

about to go to the new Governor's inauguration out there. You ought to take the opportunity to put in a plug for what we're doing there. I'm sure you will. *[Laughter]*

Ladies and gentlemen, let me say, again, how grateful I am for all the people who worked on this proposal, for the advocates for the elderly and the disabled who are here, for the very large representation from Congress. And thank you, again, for the passion and the commitment that you manifested in your statement and for having the courage to come here and tell us about your situation. I hope it will help to change the future of America.

God bless you, and happy New Year. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:36 a.m. in the Grand Foyer on the State Floor at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to caregiver Patricia Darlak, who introduced the President, and her husband, Dennis.

Statement on the Launch of the New European Currency

January 4, 1999

We welcome the launch of the euro, an historic step that 11 nations in Europe have taken toward a more complete Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). The United States has long been an advocate for European integration, and we admire the steady progress that Europe has demonstrated in taking the often difficult budget decisions that make this union possible. A strong and stable Europe, with open markets and robust growth, is good for America and for the world. A successful economic union that contributes to a dynamic Europe is clearly in our long-term interests.

Remarks on the Zero Tolerance for Drugs in Prison Initiative

January 5, 1999

Thank you very much. Let me begin by just expressing my appreciation to all who have spoken and to all who are here for the years and years and years of commitment you have manifested in this endeavor. I thank my

good friend Senator Leahy, and Congressman Rangel. I thank General Reno and General McCaffrey for making it possible for us to continue to emphasize these things and to actually make progress, for being both practical and idealistic.

Thank you, Mayor Griffin, for what you said and for what you're doing, and for bringing your police chief, Chief Hoover, here with you.

I want to say, obviously, a special word of appreciation to Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, who has literally redefined what it means to be a Lieutenant Governor—*[laughter]*—I would hate to succeed her as Lieutenant Governor of Maryland—*[laughter]*—for her indefatigable energy. I thank the others here from Maryland who are involved in her endeavor.

I'd also like to say a special word of welcome to Judge Joel Tauber and all the others who are here from the drug courts throughout America. I'll have more to say about them in a moment, but I am especially grateful for their endeavors.

Six years ago, as has already been said, our country was at peace, but too many of our communities were at war. Illegal drugs were ravaging cities on both coasts and the American heartland in between. Crack and methamphetamine use were at near record levels. Drug dealers controlled whole neighborhoods and thought nothing of opening fire on passing police cars. Many communities lived in terror; many children feared walking down the street.

I actually met, in a school in California—I'll never forget this—with a group of children who were drilled on how to jump out of their desk and hit the floor if they were subject to drive-by shootings. It had a searing impact on me. One of the reasons I ran for President was to give those kids their futures back. And all of you have done a lot to give them their futures back, and I'm very grateful to you.

In every successive year, I have proposed a larger antidrug budget. In 1999—we had a 30-percent increase just between then and 1996, even as we produced the first balanced budget in a generation. Under General McCaffrey's leadership, we have put these resources to good use: unprecedented new