

very badly for that family, as they will for our country if we allow the United States to default on its debt.

The debt limit debate in the past was accompanied by political grandstanding from both parties. The party out of power used it to criticize the economic record of the incumbent party. But grandstanding was always set aside, and the President and the majority party in Congress—Republican or Democratic—accepted the burden of raising the debt ceiling to make sure the country did not default.

This time, the House's default threat is different. It is far more dangerous and far more extreme, even than in 2011.

Let me explain.

A default looms as early as June 1, and congressional leaders met this week with President Biden.

The President and all of the leaders pledged that default was not an option—all except one leader. Speaker MCCARTHY continues to champion the House bill that will lead us to default unless the Congress and the President capitulate to House Republicans' very extreme budgetary demands. Their budget would cut veteran benefits, furlough thousands of Border Patrol agents even as title 42 expires, and it would repeal key parts of the Inflation Reduction Act and the thousands of jobs—many of which, by the way, are in Republican districts—that it has created.

The Speaker's demands that President Biden relinquish his primary legislative achievement, the IRA, really would be comparable to the Democrats demanding when Donald Trump was President that, as a condition of not defaulting, he repeal what he regarded as his signature legislative accomplishment: his tax cuts—which, by the way, were vehemently opposed by Democrats.

Speaker MCCARTHY's posture reflects the posture of his conference and the reality within his own caucus. He won't take default off the table because he can't. The most extreme Members of his caucus have extracted numerous concessions to lend their support, and it took 15 votes for him to get elected to the speakership. What we are seeing now is the result: They will default unless they get their way.

Former President Trump, who as President raised the debt ceiling multiple times, is still a leading voice for many of the Republicans in the caucus. Last night on CNN, at a townhall meeting, he encouraged default, adding fuel to the fire and even more peril for our country.

I think we all know, in all candor, that the default threat would be catastrophic, and we are being propelled over the brink.

All responsible people know that a default—No. 1, it would destroy America's reputation and jeopardize the value of the dollar as the world's reserve currency. No. 2, it would really delight our Russian and Chinese adver-

saries, who would promote our default for what it is—a sign of internal weakness, economic chaos, and disunity. A default in all likelihood would plunge our fragile economy into a recession, hurting Americans across the entire country regardless of what their political persuasion was. In a very cruel irony, according to Moody's, a default could increase our deficit by as much as \$850 billion, not reduce it as default advocates claim.

We can't allow default. We can't allow self-inflicted harm to befall Americans with the Speaker's very reckless gambit.

I thank Majority Leader SCHUMER, Minority Leader MCCONNELL, Minority Leader JEFFRIES, and President Biden for taking default off the table.

Speaker MCCARTHY, before it is too late, do the same.

I am willing, as I believe the vast majority of our colleagues are, to engage in a serious budget discussion to bring down America's debt, but what I am not willing to do—not now, not ever—is abandon America's historic commitment to paying its bills. I am not willing to inflict the damage to our economy and the pain on our people a catastrophic default would impose, nor is President Biden.

While leadership talks continue, all of us must be mindful of the real peril we face, and we must take the precautionary step of reviewing the 14th Amendment and its requirement. Section 4 of the 14th Amendment states:

The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law . . . shall not be questioned.

The Constitution is saying what we all know: A debt incurred is a debt that must be paid.

Every obligation tied to our debt is a result of a law that this or a previous Congress has passed. To renege on the obligation that law required, whether to our veterans, our seniors, our farmers, or the military, is for Congress to tell the President to break that law and disobey the Constitution.

We cannot do this. We must not do this. We must, as America has always done, pay our bills in full and on time. I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOKER). The senior Senator from Maryland.

PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, this week is Public Service Recognition Week—a week we have set aside each year since 1985 to recognize and honor public servants. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep, heartfelt gratitude to America's 20 million Federal, State, county, and local public servants. From astronauts to astrophysicists, caseworkers to court clerks, detectives to doctors, soldiers to superintendents, teachers to transit workers, America's public servants comprise one of our Nation's most critical and often maligned assets.

Men and women serve in harm's way to defend our Nation. Other public

servants support them. Public servants teach our children, deliver the mail, administer our elections, keep our streets and communities safe and clean, guide air traffic, protect our natural resources and food and drug supplies, respond to natural disasters and other emergencies, conduct pioneering basic research, provide healthcare, interpret and enforce our laws, ensure that seniors and veterans receive the benefits they have earned, and represent our Nation's interests in foreign posts. I could go on and on. The work that public servants perform affects each and every one of us on a daily basis, making our lives so much better.

The public sector workforce—particularly at the Federal level—tends to be older, better educated, and more experienced than the private sector workforce. So many public servants could earn higher salaries in private sector jobs, but their motivation is more than pecuniary gain; it is a sense of duty and a love of their community and country that compel them.

President Biden issued a proclamation this week that says:

At a time when public servants are facing threats and hostility simply for doing their jobs, their continued willingness to serve is even more meaningful and important. We have an obligation to support them and to recognize and value their commitment and sacrifice. Our Nation's future depends on ensuring our public servants have good jobs with competitive pay and benefits, along with the resources they need to accomplish their work. It also depends on the next generation of smart, dedicated people answering the call of public service and joining their ranks, helping deliver the promise of America to more of our citizens.

I couldn't agree with the President more.

Just 7 percent of America's Federal workers are under the age of 30. I join President Biden in urging young Americans to consider careers in public service. We need your talents, your energy, your ideas, and your idealism to ensure that America remains prosperous, secure, and a beacon of liberty for all humanity.

Each year, in conjunction with Public Service Recognition Week, the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service announces the finalists for the prestigious Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals. The awards are named after the partnership's founder and benefactor and highlight excellence in our Federal workforce.

I am proud that Maryland is home to 12 finalists.

They are, in the field of science, technology, and environment, Dr. Adam Phillippy, Dr. Sergey Koren, and Dr. Arang Rhie, Investigator, Associate Investigator, and Staff Scientist respectively at the National Institutes of Health, National Human Genome Research Institute, and the Telomere to Telomere Consortium, which Dr. Phillippy cofounded in 2018, having cracked the last 8 percent of humans' genetic code.

Their research into understanding the most difficult parts of our DNA has

enabled scientists to discover more than 2 new million variants in our genetic makeup, many of which can cause serious health problems. We will make leaps and bounds in understanding Down syndrome, autism, and cancer, and devising effective gene therapies for a host of diseases.

Dr. Phillippy put it this way:

It is really easy to get up and go to work in the morning because our work is making such a difference.

What a dedicated public servant.

In management excellence, Megan Meacham, Allison Hutchings, and Sarah O'Donnell, Director, Deputy Director, and Team Lead respectively at the Department of Health and Human Services' Rural Strategic Initiatives Division under the Health Resources and Services Administration, created the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program to provide grant funding for a wide array of innovative and effective opioid use prevention, treatment, and recovery services.

The program, which they established 5 years ago, has served more than 2 million people each year in more than 1,800 rural counties across 47 States and 2 territories. As Megan Meacham has stated, "We are here to help and passionate to serve. Even when we hit a roadblock, we find a way around it."

We know the challenges of opioid addiction. Our public servants are answering the challenge.

In management excellence, Gloria Morgan Shepherd, Executive Director, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, is one of three DOT senior managers being honored for helping to craft and implement the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

We were proud to pass that bill. It wasn't so easy to implement it. Dedicated public servants at the Department of Transportation are making sure our legislation carries out its intended purpose. Thanks to their work, DOT initiated 1,887 transportation projects last year that were awarded nearly \$10 billion in discretionary funds on top of \$82.3 billion in formula funding that will help modernize the Nation's highways, bridges, shipping ports, railroads, and airports.

Gloria Morgan Shepherd and her colleagues implemented 76 new or expanded grant programs and initiated bridge repair programs, a national electric vehicle charging network, and a host of safety initiatives. That is what we intended. Our public servants at DOT are carrying that out.

In management excellence, Rear Admiral Nancy Hann, Director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Commissioned Corps and Director of NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations, has implemented policies to curb sexual harassment, assault, and bullying among employees aboard NOAA's marine fleet and aircraft, creating a safer workplace and changing the organization's culture.

Admiral Hann, who has been with NOAA for 26 years, said:

It is really important for everyone to have a voice and to feel comfortable physically, emotionally, and mentally in the workplace. I have the responsibility to be the voice of the people who don't feel like they have a voice or are too scared. I take that responsibility very seriously.

We are all better off because of Admiral Hann's work.

The Paul A. Volcker Career Achievement Award: Dr. Eric J. "Rocky" Feuer, Chief, Statistical Research and Applications Branch, Surveillance Research Program, Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, has developed new methods to estimate the chances of individuals being diagnosed with cancer at different times during their lives.

Over the past four decades, he has designed a sophisticated system using statistical analysis to understand national cancer trends better, leading to significant prevention, screening, and treatment options that have benefited millions of Americans.

In 2000, he created the Cancer Intervention and Surveillance Modeling Network, allowing statisticians and scientists to address critical cancer-related questions collaboratively. He has stated that the statistical analysis he has engaged in over the course of his career is "backbencher type of work," but added it has helped "move people to action" and improve healthcare.

Yes, we are dealing with cancer challenges in our communities, and people like Dr. Feuer are making a huge difference.

Safety, security, and international affairs: Lisa Hsiao, Assistant Director, Consumer Protection Branch, Department of Justice, has protected the public from harmful or misleading trade practices by businesses across a wide range of industries, including Altria, R.J. Reynolds, Facebook, and Dish Network, securing some of the largest fines in U.S. history and requiring the disclosure of important safety and privacy information.

As Dr. Lisa Hsiao has said, "I'm proud that through these cases we have created law that can be built upon. As a lawyer, it's pretty rare to be able to make precedent that both protects the public and effects good public policy."

Protecting consumers, protecting the public, that is what public servants do.

Management excellence: Robert Gorman, Senior Trial Attorney, Department of Transportation, is one of three DOT officials in the Office of Aviation Consumer Protection who has led an aggressive campaign to require airlines to compensate air travelers for airfare and other related costs for canceled or significantly delayed flights due to circumstances within the airlines' control. The campaign has produced a record \$8.4 million in fines and more than \$1 billion in passenger refunds.

Robert Gorman and his colleagues looked for patterns to determine if an

airline were repeatedly being unresponsive or noncompliant with respect to consumer complaints, leading the Aviation Consumer Protection Office to issue two regulatory notices, launch investigations, bring enforcement actions, and in some instances, reach settlements for travelers to be reimbursed.

Thanks to Robert Gorman and his colleagues, the skies are finally friendlier for fliers.

Science, Technology, and the Environment: Dr. Sarah Nelson, Director of Defense Programs Office of Experimental Sciences, National Nuclear Security Administration, Department of Energy, played a leading role in overseeing scientists who, for the first time in history, produced a fusion reaction that produced more energy than it required, a breakthrough with enormous implications for abundant clean energy and national defense. When harnessed and expanded to utility scale, fusion energy will produce reliable electricity without releasing greenhouse gases or producing radioactive waste.

Dr. Nelson started as an intern at the NNSA's Lawrence Livermore research laboratory.

She said:

It was a tremendously influential experience for me, but I had no idea that I'd be sitting in this chair 20 years later when such a scientific breakthrough would be accomplished. If we are able to use this technology someday to enable clean energy, [it would be a game-changer].

She is right on that.

So we can debate the proper role and size of our government, but I hope we can all agree that we want the best and brightest to serve. These individuals and their fellow honorees represent the best our Federal workforce has to offer. But we should be grateful for all public servants who go to work each day determined to make a positive difference for their fellow Americans, and we should be grateful all year long.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Alaska.

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT FIRST CLASS ANDREW CHAPOTON

Mr. SULLIVAN. Mr. President, I thank the Presiding Officer for that heartfelt welcome here on the Senate floor.

I know the Presiding Officer is excited, and I know the pages are excited. Heck, half of America is excited because, once again, it is Thursday afternoon, and I am back on the floor giving probably my favorite speech of the week, the "Alaskan of the Week." As many of you know, it is an opportunity for me as I love to come down to the Senate floor and brag about somebody in my State who makes it such a great State. Usually, it is somebody who is doing something good for their local community, maybe for the State, maybe for the country, maybe for the world.

Boy, we have had so many famous Alaskans of the Week, but this one—