three, and I would like to outline them briefly.

First, the treaty redefines NATO's fundamental mission from protecting against a known threat into something much more nebulous. The initial purpose of this alliance was to contain communism and staunch the threat of the Soviet Union spreading its sphere of influence over the entire continent. With four decades of sound leadership, consistent vision, and unflinching strength, the alliance succeeded in that endeavor, bringing the West safely through the Cold War, and allowing the people of Eastern Europe to finally reassert their long-suppressed desire for freedom.

But what is NATO's role in a new environment, with the Soviet Union relegated to history? I don't think that question has been sufficiently debated, or an answer sufficiently defined, for us to be rushing into this expansion. Is there really some strategic end that would be served by the United States pledging to treat any conflagration in the turbulent realm of Eastern Europe as an attack against our own sovereignty?

It may well be that there are circumstances in which the cause of world peace and security would be best served by an American commitment to turn back an aggressor or defend a fragile democracy. But in the absence of a well-defined threat or clearly articulated strategic mission, it is hard to see how this expansion of NATO is anything other than a gamble that an institution created for one purpose is equally suited for the yet-to-be-determined purposes of a new time.

Second, I believe that this expansion will have a deleterious effect on our relationship with Russia. At this critical time—when what was once our most formidable adversary stands at a delicate point between the continued climb toward democracy and freedom on the one side, and a fall backwards into heavily-armed nationalism on the other—I'm especially troubled that this proposed NATO expansion will push future Russian leaders in the wrong direction.

As the end of this century approaches, Russia is still in possession of one of the world's most powerful military arsenals. A Russia with reborn territorial designs on her neighbors is the greatest imaginable potential threat to European stability and security.

That is why it is so vital that we seek ratification and implimentation of the START II treaty with Russia, which would actually reduce the size of its nuclear arsenal. The Russian Duma has so far refused to take this step, but appears to be moving in that direction. If they interepret this expansion, however, as a hostile gesture in their direction, they may well refuse to ratify, leaving us all less safe than we might otherwise have been.

The United States has made tremendous strides in our relationship with Russia since the fall of the Soviet system. American diplomacy now should be focused on consolidating those gains, and finding ways to help Russia complete its transition to democracy. Many experts in our own country, as well as many of the most credible pro-Western leaders in Russia itself, have warned us that expanding NATO could inflame nationalist passions, and lead to a turning away from the path of democracy and peaceful relations. That would be the most disastrous of unintended consequences, and must give us pause as we consider this step.

Third, the cost of this initiative is anyone's guess, and must compel us to caution as well, particularly considering that the United States already pays a disproportionate share of NATO's costs. If NATO expansion were vital to our national security, then our country would be resolved to pay any price, in President Kennedy's timeless phrase. But we live in a fundamentally different time, one in which each country's security is determined as much by the quality of its schools and the cleanliness of its air and water than by the might of its armies and navies. Committing to an expanded military alliance which may entail far greater costs than the Administration has estimated could diminish our ability to make the investments that will make us safer and stronger.

The Senate had an opportunity, through the amendment offered by Senator HARKIN, to gain a better sense of the size of this financial commitment. I strongly supported that effort. Unfortunately, it did not prevail, and we are left with burning questions about the size of the financial commitment entailed by this treaty, and the effect that will have on our ability to address those domestic priorities which make us stronger as a nation.

What is true for us is true for these struggling new democracies as well. As Senator MOYNIHAN has pointed out so wisely, these countries are under no immediate threat. Their most pressing challenge is the development of growing economies, and the institutions of democracy. But if they join NATO, these struggling nations will be required to spend billions on the latest in military hardware instead of making critically needed investments in areas that lead to long-term benefit: infrastructure, education, environmental health, and many others.

Decades of a failed communist system left these countries in economic ruin. I believe it is a testament to their energy and determination that they are slowly overcoming this legacy and building up new, vibrant free market economies. We should, in the name of international security, be doing everything possible to help them through this transition.

I do not believe that anyone has properly assessed the impact that joining NATO, and making the necessary investments to participate in that military alliance, will have on our Eastern European friends' ability to continue a successful transition to market economics. And I do not believe we should jump pell-mell into such an enlargement until we have done so.

The democratization of Eastern Europe is an exciting and hopeful development. As a child of the Cold War, I am awed by the transitions we have seen. The United States has a special responsibility to nurture freedom wherever it is seeking to plant its roots. But in the final analysis, it is not clear that extending NATO membership to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic is the best way to do it.

In this case, the burden of proof is on the proponents. We should not take so solemn a step as committing American lives to the protection of another country unless we are absolutely certain, beyond any doubt, that it is the wisest of possible courses. I remain unconvinced, and so I opposed the measure.●

RECOGNIZING PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

● Mr. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, I rise today in support of S. Res. 223, which I introduced yesterday on behalf of myself and Senator STEVENS. Our resolution recognizes the Prince William Sound Community College and its celebration of its twentieth anniversary this Sunday, May 10, 1988.

This is a notable milestone for the College and for the people of the Copper Basin Area. Prince William Sound Community College was established in 1976 as a Learning Center set up by the University of Alaska. It earned community college status just two years later. In 1987, the University of Alaska merged all community colleges in the state into the university system; however, due to overwhelming support from the local community of Valdez, Prince William Sound Community College remained the only individually accredited community college in the University of Alaska system.

Today, after 20 years, the student body of the college has grown to nearly 2,000 students, and the college is a recognized leader in the University of Alaska system.

Mr. President, I commend the Prince William Sound Community College for its 20 years of exceptional service to the people of Alaska and look forward to many more years of growth and contributions to the culture and economy of Alaska.●

● Mr. STEVENS. Mr. President, I join Senator Murkowski as a co-sponsor of this Senate resolution commending the Prince William Sound Community College, which is located in Valdez, Alaska, as it celebrates its twentieth anniversary.

In 1971, concerned citizens of Valdez and in the neighboring town of Cordova petitioned the University of Alaska to establish extension offices in each of these communities. In 1976, a Learning Center was established in this area.

Community college status was granted in 1978 and the centers officially became known as Prince William Sound Community College.

In 1989, the College received accreditation from the Commission on Colleges of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges and has maintained that status. Since that date, the College has established several new programs, such as the Prince William Sound Community College Theater Conference, which attracts nationally-known dramatists; the Industrial Safety/Marine Response Training Department; a wellness center; and a television station.

The University of Alaska merged all community colleges into the university system in 1987. Prince William Sound Community College has remained the only individually-accredited community college in the system because of the continuing strong support from the City of Valdez. The University of Alaska's Board of Regents has recognized the growth and accomplishment of the College by approving several new degree and certificate programs.

In twenty years of existence, Prince William Sound Community College has developed into a recognized leader in the University of Alaska system and continues to serve Prince William Sound and the Cooper Basin area as a comprehensive community college intent on life-long learning.

I urge other Senators to help us pass this resolution to commend the Prince William Sound Community College for these accomplishments in conjunction for these accomplishments in conjunction with its 20th anniversity on May 10, 1998.●

THANKING OUR NATION'S CORRECTIONS OFFICERS

● Mr. TORRICELLI. Mr. President, I rise today to thank our nation's Corrections Officers for their selfless dedication to rehabilitating those members of our society who have strayed from the path of the just. I would especially like to recognize the 5,500 members of the New Jersey State Corrections Officers Association whose daily work allows our children to grow in an environment unfettered by criminal elements. These courageous men and women risk their lives on a daily basis and deserve to be recognized for their efforts on our behalf.

Although Corrections Officers play a critical role in safeguarding our communities from convicted felons, they receive very little public recognition for their work. When a felon is apprehended the police receive the credit for the arrest and the prosecuting attorney is praised for proving the felon's guilt. Juries are hailed as courageous and the judges imposing sentences are lauded for their commitment to justice. Once the trial process is completed and a felon is convicted, that person goes to prison and is forgotten by mainstream society. However, Corrections Officers are not allowed to forget because they deal with convicted felons on a daily basis. From rehabilitating to guarding those people who have forfeited their rights to live in our communities, Corrections Officers find themselves in high risk situations every day.

In a society that believes in the fundamental importance of law and order, it is important to remember the people who help those principles flourish. By ensuring that inmates are rehabilitated before re-entering our communities, Corrections Officers are disciplinarians and teachers. They impose the will of the people while teaching criminals about the need to adhere to the law. Clearly, there are formidable obstacles to these endeavors, and I am continually impressed by the way these officers persevere in spite of the difficulties they encounter. In a criminal justice system that places an ever increasing amount of pressure on Corrections Officers to be infallible, they maintain a consistently positive and professional attitude towards their jobs.

The men and women who work as Corrections Officers in our nation's prisons should be celebrated for their commitment to their communities. I am privileged to recognize their efforts and I encourage my colleagues to do so as well.●

RECOGNITION OF REVEREND TED B. COMBS

● Mr. FAIRCLOTH. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to Reverend Ted B. Combs who recently stepped down as Pastor of the Oak Ridge Baptist Church. For 27 years, Reverend Combs faithfully led his congregation and selflessly gave to his community. His wife, Doris, and he have dedicated their lives to the service of God.

Oak Ridge Baptist Church is located in Wilkes County, North Carolina, in the western part of the state. Reverend Combs was born and raised in these parts not far from the church that he would one day pastor. He has been an integral part of the community since attending the local high school, Mountain View. As an adult in Wilkes County, Reverend Combs has served the community in numerous positions including board member of the Wilkes County Nursing Home and honorary member of Mountain View Ruritan.

The greatest testament, however, to Reverend Combs' stature in and respect among the community is given through those that live there. Wilkes County has a population of a little more than 60,000 citizens, and one would be hard pressed to find anyone who didn't speak kindly of Reverend Combs. His work in Wilkes County has touched the lives of so many.

I'm proud to recognize the achievement of Reverend Ted B. Combs before the United States Senate and privileged to call him a fellow North Carolinian.●

MILITARY HEALTH CARE

Mr. CLELAND. Mr. President, one of my proudest honors as a United States Senator is to serve as the Ranking Member on the Personnel Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee. It is in this capacity that I feel I can contribute to supporting the men and women in our Armed Forces.

Last week I introduced a military health care proposal which I referred to as KP Duty, as in ''Keeping Promises Duty.'' In the military, KP stands for ''kitchen police'' which is a term for messhall clean up which recruits are tasked to do when they go through basic training. This KP duty I am proposing is for all of us to clean up a commitment—the promises made to our servicemen and women.

The Fiscal Year 1998 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 105–85) included a Sense of the Congress Resolution which provided a finding that ''many retired military personnel believe that they were promised lifetime health care in exchange for 20 or more years of service.'' Furthermore, it expressed the sense of Congress that ''the United States has incurred a moral obligation'' to provide health care to members and retired members of the Armed Services and that Congress and the President should take steps to address ''the problems associated with the availability of health care for such retirees within two years.'' I authored that resolution, and today in year one of this two-year challenge, my friend and colleague, Senator KEMPTHORNE, Chairman of the Personnel Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and I are ready to take the initial steps in fulfilling this obligation to our retirees.

In March, I hosted a military health care roundtable at Fort Gordon, Georgia. The positive and supportive working relationship between the Eisenhower Army Medical Center and the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Augusta, Georgia was highlighted by the panel speakers and audience members. These facilities have established a sharing agreement which allows each to provide certain health care services to the beneficiaries of the other. This type of joint approach has the potential to alleviate a significant portion of the accessibility problem faced by military retirees, especially given the reduction in DoD medical treatment facilities. In spite of these benchmarked efforts in cooperative care, beneficiaries who were in the audience still attested to insufficient accessibility to resources to meet their needs. One of the audience participants who was commenting on a health problem stated, ''my life isn't the same as it was a year ago, and all I got was shuttled from one thing to another''.

In a statement I submitted last week, I discussed a legislative initiative which would require the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to work toward enhancing their cooperative efforts in the