

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 benefiting 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 loop-hole 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.

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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