

Mister Speaker, an address to Congress once began with the following words:

*Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history.*

*We of this Congress and this Administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves.*

*No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us.*

*The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation.*

*We, even we here, hold the power, and bear the responsibility.*

*We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth.*

Lincoln, of course, was talking about the state of a nation in peril on December 1, in his address to Congress in 1862.

But, had not this nation had leadership of such magnitude, who knows where we would be today?

They faced terrible consequences and yet still had the extraordinary foresight and fortitude to

charge ahead.

Today, we too face consequences.

We face consequences of international economic impact, environmental and ecological destruction.

We consider this week, of course, a debt limit crisis that has brought out the worst amongst men and women I respect both here on this House floor, on the other side of this Capitol building, and on cable news stations across the country.

We are also considering here in this House, an Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill that simply says to our children, "you clean it up. We don't care to bear the burden."

This bill does irreparable damage to programs that keep our air clean, our water drinkable, and that protect our natural heritage.

These are not dollars spent without thought, nor are they investments of a trivial nature as some would have us believe.

Simply put, these are science-based, pragmatic investments in public health.

These cuts, all told, will not save the country a penny.

The policy riders included in this bill will cost tens of thousands of lives.

The bill will expose our children, families, and communities to unnecessary illness, and degrade our irreplaceable natural resources.

But this week we are not stopping at a debt ceiling quagmire and an Interior and Environmental Appropriations abhorrence.

We will continue on to consider a measure that would deem Congressional approval for the Keystone XL Tar Sands Pipeline.

The Keystone system would flow from Alberta down to the Gulf Coast, threading right through the vast Ogallala aquifer, the main drinking water source for the Midwest.

You can ignore the dozen leaks the Keystone "one" system has had in the last year, stoking fears of a spill in the aquifer from the proposed expansion pipeline.

You can ignore the 42,000 gallons that seeped from an ExxonMobil pipeline into the Yellowstone River in Montana earlier this month, under which Keystone XL would also run.

You can ignore the science that says that the high-energy process of production of tar sands increases greenhouse gas emissions, pollutes water sources and harms the proposed region's boreal forests.

And, you can ignore the fact that testimony of TransCanada officials to Canadian regulators included the fact that the pipeline would drive gasoline prices in the Midwest higher, not lower.

But, let's forget all that.

On procedure alone, this Congressional consideration of a bill that is currently *under review* by

the Department of State is unnecessary and unprecedented – potentially negatively affecting our national security and safety.

This proposed pipeline needs no Congressional approval.

In fact, this proposed expansion need not be approved at all.

It's drawn criticism from the Environmental Protection Agency, who suggested that the State Department should consider how construction would affect wetlands, migratory birds and the communities it would pass through.

So, we stand here today, to consider approving a project expansion that has been deemed mediocre at best.

We stand here today to consider an Environmental Appropriations bill that has been deemed the worst we've ever seen.

And, we stand here today while everyone around us fights against a compromise that might keep our standing in the international economy from dipping further than we've already seen it fall.

*We cannot escape history.*

*We hold the power, and bear the responsibility.*

*We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth.*

President Lincoln, truer words were never spoken.

Thank you, and I yield back.