

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.

From Latakia, to Aleppo, and from the Kurdish northeast to the villages along the Mediterranean coastline, more and more Syrians from diverse backgrounds are rising up and demanding their freedom.

What exactly are they asking for? It is the same basic demands we hear throughout the region, and they are very familiar—they should be—to the American people, because they are the very demands that energized and motivated our rebellion and the American Revolution and the founding documents of our country. The people of Syria want greater political freedom and they want economic opportunity. They want into the modern world. They want to be treated with respect by their government, and they want an end to the culture of corruption and impunity that surrounds the Assad regime.

How has Bashar al Assad reacted to these legitimate grievances? The answer is he has responded not by offering reform but by unleashing what President Obama has rightly characterized as abhorrent violence and repression against the Syrian people. He has responded with thugs and militias who have attacked peaceful protestors. He has responded by spouting conspiracy theories rather than loosening his autocratic grip. And as we know now, he has responded by calling on his allies, his patrons in Teheran, to help him crush the demonstrations by the Syrian people, just as the Iranian regime—the fanatical, extremist, expansionist regime in Teheran, stamped out the protests that took place in Teheran after the June 2009 election.

It is now clear what path Bashar al Assad is on. Rather than pursuing reform, he is taking a page from the Qadhafi model. He is betting that he can beat his people into submission through force and that the world will let him get away with slaughter.

Let's be very clear what it means if Bashar succeeds. It will send a most perverse but unmistakable message that leaders such as Mubarak and Ben Ali in Egypt and Tunisia respectively and who are allied with the United States get overthrown, but leaders such as Assad, who are allied with Iran, survive. Is that a message we want to send?

What about tomorrow? Why do I focus on the next 24 hours? Tomorrow is likely to be a critical day for the future of Syria as protestors come together after Friday's prayers. There is a significant danger that it will also become a very bloody day if Assad continues on the path of violence and brutality against his own people.

This is, therefore, an urgent moment for American leadership, at least for America's voice to be heard. It is important for President Assad in Damascus to know today, before the protests that are likely to take place throughout Syria tomorrow, that his regime will be held accountable for its actions.

I hope we will be prepared to act quickly together with the world com-

munity if Assad fails to heed the will of the Syrian people and tries to hang on to power through repression and murder.

What can we do? Well, to begin with, we can impose tough and targeted sanctions on the Syrian officials responsible for the human rights abuses that are being perpetrated against their own people. We can also work with our allies to summon a special session of the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, just as we did in the case of Libya, and we can refer Assad's regime to the international criminal court, just as we did with Qadhafi.

We should also embrace the Syrian opposition, the freedom fighters. I hope senior American officials will meet with prominent Syrian dissidents who are here in Washington now. I also urge the administration to speak out clearly in support of the Syrian people who deserve praise for their courage as they risk their lives for freedom and human rights. They must know that the United States, still the beacon of liberty in the world, stands on their side. In the face of attacks by the Syrian regime, Syrian protesters have remained remarkably peaceful, as the protesters in Tunisia and Egypt before them did. In the face of sectarian provocations by Assad, the people of Syria who are protesting have remained together, unified, giving a message of national unity.

I know some have suggested that we should hesitate before throwing our support to the Syrian opposition, to the Syrian people as they rise up, and this argument goes like this: Bashar al Assad is the devil we know. We don't know what might replace him if he fails. But we know enough about Bashar al Assad to know, and we know enough about the opposition to know that it cannot be worse than Assad and will be much better.

The arguments that we should wait and see are, in my opinion, moral and strategic nonsense when we look at the record of Assad. He is Iran's most important Arab ally and, in some senses, Iran's only real ally and the strategic linchpin between Iran and its terrorist proxies, Hamas and Hezbollah, whom he sustains with financial and military support. Assad is responsible for a terrible campaign, long standing, of intimidation and destabilization of Lebanon, and the blood of Lebanese leaders—too many of them—is on his hands, including that of the great Lebanese leader Rafik Hariri.

As Senator CORNYN said, Assad also has the blood of countless American soldiers on his hands, having allowed Syria to be used for years by foreign extremist fighters affiliated with al-Qaida and their ilk to head to Iraq to attack and kill Americans and Iraqis.

Finally, let's not forget Syria's illegal nuclear activities. This is a regime that tried to build a secret nuclear reactor. They did so with help from North Korea. This is a regime that continues to refuse to cooperate with the

International Atomic Energy Agency in its investigation of Syria's illegal nuclear activities.

The plain fact is that Bashar al Assad is not a reformer, he is a dictator. He runs a totalitarian regime that has long been one of the worst in the Middle East.

This is a regime that has repressed, intimidated, and, in fact, tortured and slaughtered Syrian people. It is a regime that is deeply corrupt, and it is a regime that has been a menace to its neighbors and to the cause of peace throughout the region.

We now have an opportunity—and I say a responsibility—to support freedom for the Syrian people as they seek a better future for themselves. It would be a shame if they and we lost this opportunity for the Arab spring to come to Syria. I hope, together with our allies, we will seize this moment and stand in solidarity with the people in Syria who are fighting for the fundamental values on which our own country was built: freedom and opportunity.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant editor of the Daily Digest proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

CORRECTING THE ENROLLMENT OF H.R. 1473

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate H. Con. Res. 35.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the concurrent resolution by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 35) directing the Clerk of the House of Representatives to make a correction in the enrollment of H.R. 1473.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there is 2 minutes of debate, equally divided, prior to the vote.

Mrs. MURRAY. Madam President, I yield back all time and ask for the yeas and nays.

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

Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The question is on agreeing to the concurrent resolution.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

The result was announced—yeas 47, nays 53, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 59 Leg.]

YEAS—47

Alexander	Boozman	Coats
Ayotte	Brown (MA)	Coburn
Barrasso	Burr	Cochran
Blunt	Chambliss	Collins