Recently, there has been discussion of the possibility of reworking our entire military force structure—which is presently based on the capacity to fight two simultaneous major regional conflicts—in order to enable us to commit US troops to an ever-growing number of multilateral “peacekeeping” missions. I am concerned that we may sacrifice our vital national security interests in order to be able to participate in peripheral endeavors. We should not be shortsighted. We should not lose sight of what we must do in order to accomplish what we can do. Our military should be used to protect our national security interests, not provide peacekeeping in areas without strategic significance.

That kind of distinction will never happen under the Clinton Administration. Sanctions and threats are more fluid at this time than at any other in the last 40 years. Therefore, one of the very important decisions that the OSCE must make at the Istanbul Summit, is who will chair the OSCE in 2001.

I am very pleased to announce that the OSCE has chosen the nation of Romania to undertake this important leadership role. The United States and several leading European nations had advanced Romania’s candidacy, and I believe that the OSCE has made a very wise choice. Romania’s value as OSCE chair derives from a number of factors. First, Romania’s geostrategic position places it in the heart of the region where stability is needed most. Despite lying at the crossroads of the Balkans, the Caucasus, and European Russia, Romania has managed to maintain excellent relations with all the parties. The OSCE desperately needs leadership that understands the problems of this region, while having no vested interest in any particular outcome. That is the sort of leadership that only Romania can bring to the table. Second, Romania is a role model for other Balkan nations. The economic and political reforms that Romania has undertaken, have not come easy—but that is part of her attraction to the other nations of the region. Romania’s experience demonstrates that if willing to make the necessary sacrifices, democracy and a liberalized economy are within reach. Finally, Romania has a strong tradition of cooperation with this nation. Our friendship has been formalized through the 1997 Strategic Partnership, as well as Romania’s vigorous participation in the Partnership for Peace.

Mr. President, Romanian chairmanship is a very positive harbinger for the future of Europe, and for the future of the Balkan Region. I congratulate the OSCE for their excellent choice. I wish Romania’s leadership the very best wishes upon assuming this very weighty responsibility. We look forward to another session of productive dialogue and meaningful diplomacy upon their accession to the chairmanship.

THE 1999 STATE PARKS GOLD MEDAL

Mr. GRAHAM. Mr. President, today, I rise with my colleague Senator MACK to take a moment to recognize our Florida state park system, which recently received the prestigious 1999 National State Parks Gold Medal from the National Sports Foundation, Inc., a part of the 25,000-member National Sporting Goods Association. The State Parks Gold Medal is awarded every other year to the state park system considered America’s best. We are proud and honored that Florida’s state park system, which includes 151 diverse state parks throughout the state covering more than one-half million acres, received this recognition in October at the National Recreation and Park Association Annual Congress in Nashville, Tennessee.

Congratulations to Governor Jeb Bush, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Secretary David Struhs, and the Department’s Division of Recreation and Parks Director, Fran Malnella, on this achievement.

This nation’s state parks play a key role in our society—they provide much-needed recreational opportunities to Americans while protecting key resources. These parks create the link between our national parks, dedicated specifically to protection of the resources for which the park was created, and our local parks, dedicated specifically to recreation. Without a strong state park system, our national parks will become stressed as people seek to fill unmet recreational needs. We are proud that the state of Florida recognizes this connection, and works to maintain a strong state park system for future generations.

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, last Wednesday, the Senate confirmed Governor Joseph E. Brennan as a commissioner on the Federal Maritime Commission, and this week Governor Brennan was sworn in for a term to expire in 2003.

Governor Brennan, who formerly served as a Member of Congress for four years, where he was a member of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, and Governor of Maine for eight years prior to that, is eminently qualified to confront the challenges facing the maritime community. With his broad experience at the state and federal levels, Governor Brennan is an outstanding choice to serve as a Commissioner on the FMC.

His service in Congress gave him first-hand knowledge of federal maritime issues as a member of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee that will be invaluable on the Maritime Commission.

Established in 1961, the Federal Maritime Commission—FMC—is an independent regulatory agency charged with administering laws relating to shipping and the waterborne domestic and offshore commerce of the U.S. The FMC’s jurisdiction encompasses many facets of the maritime industry. The Chairman and four Commissioners of the FMC are responsible for protecting shippers, carriers and others engaged in foreign commerce from restrictive rules and regulations of foreign governments and from the practices of foreign-flag carriers that have an adverse effect on shipping in U.S. trades. The FMC also reviews and monitors agreements under shipping law, reviews and approves or rejects tariff filings, issues licenses for ocean freight
activities, administers passenger indemnity laws, reviews alleged or suspected violations of shipping statutes, and promulgates rules and regulations on shipping laws.

The maritime sector is vitally important to our economy, and the FMC’s responsibilities are fundamental to sustaining U.S. competitiveness in this area.

As a Senator from Maine, a state with a rich maritime heritage, I am keenly aware that our nation has always been dependent upon the sea and has thus enjoyed a rich maritime tradition. To this day, our merchant marine remains an integral part of our culture and our economy.

Today, one out of every six jobs in the United States is marine related. America’s ports support more than 55 percent of all our overseas foreign trade, and within the U.S., more than one billion tons of commercial cargo is transported by ship each year. We must do all that we can to preserve our maritime legacy for future generations, and the FMC plays a key role in the commercial component of this legacy.

Mr. President, I would also like to recognize Senator McCaIN, Chairman of the Commerce Committee, for his leadership, and for making it possible to move the nominations of both Governor Brennan and Anthony Moret prior to adjournment. I am grateful to Senator McCaIN and to Majority Leader LOTT for their efforts to move this nomination expeditiously—and to my colleagues for their support.

Finally, I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Governor Brennan. I am very pleased that the President recognized that he would make a valuable contribution to the FMC. As senior Senator from Maine and a member of the Commerce Committee, I look forward to working with Governor Brennan on maritime issues in the years to come.

Mr. President, once again, I would like to thank Chairman McCaIN, Majority Leader LOTT, and my colleagues, and I yield the floor.

THE RISING COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I want to address an issue of critical importance to millions and millions of Americans, an issue I have come to the floor previously to discuss and an issue that has become one of my highest legislative priorities, the lack of affordable prescription drugs.

Today, nearly thirty five percent of Medicare beneficiaries, 14 million people, have absolutely no coverage for prescription drugs. Unfortunately, these are the same individuals who consume the majority of prescription drugs in our country. Studies indicate that eighty percent of retirees take at least one prescription drug every day and those over the age of sixty-five take on average, eighteen and a half prescription drugs per year.

Older Americans spend a tremendous amount of money out of pocket on their health care expenses. It is estimated that seniors spend an average of fourteen percent on hospital admission fees, thirty one percent on physician visits, thirty four percent on prescription drugs and twenty one percent on other health care related expenses. Prescription drugs have become the number one health care expense for senior citizens in our country.

I came to the floor a few weeks ago to talk about this very same issue, but I am addressing this issue again because I believe this matter is too critical for Congress to ignore. It appears as though Congress will not reach an agreement before we adjourn for the year, or even have a meaningful discussion, on how we will provide relief to the millions of needy seniors throughout our country and a state of South Dakota who struggle every day to pay for their medications.

While prices for the prescription drugs most often used by older Americans are skyrocketing far beyond inflation, a recent study by the American Association of Retired Persons found that price differentials are as high as one thousand four hundred and sixty nine percent for some drugs.

The findings in the Families USA study reflect similar results that I introduced with Senator KENNY, the Prescription Drug Fairness For Seniors Act. Our bill would allow Medicare beneficiaries access to the same low prescription drug prices that the drug companies offer their ‘favored’ customers, such as HMO’s, large insurance companies and the federal government. This bill ends the price discrimination that now exists against the segment of the society who rely on prescription drugs the most, older Americans. South Dakotans have told me that they support this effort to make prescription drugs affordable.

Mr. President, we are forcing our senior citizens to make the unimaginable choice that no human being should have to make.

With the proposed drug industry merger between Warner Lambert and American Home Products, and the recently released Families USA study, today highlights two more examples which reinforces my belief that we need legislation to help lower the high cost of prescription drugs for American consumers.

A 73 billion drug industry merger has the potential to decrease any competition that still exists in the industry. Stock prices for the pharmaceutical industry are at an all time high which adds to their record profits. The losers for all of this are the American consumers who are forced to pay increasingly higher prices for prescription drugs.

By joining forces, these two drug companies expect a total cost savings of over one billion dollars over three years by spreading the cost of developing new drugs, while increasing the...