

made out like bandits. I don't want any lectures from those who gave the bandits their bag of gold.

I yield the floor.

FISCAL YEAR 2011 SAFER PROGRAM

Ms. LANDRIEU. Madam President, I want to highlight an important provision that is included in the Homeland Security division of this bill. It is related to the firefighter hiring program known as SAFER. In 2009 and 2010, Congress approved waivers for several restrictions of the SAFER grant program because in this economic downturn fire departments were struggling to meet those requirements. By adding this flexibility to the program, fire departments were able to make the best use of the funding provided in fiscal years 2009 and 2010. A provision in this bill maintains three of the same waivers for fiscal year 2011 and specifically allows for the grants to be used to retain and/or rehire personnel, to supplant local funds, and a local match is not required. While some might argue that it is a local responsibility to hire firefighters, it has been made clear disaster after disaster—and especially including catastrophic events such as the 9/11 attacks and Hurricane Katrina—that firefighters are the first people we call on from all over the Nation to serve in a national response. Of course, I supported the inclusion of all six waivers contained in the Inouye amendment. Through negotiations we were able to secure the provisions that allow for the retention and/or rehiring of firefighters, the waiver of a cost share, and the ability to supplant local funds.

Mr. INOUE. I thank my subcommittee chairman for highlighting this important provision. Ensuring that the SAFER grants are available to retain and/or rehire firefighters and waiving match requirements will provide communities the assistance they need in these tough times.

Mr. CASEY. Madam President, much attention has been given to how the Ryan plan ends Medicare as we know it by turning Medicare into a voucher program.

For example, on April 6, 2011, AARP wrote to Congressman RYAN:

Today's budget proposal appropriately acknowledges that health care costs must be addressed if the federal budget is to be balanced. However, rather than recognizing that health care is an unavoidable necessity which must be made more affordable for all Americans, this proposal simply shifts these high costs onto Medicare beneficiaries, and shifts the even higher costs of increased uninsured care onto everyone else. By creating a "premium support" system for future Medicare beneficiaries, the proposal will increase costs for beneficiaries while removing Medicare's promise of secure health coverage—a guarantee that future seniors have contributed to through a lifetime of hard work.

The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities put out a statement on April 6, 2011 stating:

Many future Medicare beneficiaries with modest incomes, such as elderly widows who must live on \$15,000 or \$20,000 a year, also would likely be hit by the plan's Medicare provisions; the Medicare voucher (or defined contribution) they would receive would fall farther and farther behind health care costs—and purchase less and less coverage—with each passing year. Aggravating this problem, Ryan has said that his plan calls for repeal of a key measure of the health reform law that is designed to moderate Medicare costs—the Independent Payment Advisory Board. In other words, his plan would scrap mechanisms to slow growth in the costs of health care services that Medicare beneficiaries need, even as it cuts back the portion of those costs that Medicare would cover.

The Center for American Progress writes:

Medicare as we know it would end for new beneficiaries in 2022 under the House Republican budget proposal. It would be replaced with a government voucher that would be paid directly to private insurance companies. This system would double costs to seniors. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office, or CBO, concluded that "most elderly people would pay more for their health care than they would pay under the current Medicare system."

However, there has been less discussion of the other ways in which the Ryan plan would hurt current beneficiaries.

So I would like to give some specific examples how the changes Congressman RYAN proposed will impact current Medicare beneficiaries.

The Republican plan will force beneficiaries to pay for preventive services and eliminates the free annual wellness exam they can currently receive. Nearly all 44 million beneficiaries who have Medicare, including 2.2 million in Pennsylvania, can now receive free preventive services—such as mammograms and colonoscopies—as well as a free annual wellness visit with their doctor.

The Republican plan will eliminate the efforts that have begun to close the doughnut hole. If the Republican budget becomes law, costs for Medicare beneficiaries who fall into the doughnut hole will increase drastically. Over 266,000 Pennsylvanians will pay an additional \$149 million in 2012 and \$3 billion through 2020.

The Republican plan hurts beneficiaries today by repealing improvements designed to save them money and provide needed services. It hurts beneficiaries even more beginning in 2022 when end Medicare as we know it and puts in place a voucher system to ration health care and increase costs for beneficiaries.

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, last Friday night, in the absence of a budget deal, the Federal Government came within 1 hour of shutting its doors and all but emergency services. The obstacle to an agreement at that point was not a matter of spending levels or budget cuts. The obstacle was ideologically driven policy riders that some insisted on including in the budget bill. Thankfully, in the end, we prevailed in stripping out the abhorrent rider to bar funding for Planned Parenthood.

A small but vocal minority is adamant about eliminating one specific organization's health centers, which provide health care and family planning services for women nationwide. Planned Parenthood centers receive Federal funding from title X of the Public Health Service Act—the only Federal grant program dedicated to offering people comprehensive family planning and related preventive health services. President Nixon was instrumental in enacting this legislation, and it has been supported since then by lawmakers and Presidents of both parties. As many women can tell you, title X was a remarkable breakthrough in women's health care.

What a travesty it would have been to gut health services to women that literally have meant the difference between life or death, health or grave illness, to countless American women. Vermonters were outspoken in their opposition to this rollback for women's health, and I am proud of our State and grateful for our success in this round.

Tens of thousands of women in Vermont depend on title X of the Public Health Service Act for lifesaving preventive treatments and care. Around the country, there are many providers of title X services, but in Vermont, Planned Parenthood centers are the only clinics where many lower income women can go for family planning care. Planned Parenthood centers in Vermont offer women and teens annual health exams, cervical and breast cancer screenings, and HIV screenings and counseling. Last year in Vermont, Planned Parenthood provided critical primary and preventive services to nearly 21,000 patients.

In the last few weeks more than 6,000 Vermonters have contacted me about their support for the funds that make title X health services possible and for Planned Parenthood's long and commendable record of making title X's promise a reality for millions of American women in Vermont and across the Nation. I have heard from nurses and doctors in Vermont urging me to support funding for Planned Parenthood in order to continue essential care these centers offer to their own patients and to women who would not receive primary health care were it not for Planned Parenthood.

Despite the misleading and blatantly false statements of some ideologically driven advocates, more than 90 percent of the care Planned Parenthood health centers offer is preventive. In fact, 6 of every 10 women who use Planned Parenthood for title X services describe it as their primary source of medical care. And despite what some opponents of women's health funding have proclaimed, absolutely no title X funding can be used for abortion services. The sad irony is that defunding title X and Planned Parenthood would result in more unintended pregnancies, and probably more abortions.

This drive to defund women's health services offered by a particular organization also raises constitutional concerns. Article I, section 9, paragraph 3 of our Constitution expressly forbids passage of any "bill of attainder." According to the late former Chief Justice of the United States, William Rehnquist, "A bill of attainder was a legislative act that singled out one or more persons and imposed punishment on them, without benefit of trial. Such actions were regarded as odious by the Framers of the Constitution because it was the traditional role of a court, judging an individual case, to impose punishment." Yet those promoting the anti-Planned Parenthood rider clearly intend to single out one organization by name to "punish" it, "punishing" as well the millions of women who Planned Parenthood serves.

Proponents of this rider have cited what they call "evidence" that Planned Parenthood has acted unlawfully. Other supporters of this virulent effort charge that the organization has been "accused" of a variety of things. These comments make clear that their legislative intent is to punish for these unverified accusations. Some in fact have gone so far as to accuse Planned Parenthood of violating the law that prohibits any Federal funds to be used to provide abortions.

There is no substantive reason to believe such accusations. If there is any violation of this or any Federal law, it is the role of the executive branch to prosecute and try the offenders. That is not the role of this body, though that is what some are advocating, through their injection of accusations and partisan politics into this debate.

The Framers' original intent was to prohibit bills that single out one entity for punishment because that is not Congress's role in the separation of powers they so carefully devised for our Republic.

Aside from the serious constitutional issues with the pending measure is one naked fact from which proponents of this legislative rider cannot hide: Nothing in this pernicious rider would actually reduce spending. Their proposal would save not one penny. This is about "punishment," not fiscal responsibility.

Does this Congress care more about what looks good on a bumper sticker or what matters in the daily lives of real people? The arrogance and shortsighted attitude of a minority has put at risk the lives and health of millions of women. My wife Marcelle is a cancer survivor. We were lucky. We had good health care and a salary that allowed us to pay the bills when she got sick. Other people are not so lucky. Without the services that Planned Parenthood provides, thousands of low-income women in Vermont would lose their ability to have regular cancer screenings that could save their lives too. That we are even considering the elimination of these health services to America's women is shameful. That it

was the sticking point that nearly forced the shutdown of the Federal Government is a disgrace.

Title X was a true breakthrough for the health of American women. Should we as a nation walk back from the remarkable progress we have made in women's health? Of course not. The mean-spirited and ideological attacks must end, and these ideological assaults on women's health care must end.

Mr. LEVIN. Madam President, there is no doubt that we must take action to reduce our budget deficit. The question is, How will we accomplish this? Will we do as we have done all too often over the last few years, and protect the tax cuts of the well-to-do at the expense of middle-class families? Or will we seek a balanced approach that seeks to spread the burden of deficit reduction so that the upper income folks who have so prospered the last few years also contribute to the solution?

There is no question in my mind that deficit reduction requires shared sacrifice. By that test, the legislation before us is highly problematic. True, it manages to avoid some of the most extreme budget cuts that House Republicans included in their original appropriations bill. The bill before us is surely reasonable in comparison with that extreme measure. But the test cannot be whether it is better than HR 1. We can and must do better.

What troubles me most is that this legislation seeks to address the problem in only one manner, targeting non-defense discretionary programs that make up a fraction of our budget. I remain convinced it is a mistake to attack the deficit only through cuts in domestic discretionary spending, and not also end the huge Bush tax cuts for upper incomes, and close tax loopholes and reduce tax expenditures that most budget experts believe must be part of any serious deficit reduction plan. Simple math makes clear that those kinds of revenues must be a part of the solution.

The refusal to take a balanced approach in this legislation means that to reach its deficit reduction target, this bill makes cuts that are, in my mind, too large. It reduces funding for the COPS program and grants to state and local law enforcement agencies by more than one-quarter, making our communities less safe. It reduces energy efficiency funds by 18 percent, as though this issue wasn't crucial to our Nation's future security and prosperity. It cuts funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention by 11 percent, as though the health of our citizens was not a priority.

This bill eliminates all funding for the HUD Housing Counseling Assistance Program, eliminates it entirely, ignoring the fact that communities across the nation are reeling from a foreclosure crisis.

This bill cuts by 20 percent funding for Army Corps of Engineers construc-

tion. That provides funding for the barrier that we hope will keep destructive Asian carp out of the Great Lakes, and believe me, that is false economy. The economic damage Asian carp can do if they establish themselves in the Lakes is incalculable. The bill also cuts more than one-quarter of funding for vital water infrastructure programs important not just in Michigan but around the state, and it makes a deeply misguided 37 percent cut in Great Lakes restoration initiative funding, a totally unjustifiable reduction of our commitment to lakes that are an engine of economic activity for all the states in the Great Lakes region.

There are some important programs that have escaped the worst cuts. I am pleased that students will still be able to receive a maximum Pell grant of \$5,500, and that the misguided proposal to reduce these grants has been defeated. I am pleased that this bill generally avoids misguided Republican attempts to deprive financial regulatory agencies of the resources they need to prevent the next financial collapse.

This bill rescinds highway funding that was provided at least 13 years ago, including funds from the ISTEA reauthorization bill. That should mean that the funding for the traverse city bypass, later reprogrammed to the grand vision, will not be included in that rescission since it is no longer part of the ISTEA bill. At the request of the community, the funds were reprogrammed in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005 for an entirely different purpose than the original legislation and in an entirely different bill. Since that time the community has completed the comprehensive grand vision study and is now poised to implement its recommendations.

I am also glad that the bill contains a full year Department of Defense Appropriations Act, so that our troops and their families will no longer have any doubt about when their next paycheck will arrive. And I am pleased that it does not include ideologically motivated policy riders that would interfere with women's health care and environmental protection.

But on balance, this bill lacks balance. It seeks solutions only in cutting domestic programs that make our Nation safer and more prosperous, that protect our environment, and that help the families that have suffered most during the financial crisis and recession, while protecting the tax cuts that benefit those at the very top.

Because of that lack of balance, that lack of fairness, I am unable to support this bill. But I am encouraged that, thanks to the leadership President Obama showed this week, and thanks to the voices of the many of us who are arguing for a balanced approach to deficit reduction, we are finally engaged in an open and honest debate over the vision we should follow for the future of our country.

In the weeks and months ahead, we will finally seek an answer to the question of whether we will all share in the

sacrifices required, and whether the same people who have done so very well over the last decade or so will be asked to contribute. I agree with our President, who said this week:

At a time when the tax burden on the wealthy is at its lowest level in half a century, the most fortunate among us can afford to pay a little more. I don't need another tax cut. Warren Buffett doesn't need another tax cut. Not if we have to pay for it by making seniors pay more for Medicare. Or by cutting kids from Head Start. Or by taking away college scholarships that I wouldn't be here without. . . . And I believe that most wealthy Americans would agree with me. They want to give back to the country that's done so much for them. Washington just hasn't asked them to.

Let me add that I will vote against both of the correcting resolutions before us today. It is ironic indeed that Republicans claim to be fighting the deficit by blocking the implementation of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which according to the Congressional Budget Office will reduce the deficit by \$210 billion from 2012 to 2021. Likewise, the attempt to prohibit funding for Planned Parenthood has nothing to do with the deficit and everything to do with extreme ideology.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

Mr. INOUE. Madam President, after 6½ months it appears the Congress may finally be able to finish the fiscal year 2011 appropriations process. Earlier today the House passed a Department of Defense Appropriations bill which includes an extension of the current continuing resolution through the end of the fiscal year. If the Senate passes this legislation and the President signs it, we will be able to close the books on this issue and focus our attention on the budget for fiscal year 2012.

In reflecting upon how we got here, I wish to point out to my colleagues that the fundamental reason we find ourselves debating a continuing resolution today is because 1 year ago the Congress was unable to agree upon a budget resolution. The failure to reach a consensus agreement on the budget meant the Appropriations Committee was asked to resolve the differences in spending itself. After months of attempting to do so, the committee was unable to bridge the gap between the Republicans and Democrats.

When the committee finally adopted a funding level proposed by the Republicans, a hostile political environment crippled the committee's efforts to enact a bipartisan budget plan. As we go forward I would ask all of my colleagues to think carefully about this, and I urge everyone to cooperate both here in the Senate and with our colleagues in the House. If we can fashion a compromise budget agreement this year it might allow our committee to restore the bipartisan working relationship which has long been the hallmark of the committee for generations. I sincerely hope that will be the case.

In some respects today we can take that first step. The bill that we are considering reflects a bipartisan agreement reached among the leadership of the House and Senate and the White House with the details being worked out by the Committees on Appropriations. It is a very tough measure that cuts domestic spending more than I am comfortable with, but it is dramatically superior to the alternative passed by the House 2 months ago and equally superior to not passing an extension through the end of the year.

In total, the measure reduces government spending \$78.5 billion below the President's request. It is nearly \$40 billion below the enacted level for fiscal year 2010. Never before have we cut our appropriated funding so drastically. By far and away this is the largest 1-year cut from the President's budget request in the Nation's history. The bill cuts all categories of spending: defense, international, and domestic, discretionary and mandatory. While some of my colleagues will argue that the Department of Defense was "let off the hook," others will probably say the bill cuts more from defense than is prudent.

Including military construction, the Defense Department's budget is reduced \$20 billion below the President's request. In comparison to the fiscal year 2010 enacted funding, the department's budget is approximately \$2 billion below a freeze, with military construction down by more than \$6 billion and the rest of defense increasing by more than \$4 billion.

The priority in this defense bill is first and foremost to ensure that we treat our military personnel and their families fairly. This means a 1.4 percent pay raise. It means fully funding health care, but it also means ensuring that our forces have the proper equipment and the funding necessary to operate it. While funding is austere, the bill includes important enhancements such as buying more missiles for our Aegis missile defense ships, and more helicopters for search and rescue operations and medical evacuation in Afghanistan. It means investing in new technologies at a faster pace than requested, purchasing more drones to find and wipe out terrorists, and ensuring the safety of our soldiers and Marines by accelerating the purchases of safer Stryker vehicles and MRAPs.

Accomplishing this while at the same time reducing defense spending has been a challenge, but working with our colleagues in the House we have put together a plan which fulfills all of these objectives.

But this bill isn't just about defense. For the State Department and foreign assistance, we are providing \$8 billion less than was requested. This low level of funding was the most we could get our colleagues in the House to agree with, and it means many important programs will have to be reduced. We won't be able to make as much progress on fighting AIDS and hunger.

We won't have as much funding as I would like to support our operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. But considering the budget situation we face, we will have to make do.

It is in the area of domestic spending in which the bill makes the most serious reductions, with the total included being approximately \$50 billion below the President's request. In achieving this rate of savings, this compromise measure sought out as many different ways to reduce spending as possible to allow us to preserve our critically important priorities. We were able to mitigate the damage by looking at areas where we could identify savings from mandatory spending and by rescinding lower priority funds. In total, domestic discretionary spending is cut by \$38.3 billion while mandatory spending comes down by \$17.7 billion.

Many, many programs had to be cut to reach these levels. In health care, in education, in housing, in infrastructure, but this bill is much better than the approach adopted by the House in HR 1. For example, we were able to fully fund Head Start—restoring the House Republican cut of \$1.4 billion which would have denied 218,000 children an opportunity to learn. We provided \$30.7 billion for NIH, \$1.4 billion more than the House Republicans. We provided \$2.1 billion more for food safety than the Republican plan.

In energy, housing, our National Parks, our transit programs, in every area we forced the House to back away from their unwise cuts which would have devastated the progress we are making to restore the economy and protect our people. Crazy ideas like furloughing Social Security workers and shutting off food inspections were turned around. But there is more to this story. The House bill wasn't just about dangerous and drastic cuts; it was also an attempt to legislate terrible social policy on a must pass emergency spending bill.

Here too we turned them around. Nearly a dozen provisions to overturn health care reform were rejected. Eleven riders to gut the Environmental Protection Agency were rejected. Provisions to eliminate successful programs like needle exchanges, and the Corporation on Public Broadcasting were denied. Their attempts to rewrite gun laws and net neutrality were rejected.

It is true and regrettable that we had to accept limited provisions affecting the District of Columbia on abortion and school vouchers. We are not happy about that. Still, in comparison to what the House wanted to do, this bill is an enormous improvement even for the District of Columbia.

As in any compromise, neither party to the agreement is happy with every item in the bill. Some on the other side would have preferred more cuts in domestic programs while most members on our side believe we have cut our domestic priorities too deeply. But, this is truly a bipartisan bill. When it is approved it will be the most significant

legislation to pass the Congress this year.

I believe this bill provides a road map on how we can continue to work across party lines to achieve what is necessary for the country. Yesterday the President unveiled his long-range strategy to reduce the deficit. His approach is extremely different than the approach of the House Republicans. In 2 weeks our Senate Budget Committee will unveil its plan on regaining fiscal control. It is not overstating the case to say that it is truly a matter of urgent national security that we reach across party lines and conclude an agreement with our colleagues in the House to regain control over our government's finances.

Both parties feel strongly about their recommendations and the structure of future budgets. The philosophical divisions are wide. But as I watched the President's speech, I thought about this continuing resolution and how we were able to bridge a huge divide between the Houses and the political parties. Because of this experience I became more optimistic that we can find a way to work with our House colleagues and come up with a deficit reduction plan that would represent all of our best efforts to act in the Country's interest.

Today it is vitally important that we take that first step toward putting our fiscal house in order by adopting this bill. It is also critical that the Congress demonstrate that it can act in the spirit of compromise and in the national interest. This bill represents a fair compromise which will meet our country's needs, and I urge all my colleagues to support it.

Madam President, I submit pursuant to Senate rules a report, and I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

DISCLOSURE OF CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED
SPENDING ITEMS

I certify in accordance with rule XLIV of the Standing Rules of the Senate that there are no congressionally directed spending items contained in H.R. 1473.

Mr. INOUE. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, as ranking member of the Committee on Appropriations, I regret that the Senate must consider in mid-April an appropriations bill for a fiscal year that is already half over. It disturbs me that we have subjected the Federal Government to eight short-term continuing resolutions over the past 6 months. Such measures are inefficient, add hidden costs to Federal contracts and procurements, and make it difficult for State and local governments to plan effectively. Such measures also have a detrimental impact on the morale of the Federal workforce, including our men and women in uniform who last week, even while engaged in hostilities

overseas, were left wondering about their next paycheck.

However, this delay has made possible significant spending reductions. The bill cuts \$38 billion from the spending levels in place at the beginning of this Congress. It also cuts \$78 billion from the President's fiscal year 2011 budget request. These reductions in spending will compound over time and, if sustained, will result in a significant reduction in our national debt. These reductions don't come without consequences, however. The bill cuts programs that are important both nationally and in my State of Mississippi. This bill contains rescissions of funds I once fought hard to appropriate but which have not been spent for a variety of reasons. In many cases, we don't yet know the precise impacts of the various cuts because so much discretion is left to the implementing agencies. We all recognize, however, that sacrifices must be made in order to achieve the greater good of fiscal solvency.

We also recognize that the bill is only one step toward addressing our Nation's debt problem. Although discretionary spending will be an important component of any solution to that problem, we will fail to solve it if we focus on discretionary spending alone. Hopefully, the agreement reached on this bill will lay a foundation for the much more difficult decisions on entitlements and taxes that lie ahead.

We also realize some will think this bill cuts far too little and some will think it cuts too much. I suspect that, individually, each of us could write spending bills at much lower levels than are contained in this legislation. We could fund those things we deem to be priorities and significantly cut back or eliminate the rest. But this legislation, instead, represents the priorities of the people of the entire Nation as expressed and negotiated by their duly elected Representatives, Senators, and the President.

On balance, the process has worked well. But without a budget resolution or any agreement on an appropriate top-line discretionary spending level, there was little agreement on the level of funding in appropriations bills. As a result, we are once again presented with a single trillion-dollar package that no Senator has had an opportunity to amend. The bill gives enormous flexibility to the executive branch because it does not contain the detailed directives typically found in appropriations bills and reports. And, of course, it is 6 months late.

I hope in the coming months that Congress and the President will reach consensus on a budget plan that will address each of the major drivers of our current fiscal imbalance, including discretionary spending. We need to find a way to bring fiscal year 2012 appropriations bills to the floor individually and get them to conference with the other body. I believe such a process would provide needed constraints on spending levels while allowing all Members to

influence the content of the individual bills.

Madam President, I will vote for this bill, and I urge the Senate to approve it.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. KLOBUCHAR). The Senator from Texas is recognized.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. CORNYN pertaining to the submission of S. Res. 148 are printed in today's RECORD under "Submitted Resolutions.")

Mr. CORNYN. Thank you, Madam President. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Connecticut.

SYRIA

Mr. LIEBERMAN. I thank the Chair. Madam President, it is coincidental, but my remarks follow in a logical path from those of my colleague and friend from Texas, particularly with regard to the thoughtful questions he raised about Syria.

I have come to the floor to speak about the historic and extraordinary events that are taking place in Syria where, for the past 3 weeks, the Syrian people have been peacefully and courageously taking to the streets of their cities. I wish to talk particularly about what may happen in Syria over the next 24 hours.

What is happening, of course, in Syria is part of a broader story that is unfolding across the Middle East—a democratic awakening in which millions of ordinary people are rising up against corrupt autocratic regimes that have ruled the region and suppressed these people for decades. But the strategic stakes in Syria are among the highest anywhere in the region. In fact, I would say what happens in Syria in the coming days will have far-reaching consequences for the future of the Middle East and for our national security here in the United States.

The uprising in Syria began, like those in Tunisia and Egypt, spontaneously and unexpectedly. It rose from the people, not from outside. It began in the city of Dara'a, in southern Syria near the Jordanian border, after the Assad regime arrested a group of schoolchildren there. When the citizens of Dara'a began peacefully assembling to protest this absurd act of repression, the police responded by firing live ammunition into the crowd. Rather than being intimidated by this violence, however, the protest movement persisted and spread.

Although the Assad regime was trying desperately to prevent accurate information about what is happening inside Syria from reaching the rest of the world, it is clear that people in many cities around the country are now in open revolt against the Assad regime.