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Jason Smith's Capitol Report - Friday, October 16th

OCTOBER 19TH 2015 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Congressman Jason Smith Capitol Report: Deja Vu All Over Again Friday, October 16, 2015

It has happened again. Last week, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) caused another spill in Colorado. This time, it was gray water spilled into a creek while working to clean up the Standard Mine. The EPA did not immediately notify the community or affected elected officials.

This spill comes two months after EPA contractors catastrophically dumped three million gallons of toxic water from the Gold King mine into the Animas River, potentially tainting drinking water for thousands. Both the Gold King mine spill and the spill of gray water happened on EPA Superfund sites. The EPA's website explains that the "Superfund program is responsible for cleaning up some of the nation's most contaminated land," but instead of cleaning up our contaminated land, the EPA only made it worse.

The EPA spends \$158 million of taxpayer money on its public relations budget. There are about 200 full-time employees in this division, and the EPA still manages to give another \$15 million to outside public relations consultants. The EPA uses our money to spin the facts, telling Americans to trust them on the disastrous rules and regulations they force on rural America. Take for example the Clean Power Plan that would make energy significantly more expensive or the Waters of the United States rule which could put every puddle under federal jurisdiction.

I have sponsored three important bills recently to help rein in this out of control agency. First, the No Exemptions for EPA Act states clearly that the EPA should be treated like private companies and held accountable when they cause spills, and it closes any legal loopholes just to make sure. The second is the EPA Pays Act which simply says that when the EPA spills, they have to pay the folks affected. We know the EPA has the money! This bill would use the funds from their public relations account – the same one used to lobby for the Waters of the United States rule – to repair the damage. The third bill is the Judgment Fund Taxpayer Accountability Act which would increase transparency and require agencies like the EPA to fully disclose the amount of money being paid out due to court judgments against the agency. This will show us which agencies are fixing the messes they create and which need to do better by Americans.

It's clear to me that local communities should decide how to best manage their natural resources, not unelected bureaucrats, and the legal system also agrees. Last week, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled to block the Environmental Protection Agency's controversial Waters of the United States provision, effectively stopping the egregious power grab nationwide. EPA bureaucrats are doing more harm than good and I'm using every avenue at my disposal to defund their hypocritical actions.

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