size of the city of Chicago. The fire destroyed 32 homes and 4 rental cabins. Nearly 10,000 people were evacuated at one point, and the fire cost the taxpayers over $100 million before it was finally extinguished. Unfortunately, it will likely cost double that amount for the necessary rehabilitation of the forests that needs to occur now. After a fire such as this, there is only a short opportunity to hasten forest rehabilitation, reduce risks of flooding, insect epidemics, and future fires, and capture at least some of the economic benefit from the dead and dying trees to help offset and pay for those restoration costs.

Given the urgent need for action, as I said, I am introducing today the Arizona Wallow Fire Recovery and Monitoring Act, joined by my colleague, JOHN MCCAIN, as an original cosponsor. This legislation would expedite the removal of hazard, dead, and dying trees in community protection management areas within the Wallow Fire area. The removal projects carried out under the act will be completed within 18 months of enactment. The reason for this timeline is that when it comes to timber harvesting of the fire-killed trees, the costs of delay are extreme. Fire-killed trees will lose more than 40 percent of their value in less than 2 years.

Due to the intensity, the size, and the magnitude of the fire, there is a tremendous amount of dead and dying trees within the Wallow Fire area. Portions of the forest that have burned pose a risk to forest users, to communities, and to private property and the remaining resources. These risks include the hazards of falling trees, erosion, flooding, reburns due to excess fuel loads, and insect infestation risk to the remaining live trees. Under these postfire conditions, timber salvage is a management tool to mitigate these risks, generate revenue and jobs, and put the forest on the road to recovery.

We saw the negative consequences of delay firsthand in Arizona after the Rodeo-Chediski Fire in 2002, which at that point had been our State's largest fire. Bureaucratic regulations and lawsuits so severely delayed salvage efforts that by the time the projects were cleared to proceed, the trees had lost most of their economic value. Congress should not stand by and allow this situation to be repeated.

That said, we are not looking to eliminate environmental safeguards or exempt timber harvests from Federal environmental laws. This bill is narrowly tailored, limiting the removal of hazard, dead, and dying trees to those trees located within community protection management areas. One of these areas includes the wildland urban interface and other areas critical to communities. In addition, a comprehensive hazard tree and commercial timber evaluation and an environmental assessment under the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, are required. All appeals and judicial review would follow the processes in the bipartisan Healthy Forest Restoration Act.

The practice of postfire timber salvage may be controversial in part because there is limited scientific information on its ecological effects. Most of the scientific literature that does exist is based on forests in the Pacific Northwest. The forests in that part of the country are very different from the dry ponderosa pine-dominated forests that burned in the Wallow Fire. Thus, the bill would require monitoring for all timber removal projects implemented under the act.

Finally, from a fiscal perspective, there is never going to be enough Federal funding for the forest restoration work that needs to be done to save the forest that remains. Acknowledging this reality, this bill takes the proceeds from the timber removal project sales and keeps them on this forest to help pay for future forest restoration treatments.

This bill strikes a responsible balance between environmental concerns and economics after a catastrophic wildfire. I urge my colleagues to support its swift passage.

The Arizona Wallow Fire Recovery and Monitoring Act requires a comprehensive evaluation of the forest conditions and hazard tree and fire-damaged timber resources across the Wallow Fire Area; limits the areas where dead and dying trees can be removed to Community Protection Management Areas; limits tree removal to hazard trees and trees that are already down, dead, broken or severely root sprung trees where mortality is highly expected; prohibits the construction of new, permanent roads; provides for an expedited, but thorough, environmental review of tree removal projects proposed in the Wallow Fire Area, including full public participation in the development of such projects; uses the processes for appeals and judical review established in the bipartisan Healthy Forest Restoration Act; requires monitoring of the ecological and economic effects of timber removal projects; and authorizes the use of timber receipts to offset the costs of forest restoration.

SUBMITTED RESOLUTIONS

SENATE RESOLUTION 230—EXPRESSING THE SENSE OF THE SENATE THAT ANY AGREEMENT TO REDUCE THE BUDGET DEFICIT SHOULD NOT INCLUDE CUTS TO SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS OR MEDICARE BENEFITS

Mr. WHITEHOUSE (for himself, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. BROWN of Ohio, Mr. MERKLEY, and Mr. FRANKEN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Finance:

S. RES. 230

Whereas over 34,000,000 retired workers currently receive Social Security benefits in amounts that average a modest $14,100 a year;

Whereas, in 2008, 23 percent of retired workers receiving Social Security benefits depended on those benefits for all or almost all of their income;

Whereas according to AARP, Social Security benefits kept 36 percent of seniors out of poverty in 2008;

Whereas reducing Social Security benefits would cause many seniors to have to choose between food, drugs, rent, and heat;

Whereas 95 percent of seniors in the United States, who numbered almost 37,000,000 in 2008, got their health care coverage through the Medicare program;

Whereas without Medicare benefits, seniors, many of whom live off of Social Security benefits, would have to turn to the costly and uncertain private market for health care coverage;

Whereas the Social Security program and the Medicare program are extremely successful social insurance programs that permit seniors in America to retire with dignity and security after a lifetime of hard work; and

Whereas the Social Security program and the Medicare program help relieve young American families from worry about their own futures, allowing freedom of opportunity in America: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the Senate that any agreement to reduce the budget deficit should not include cuts to Social Security benefits or Medicare benefits.

SENATE RESOLUTION 231—DESIGNATING SEPTEMBER 2011 AS ''NATIONAL CHILD AWARENESS MONTH'' TO PROMOTE AWARENESS OF CHARITIES BENEFITTING CHILDREN AND YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES AND RECOGNIZING EFFORTS MADE BY THOSE CHARITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS ON BEHALF OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH AS CRITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. BURR (for himself, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, Mr. BROWN of Ohio, Mr. BEGICH, Mr. LAUTENBERG, and Mr. ALEXANDER) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 231

Whereas millions of children and youth in the United States represent the hopes and future of the United States;

Whereas numerous individuals, charities benefitting children, and youth-serving organizations that work with children and youth collaborate to provide invaluable services to enrich and better the lives of children and youth throughout the United States;

Whereas raising awareness of, and increasing support for, organizations that provide access to healthcare, social services, education, the arts, sports, and other services will result in the development of character and the future success of the children and youth of the United States;

Whereas the month of September, as the school year begins, is a time when parents, families, teachers, school administrators, and communities increase their focus on children and youth throughout the United States;

Whereas the month of September is a time for the people of the United States to highlight and be mindful of the needs of children and youth;

Whereas private corporations and businesses have joined with hundreds of national and local charitable organizations throughout the United States in support of a month-long focus on children and youth; and

Whereas designating September 2011 as ''National Child Awareness Month'' would recognize that a long-term commitment to children and youth is in the public interest, and will encourage widespread support for charities and organizations that seek to provide a better future for the children and youth of the United States: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate designates September 2011 as ''National Child Awareness Month''—

(1) to promote awareness of charities benefitting children and youth-serving organizations throughout the United States; and

(2) to recognize efforts made by those charities and organizations on behalf of children and youth as critical contributions to the future of the United States.

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, I rise to discuss the ongoing negotiations on the Federal budget and our rapidly approaching debt ceiling. I think we all agree the situation we face is increasingly grave. I believe every responsible person agrees that a failure to act on the debt limit would have awful repercussions and set back our fragile and tentative economic recovery. Surpassing the debt limit could inflict a triple economic harm on our struggling economy: the economic harm of all at once pulling 40 cents of every Federal dollar out of the economy, the economic harm of shutting down every work project that depends on Federal permits, contracts or regulatory approvals, and the economic harm of driving up interest rates for our constituents and for our country. We must, therefore, act and act quickly to ensure that we avoid that outcome.

I also believe the debt limit presents an opportunity to make some tough decisions on our unsustainable deficits. The longer we wait to make these choices, the harder they will be. It is my strong belief that any agreement we reach to reduce the deficits must be based on real savings and must not be made at the expense of our most vulnerable citizens. That is why I am so concerned about reports that Social Security and Medicare benefits have been raised as possible sources of deficit reduction. Cuts to Social Security and to Medicare benefits are unnecessary, are wrong, and should not be on the table. Social Security is not the cause of the deficit, and beneficiaries of Social Security should not be made to shoulder the burden of deficit reduction.

A balanced deficit reduction package is certainly within our grasp. I wish to commend our chairman, Senator CONRAD, chairman of the Budget Committee, for his proposal which would cut the deficit by $4 trillion over the next decade. His plan would cut the deficit by more than the House Republican budget and would do so without cutting Social Security or Medicare benefits. Chairman CONRAD's blueprint would balance $2 trillion in spending cuts with an equal amount of tax loophole closers for wealthy individuals and corporations. His budget would call for shared sacrifice, not just go after the elderly and other vulnerable Americans. We should not, as Americans, balance the budget on the backs of those who can least afford it. That is why I rise to offer a resolution expressing the sense of the Senate that any budget agreement should not include cuts to Social Security or Medicare benefits. Social Security is funded through the contributions of our Nation's workers and businesses. It currently has a trust fund balance over $2.5 trillion, and it is projected to be fully solvent for another quarter century. So while I agree with steps to strengthen Social Security, it is a vital program, any changes should be considered independent of this effort to reduce the deficit, and under no circumstances should we cut Social Security benefits. Indeed, the solvency of the program could be extended significantly just by applying payroll taxes to a greater portion of the earnings of millionaires and billionaires. What we should never do is to put elderly Americans' security at risk in the stock market or increase the retirement age or cut benefits through backdoor methods such as lowering the cost-of-living adjustment.

As has the Presiding Officer, I have heard from hundreds of folks from my home State—Rhode Islanders who agree with me—and, particularly, I rely on seniors to whom I have listened at community dinners and senior centers throughout the State who are concerned that they have already gone 2 years without a cost-of-living adjustment when prices are going up all around them.

Audrey from Middletown told me that after her husband died, she had many expenses but ''no income except for his Social Security check which enabled me to go on living—simply but adequately—without being a burden on my sons and losing my dignity as well.''

Ronald from Cumberland, RI, has been on Social Security for a number of years. He wrote me to say:

It . . . seems that it's always the people who need the help the most who get cut from the Federal Government. Why is this? No Social Security COLA for two years, yet prices for the basic needs still rise. . . . In a country like the United States of America, this should not happen.

The threat to Medicare is just as real. Earlier this year, House Republicans passed a budget that in 10 years would put an end to the Medicare Program as we know it. Estimates suggest their proposal would end up forcing a typical 65-year-old senior to pay, on average, $12,500 each year in out-of-pocket expenses, starting in 2022—more than double what a senior is estimated to pay under the current system. In Rhode Island, where the average senior only gets about $14,200 per year from Social Security, charging an average $12,500 for seniors would be an exercise in poverty creation.

The Republican budget would also throw seniors right away—in the next year—back into the Medicare prescription drug doughnut hole we have just begun closing through the affordable care act, and it would eliminate the lifesaving preventive services that were added by the health care reform law. Cutting Medicare benefits is the wrong approach to balancing our budget, especially while Republicans continue fighting to protect every single tax break, every single loophole, every single earmark in the Tax Code enjoyed by millionaires and billionaires and by corporations, many of whom pay no taxes at all.

Medicare and Social Security are cornerstones of our Nation's prosperity, and they benefit all of us. These programs allow Americans to live their lives free from worry about their retirement security or the welfare and health treatment of their parents. This American freedom is a value we should fight to protect.

While we should always be open to improving these vital programs, we must not cut the benefits our seniors and disabled Americans have earned and rely upon. I wish to thank Senators BLUMENTHAL and SANDERS; Senator SHERROD BROWN; the Presiding Officer, Senator MERKLEY; and Senator FRANKEN for their support in cosponsoring this resolution. I hope my colleagues will join us in protecting the promise we have made to our Nation's seniors through Social Security and Medicare.

In closing, the challenge before us is a formidable one, but I truly believe we can reach an agreement on the deficit and debt ceiling without compromising the security and well-being of our seniors.

I thank the Chair.

AMENDMENTS SUBMITTED AND PROPOSED

SA 527. Mr. HELLER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1323, to express the sense of the Senate on shared sacrifice in resolving the budget deficit; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 528. Mr. PORTMAN submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1323, supra; which was ordered to lie on the table.

SA 529. Mr. REID proposed an amendment to the bill S. 1323, supra.

SA 530. Mr. REID proposed an amendment to amendment SA 529 proposed by Mr. REID to the bill S. 1323, supra.

SA 531. Mr. REID proposed an amendment to the bill S. 1323, supra.

SA 532. Mr. REID proposed an amendment to amendment SA 531 proposed by Mr. REID to the bill S. 1323, supra.

SA 533. Mr. REID proposed an amendment to amendment SA 532 proposed by Mr. REID to the amendment SA 531 proposed by Mr. REID to the bill S. 1323, supra.

TEXT OF AMENDMENTS

SA 527. Mr. HELLER submitted an amendment intended to be proposed by him to the bill S. 1323, to express the sense of the Senate on shared sacrifice in resolving the budget deficit; which was ordered to lie on the table; as follows:

At the end of the bill, add the following:

SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET RESPONSIBILITY.

(a) SHORT TITLE.—This section may be cited as the ''Congressional Budget Responsibility Act of 2011''.

(b) DEFINITION.—In this section, the term ''Member of Congress''—

(1) has the meaning given under section 2106 of title 5, United States Code; and