

We must undertake this effort today so that our Nation will remain strong and secure tomorrow. We must do it as well because we have the most sacred obligation to those who accept dangers and hardships on our behalf.

They are our sons and daughters, husbands and wives, friends and neighbors, from cities and towns all over America. We must give them the support they need to keep doing their jobs well and to keep coming home to America, safe and sound.

Thanks for listening, and happy New Year.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:55 a.m. on December 30 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 2. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 31 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Statement on the Decline in the National Murder Rate

January 2, 1999

The Justice Department study on homicide trends released today shows that America's murder rate has fallen to its lowest level in 30 years, with much of the decline coming from the drop in youth gun homicides. Our cities are now the safest they have been in a generation. With the help of the '94 crime act, cities have replaced gang and gun violence with more police and tougher gun enforcement, and their efforts are paying off in dramatic decreases in homicides. A variety of studies show that crime, and especially homicide, should continue to decline into the new year, and that is good news for Americans in 1999. But we have more to do, and we must stick to our plan. We must finish the job of putting 100,000 more police on our streets, putting tougher laws on our books, and providing better opportunities for our young people.

NOTE: This statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 31 but was embargoed for release until 4:30 p.m., January 2.

Remarks Announcing a Long-Term Health Care Initiative

January 4, 1999

The President. Thank you, Patricia, for your fine statement and for the power of your example. And we appreciate you and your husband being here today and the work that you're doing.

We thank Congressman Hoyer for bringing his constituent here today. And we welcome Senator Reid, Senator Breaux, Senator Specter, Senator Dodd, Senator Wyden, Congressmen Brown, Cardin, Moran, and Cummings. And I'd also like to say, Senator Mikulski has a special interest in this issue and wanted to be here today, but could not.

You know, this new year gives us all a sense of making a fresh start, a sense of being able to think anew. It should also give us a sense of rededication. I'm delighted to see here, along with the members of our administration, Secretary Rubin, Secretary Shalala, and Janice Lachance, so many advocates not only for seniors but for the disabled.

We need to be looking ahead at the issue that Patricia Darlak described so clearly and powerfully, to the challenges that the new century will present us, because there will be many, many, many more stories like hers. That is the fundamental reality. Already there are millions of people out there helping to care for an aged or disabled loved one, but there will be many more like her in the 21st century.

Now, that is, for those of us who are part of the baby boom generation, what we would call a high-class problem because we will be "them"—"they"—we will be "they." Is that the right—but the baby boom is about to become a senior boom, and like the baby boom, the senior boom will change the face of America. During the next 30 years, 76 million baby boomers will join the ranks of the retired. The number of elderly Americans will double by 2030; by the middle of the next century, the average American will live to an age of 82. That's 6 years longer than the average life expectancy today.

Now, as I said, those of us who hope to be in that group consider that a high-class problem. We also are very encouraged that people are living stronger, healthier lives. We