

traced in the stars. We are reminded of the hope that the grandest purposes of the Almighty can be found in the humblest places. And we embrace the hope that all the love and gifts that come to us in this life are the signs and symbols of even a greater love and gift that came on a holy night. The old carol speaks of a "thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn." And every year at this time we feel the thrill of hope as we wait on Christmas Day.

This Christmas, as loved ones come together, some in our military are separated from family by the call of duty a long way from home. We have service men and women celebrating the holidays at bases from Europe to East Asia and on many fronts in the war on terror. Especially for those deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq, the work is dangerous and the mission is urgent. American service men and women are bringing freedom to many and peace to future generations. Their sacrifices defend us all, and all Americans are grateful to them and to our military families.

Across our country, citizens are supporting our people in uniform with their prayers and many acts of kindness. Often the effort is led by children. In Chantilly, Virginia, Brownie Troop 5179, who are

here tonight, by the way, collected donations of candy and sun screen, bug spray, and handmade cards to send to our soldiers overseas. They gathered more than 200 pounds of gifts and made sure the packages arrived on time for the holidays. I'm sure those thoughtful gifts were gladly received.

And I thank the Brownies for reminding the good people of our military how much they mean to America. And to show our appreciation to the Brownies of Chantilly, Virginia, and all those who volunteer in our blessed land, we have two representatives of the Troop to help Laura and me light our national Christmas tree.

And so, if Nichole and Clara will come forward, we will turn on the lights. Are you ready? Now will you join me in the countdown? Five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:56 p.m. on the Ellipse during the annual Christmas Pageant of Peace. In his remarks, he referred to John Betchkal, president, Christmas Pageant of Peace; Peter Nostrand, chairman, Christmas Pageant of Peace, and his wife, Nancy; Robert H. Schuller, minister, Reformed Church in America; and Nichole Mastracchio and Clara Pitts, members, Brownie Troop 5179, Chantilly, VA.

Remarks on the Nomination of Bernard B. Kerik To Be Secretary of Homeland Security *December 3, 2004*

The President. Good morning. I'm proud to announce my nomination of Commissioner Bernard Kerik as the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Bernie Kerik is one of the most accomplished and effective leaders of law enforcement in America. In his career, he has served as an enlisted military police officer in Korea, a jail warden in New Jer-

sey, a beat cop in Manhattan, New York City corrections commissioner, and as New York's 40th police commissioner, an office once held by Teddy Roosevelt. In every position, he has demonstrated a deep commitment to justice, a heart for the innocent, and a record of great success.

I'm grateful he's agreed to bring his lifetime of security experience and skill to one

of the most important positions in the Federal Government. Bernie is a dedicated, innovative reformer who insists on getting results. As the head of New York City jails, he cut inmate violence by more than 90 percent. As Mayor Rudy Giuliani's police commissioner, he had great success in reducing crime in New York City. His broad, practical, hands-on experience makes Bernie superbly qualified to lead the Department of Homeland Security.

When confirmed by the Senate, Bernie Kerik will build on the historic accomplishments of Secretary Tom Ridge. As the Department's first leader, Tom oversaw the large reorganization—the largest reorganization of the Government in nearly a half-century. He met urgent challenges with patience and purpose, and because of his service, our country is safer.

Tom also carried out his duties with skill and honesty and decency. He's been my friend for more than 20 years. He is one of the great public servants of our generation. Tom Ridge has our Nation's gratitude; he's got my gratitude; and I wish he and Michele all the best.

My nominee to succeed Secretary Ridge has the background and the passion that are needed to protect our citizens. As police commissioner on September the 11th, 2001, Bernie Kerik arrived at the World Trade Center minutes after the first plane hit. He was there when the Twin Towers collapsed. He knew the faces of the rescuers who rushed toward danger. He attended the funeral of the officers who didn't come back. Bernie Kerik understands the duties that came to America on Sep-

tember the 11th. The resolve he felt that morning will guide him every day on his job. And every first-responder defending our homeland will have a faithful ally in Bernie Kerik.

As he prepares for new responsibility, Bernie Kerik has the love and support of his family, his wife, Hala; his children, Joseph, Celine, and Angelina and Lisa. He will always be inspired by his father and hero, Donald Kerik, Sr., and his caring stepmother, Clara. Bernard Kerik has devoted his life to protecting his fellow citizens, and his example has led many others to take up that calling. He loves his country. He has gained the trust and admiration of millions. I call on the Senate to promptly confirm his nomination as the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Thank you for serving, Bernie, and congratulations.

Secretary-designate Kerik. Mr. President, thank you.

The President. Yes, sir.

[*At this point, Secretary-designate Kerik made brief remarks.*]

The President. Good job. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:54 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rudolph W. Giuliani, former mayor of New York City; and Michele Ridge, wife of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Kerik.

Remarks on Signing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004

December 3, 2004

Thanks for coming. Good morning. I'm proud to be standing up here with friends

from both sides of the political aisle who