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pollution, and increase water supply in Thailand and throughout the region. TDA looks forward to working with the Thai Government to fund additional environmentally-sound projects in Thailand.

President Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin celebrated the substantial achievements of more than 50 years of institutional collaboration involving the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the U.S.-Thai Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences, and the Ministry of Public Health on a wide variety of tropical and infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Citing Thailand as a model for other countries, President Bush congratulated Prime Minister Thaksin for the success of Thailand's programs in dramatically reducing the levels of HIV/AIDS infection. The leaders praised the unique bilateral collaboration to develop vaccines for prevention of HIV/AIDS and welcomed the plan to hold the world's largest HIV vaccine efficacy trial in 2002. President Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin welcome Thailand's inclusion in the Leadership and Investment in Fighting an Epidemic (LIFE) initiative, which is being implemented through the CDC's Global AIDS program and which will complement the research CDC and the Thai Ministry of Public Health have been pursuing jointly since 1990.

To reinforce the mature partnership between their two countries, President Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin pledged to continue regular and close consultations and strengthen cooperation for the mutual benefit of both countries and peoples.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

## Remarks on Signing the Drug-Free Communities Reauthorization Act

*December 14, 2001*

Thank you all very much. It's an honor to be here. Let me first say, we're winning. We've got a new war, and I want you to know your Government is doing everything we can to defeat those who hate freedom. We will defeat them abroad, thanks to a fabulous military. We are patient. We're relentless because our cause is just, and it is noble. Plus we're doing everything we can at home to prevent the enemy from hitting us again.

There's another war at home, too, and that's to win the war against the scourge of drugs. I'm so glad—it's an honor to be introduced by America's new Director of National Drug Policy Council. John Walters brings a passionate concern and a strong background to the fight against drugs. In the late 1980's, he was one of the architects of the Federal Government's most successful antidrug policies. And he'll lead our administration's effort with determination and intelligence, with resolve and moral clarity. I am proud to have John as a member of my Cabinet.

And I'm honored to speak to the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America. I want to thank you all for being here. You're a part of America's armies of compassion, examples of service and citizenship. You restore hope to lives, and safety to neighborhoods. All Americans admire your dedication. And the bill that I will soon sign will strengthen your work. We share an important commitment: For the sake of our children and for the good of our Nation, we will reduce drug use in America. I want to thank General Art Dean for being the CEO of this important group of soldiers in the armies of compassion.

I want to thank the three Members of the United States Congress who stand up here with me today, leaders in this important effort, not only leaders in Washington but, as you'll soon hear, leaders in the communities in which they live. Thank you so much for being here.

Drug use threatens everything—everything—that is best about our country. It breaks the bonds between parents and children. It turns productive citizens into addicts. It transforms schools into places of violence and chaos. It makes playgrounds into crime scenes. It supports gangs here at home.

And abroad, it's so important for Americans to know that the traffic in drugs finances the work of terror, sustaining terrorists—terrorists use drug profits to fund their cells to commit acts of murder. If you quit drugs, you join the fight against terror in America.

And above all, we must reduce drug use for one great moral reason: Over time, drugs rob men, women, and children of their dignity and of their character. Illegal drugs are

the enemies of ambition and hope. And when we fight against drugs, we fight for the souls of our fellow Americans.

And in this struggle, we know what works. We must aggressively and unabashedly teach our children the dangers of drugs. We must aggressively treat addiction wherever we find it. And we must aggressively enforce the laws against drugs at our borders and in our communities.

America cannot pick and choose between these goals. All are necessary if any are to be effective. And my administration will pursue these goals with energy and focus and strong commitment. It's important for the future of this country that we do so.

This comprehensive approach has been tried before, and it's worked. From the mid eighties to the early nineties, drug use amongst high school seniors was reduced each and every year. Progress was steady and, over time, dramatic. Yet recently, we've lost ground in this important battle.

According to the most recent data, the percentage of 12th graders using an illicit drug in the previous month rose from less than 15 percent in 1992 to about 25 percent in the year 2000. Over the same period, the percentage of 10th graders using an illicit drug in the previous month rose from 11 percent to more than 22 percent. Marijuana use amongst eighth graders rose, while their perceptions of the dangers of marijuana use fell. There was a similar decrease in the perception of risk involved with LSD and powder and crack cocaine.

Behind these numbers are countless personal tragedies, and my administration will not be indifferent to them. We must return the fight against drugs to the center of our national agenda.

And as we win this fight, America will be a more hopeful place. And as we battle against a major, significant problem in America and show progress, this country's promise will be more available to more of our citizens.

It's a national imperative that we win. And I understand that you all are amongst the most important allies we have to achieve this goal. You've got a track record of success. You sponsor drug education programs and youth summits and parent training courses. You support drug intervention programs and foster great counseling services. You're helping to build a culture of responsibility, one that respects the law, one that teaches our children right from wrong, and one that strengthens our commitments to our fellow citizens.

In Troy, Michigan, the Troy Community Coalition for the Prevention of Drug and Alcohol Abuse is building leadership skills to help teens to say no to drugs and alcohol. As a result, alcohol use among high schoolers has declined in dramatic fashion. I want to thank Sandy Levin, the Congressman from the great State of Michigan, who is on the stage with us, for helping lead that effort. And I want to thank the good people from Troy, Michigan, for standing up and doing what's right for your community.

I'm particularly proud that the coalition's leader, Mary Ann Solberg, has agreed to join John Walters as the Deputy Director of the National Drug Control Policy. Now that you have your uniform on, go get them. [*Laughter*]

Also on the stage with us is Congressman Rob Portman, who is the President of the Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati, a winner of CADCA's Outstanding Coalition Award. I understand this program well because I saw it first hand in Cincinnati. I want to thank Rob for his leadership.

I appreciate this coalition's practical approach, by providing tips to parents on how to deal with drug use, provide financial incentives to businesses that have drug-free workplace programs. And the most aggressive antidrug media campaign is in Cincinnati, for a market its size. The result is that for the first time in a decade, teen drug use in greater Cincinnati is beginning to level off. They're making great progress in that important city. It goes to show what happens when our Nation invigorates the grassroots to deal with a problem that we must solve, early, before it is too late.

And also on this stage is the fine United States Senator from the State of Iowa, Chuck Grassley. He's worked with the people of Iowa to begin what they call the Face It Together Coalition, the first ever statewide antidrug coalition led by a United States Senator. The coalition has a comprehensive workplace

drug education program. It works with coalitions around the State for best practices for community based antidrug efforts. It conducts workshops to train faith-based leaders on effective drug prevention strategies.

Senator Grassley, I appreciate you taking the lead. It's a hard job being a Senator, but it's easy to forget the community responsibilities when you get elected to such a high office as Senator. And yet this Senator never forgot where he came from. This Senator asked a question, "What can I do"—just like you asked that question, "What can I do"—to improve the lives of the citizens of a State he so dearly loves. And he chose to fight, stand side by side with the good citizens of Iowa to fight drug use. And Mr. Senator, thank you for your leadership.

I'm so happy to be able to sign an important piece of legislation in your presence. The bill I sign today increases the total amount of funds authorized for programs like the ones we just described from more than $50 million a year in the current fiscal year to nearly $100 million by the year 2007. It allows coalitions to reapply for grants even after 5 years, as long—[*applause*]—make sure you meet your matching fund requirement. [*Laughter*]

It instructs Director Walters to focus the greatest resources on areas of the greatest needs, by giving priority to coalitions that serve economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. The reauthorization bill creates a new class of grants that will help established coalitions assist new ones, assist new folks on how to battle this scourge called drug use. And the bill creates a National Community Antidrug Coalition Institute to provide education and training and technical assistance to coalitions all throughout our country.

There are other steps we must take. Many of you are working with faith-based institutions, because you've seen the power of faith to transform lives. Last month, the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, led by Joe Califano, released a report on substance abuse, religion, and spirituality. The report found that "religion and spirituality can play a powerful role in the prevention and treatment of substance abuse and on the maintenance of sobriety."

My armies of compassion legislation will provide support to faith-based institutions working to prevent and treat drug abuse. The House passed this legislation. I urge the Senate to do so. This Nation must not fear faith-based programs; we must welcome them. We must welcome anybody who is willing to join in this important goal and in this important cause.

We've got a responsibility here in Washington to lead the fight against drug abuse. But we understand here that one of the best ways to do so is to support the people in the neighborhoods, on the streets, the community coalitions which are truly the front line in our battle to save people's lives. You've devoted your lives to the well-being of others, and for this I'm incredibly grateful. On behalf of all Americans, thank you for your compassion; thank you for your concern; thank you for your love for your country and your fellow human being.

And now it is my honor to invite Director Walters and General Dean, along with the sponsors of this important piece of legislation, to join me as I sign this bill.

May God bless you all, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:25 p.m. in the Regency Ballroom at the Omni Shoreham Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Arthur T. Dean, chairman and chief executive officer, Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America; and Joseph A. Califano, Jr., chairman and president, National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. H.R. 2291, approved December 14, was assigned Public Law No. 107–82.

## Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.