deadbeat tenant of Mr. McKnight, who had already been responsible for the EPA spending \$1.6 million in a brownfield cleanup, could not afford to remove 2,000 barrels of toxic waste from this warehouse that Mr. McKnight knew did not exist, the EPA was called in to inspect the building by some anonymous caller who said that they could smell a leak. Once the EPA got there, their inspector said they couldn't smell a leak. There was no leak, but they did find 2,000 barrels containing toxic material.

Without Mr. McKnight's knowledge, the EPA declared this warehouse an “imminent fire hazard” and cleaned up the chemicals at a cost of \$800,000, even though the previous tenant had a bid of 170. Later, at a public forum, an EPA representative stated that the EPA had the funds to clean up the warehouse, only to bill Mr. McKnight later for that overpriced cleanup. Not only did they bill him for the overpriced cleanup, but they sought over \$1 million in cleanup fees and placed a lien on his real estate holdings, including his farm and his home.

I helped Mr. McKnight to get the case reconsidered. After 8 years in court, he was able to get it reduced down to \$600,000.

The EPA shouldn't use legal loopholes and cover behind exemptions at the cost of taxpayers and, not only that, to charge somebody that had no knowledge of the barrels even being there, rather than the man who put the barrels there. This gentleman served 1 year and 4 months in Federal prison for this. It was his second offense, and yet Mr. McKnight was fined over \$1 million.

That is why I have introduced three bills over the last 2 months targeting the EPA. My bills: H.R. 3531, No Exemptions for EPA Act; H.R. 3655, EPA Pays Act; and H.R. 3699, Judgment Fund Taxpayer Accountability Act are all aimed at holding the EPA to the same standards and requirements as private citizens.

My bills remove these legal loopholes from the EPA and force them to repay the Federal Government for any damages the EPA causes. If I were to accidentally cause the same disaster, do you think that I would get off by just

saying “I'm sorry and I promise not to do it again”? That is why we have introduced these three bills.

So I ask my colleagues to, please, join me in holding the EPA accountable in any future accidents by supporting H.R. 3531, 3655, and 3699.

DEBT CEILING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, in 1983, President Ronald Reagan wrote to then-Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker, urging him to raise the debt ceiling. In his letter, he said: “The risks, the costs, the disruptions, and the incalculable damage lead me to but one conclusion: The Senate must pass this legislation before the Congress adjourns.”

Twenty-three years later, we now find ourselves 1 week away from defaulting on our debt for the first time in our Nation's history. Instead of making sure we preserve the full faith and credit of the United States, as President Reagan had done 18 times during his tenure, some want to hold our economy hostage to extract ideological wins.

This is not the time for partisan bickering and political gamesmanship, not when it means delaying Social Security benefits for seniors and those with disabilities, withholding paychecks from our brave Active Duty servicemembers, and postponing interest payments on government-issued bonds.

We have a responsibility to live up to our obligations no matter what. That is not politics; it is basic governing.

The longer we wait to meet our obligations and raise the debt ceiling, the closer we get to another credit rating downgrade, a spike in interest rates, and a severe slowdown in economic growth. This is not an overstatement.

Let's look back at what happened in 2013 during the last debt ceiling standoff. Just the possibility of default caused rates on Treasuries to rise by almost half a percentage point. That cost taxpayers as much as \$70 million.

This time around, if we actually default, market forecasters estimate that interest payments on Treasuries would increase Federal deficits by \$10 billion over the short term and by \$70 billion a year after that. That is money that wouldn't be going to critical investments in research and development, education, and infrastructure.

On top of that, higher interest rates on Treasuries could lead to a 1 percent reduction in GDP. That would mean the loss of almost 700,000 jobs, and that is just a conservative estimate.

Make no mistake, every American would be impacted. Middle class families looking to buy a home would face higher mortgage rates. A half a percentage point increase in mortgage rates would increase the lifetime cost of an average home loan by almost

\$19,000. Small-business owners would face difficulties trying to secure new loans as lending tightens up. And students will have an even harder time trying to pay for college as student loan rates skyrocket.

We owe it to our constituents to move toward responsible governing and away from governing by crisis, which has become all too common around here.

The bipartisan budget package unveiled last night affirms the full faith and credit of the United States and represents real progress for hard-working American families who are tired of threats of default and partisan gridlock.

Now is not the time for politics. Now is the time for thoughtful consideration, bipartisan compromise, and, most importantly, finding a path forward for the American people.

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. OLSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. OLSON. Mr. Speaker, this is the last week of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Before it ends, I would tell the American people about two amazing women from Sugar Land, Texas, two good friends of my family, two women who are here for a reason, two people who are touching others in need, two people who are making a difference.

□ 1030

Meet Irma and Sasha. Stunning, aren't they? They are related. They look like sisters, but they are not. They are mother and daughter. The mom, Irma, is on the left. Her baby girl, Sasha, is on the right. Irma and Sasha are sisters in a cause. Both have fought breast cancer, and both have won.

Each year over 200,000 American women hear four crushing words: You have breast cancer. Irma feared those words because she knew they may be coming. Both of her sisters heard those four words. One died.

Irma beat her cancer, but lived in fear. With her family's history of breast cancer, her daughter had a good chance of hearing those four terrible words. Five years after Irma beat breast cancer, Sasha banged on her door, crying without end. She was 31, and she had aggressive breast cancer.

Irma was by Sasha's side every second of her fight against cancer. Mom watched her daughter lose each breast. Mom watched her daughter go through 16 rounds of harsh chemotherapy. Mom watched her daughter lose all of her hair, her eyebrows, her eyelashes. Mom watched her daughter lose that smile. Sasha thought that she was no longer beautiful. Her will to fight was decreasing.

Irma took charge. She told Sasha that “no matter how sick you feel, get