

# Six Issues Trump Will Likely Address in His First State of the Union (includes Lesson Plan and SOTU Bingo!)

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Matthew Green

Marking his first year in office, President Trump is scheduled to deliver his premiere State of the Union address to Congress on Jan. 30.

Although Trump addressed a joint session of Congress last February, the upcoming speech is officially his debut State of the Union address, an opportunity to highlight accomplishments from his first year and communicate his agenda for the year ahead.

The Constitution requires that the president “shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient.”

Until the early 20th century though, most presidents simply wrote their addresses and sent copies to members of Congress. In 1913, Woodrow Wilson revived the practice of delivering the address to a joint session of Congress, something that hadn't occurred since 1800, when John Adams faced both houses.

Love him or hate him, most everyone can agree that Trump's presidency thus far, like his election campaign, has been a strikingly atypical and unorthodox affair. The billionaire real estate developer and reality TV star entered office with no government experience.

In many respects, Trump had a pretty bumpy, often chaotic first year in the White House, one marred by controversies, divisiveness and historically low approval ratings. As evidence of the tumult, five Democratic House members have already announced plans, weeks in advance, to boycott Trump's State of the Union address. A number of Democratic women in the House plan to attend but say they will wear black in a stand against sexual harassment, an idea inspired by actresses who dressed in black at the recent Golden Globe Awards. Trump has been accused by multiple women of inappropriate sexual conduct.

In his first year, Trump also faced a handful of legislative and legal setbacks, and was consistently tormented by the wide-reaching investigation into his presidential campaign's potential collusion with Russia.

But in his short time in office, Trump has undoubtedly had a tremendous impact, helping to steer the country in a dramatically different direction from that of his predecessor. From rolling back many of Barack Obama's environmental regulations to exiting multinational agreements and pushing through a massive tax cut, Trump will have no shortage of achievements to recount to Congress.

This interactive graphic has six big themes that Trump is likely to touch on in his address. Click

on each for more detail.

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Military Campaigns



Immigration



Nuclear Threats



Economy



Infrastructure



Cutting Regulations

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## Military campaigns

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Trump is likely to boast of the Islamic State's decline in Iraq and Syria, whose government last month announced that its long and bloody war against the terrorist group had finally ended. As a candidate, Trump promised to destroy the Islamic State, and as president has pursued an aggressive air strike campaign targeting the group's strongholds, a strategy he attributes to their diminished strength.

At the end of December, he tweeted: “On 1/20 – the day Trump was inaugurated – an estimated 35,000 ISIS fighters held approx 17,500 square miles of territory in both Iraq and Syria. As of 12/21, the U.S. military est the remaining 1,000 or so fighters occupy roughly 1,900 square miles..”

However, the Islamic State continues to wreak havoc, especially in the Middle East, where deadly bombings and unrest are still common occurrences.

The president may also reference his administration’s aggressive bombing campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan, an effort to aid the country’s military forces and end the longest running war in U.S. history. The offensive is a reversal of the Obama administration’s strategy of curtailing U.S. military involvement in the long-troubled region.

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### Immigration

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Trump will likely make another case for his much disputed travel ban, which blocks people from eight mostly Muslim nations from entering the U.S., a course of action the administration insists is necessary for preventing terrorists from entering the country.

After repeated setbacks in federal courts, the administration declared a tentative victory in December, when the Supreme Court allowed the third version of the travel ban to go into effect while legal challenges continue against it.

Trump will also likely touch on the need for comprehensive immigration reform, even as the latest efforts have already started to sputter. He is expected to reiterate his demand for new border security measures, including the construction of a new wall and increased immigration enforcement.

Trump will also likely mention the need to accommodate some of the estimated 700,000 undocumented immigrants who came here as children and were given temporary legal status under Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Although the administration announced its plans to end the DACA program by March, Trump says he wants Congress to figure out a permanent solution.

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## Nuclear threats

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The U.S. is on edge over nuclear tensions with North Korea, an issue that Trump is sure to touch on in his address. Through tweets and other statements, Trump has repeatedly sparred with North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, threatening and even taunting him after each successive North Korean missile test. Trump insists this tough talk strategy, a major departure from Obama's "strategic patience" approach, has proven effective.

On New Year's Day, Kim announced that he was prepared to "melt the frozen" relations with South Korea, a strong U.S. ally, and wanted to discuss North Korean participation in the upcoming Winter Olympics in South Korea.

Trump was quick to take credit for Kim's about-face, tweeting that this wouldn't have happened had he not been "firm, strong and willing to commit our total 'might' against the North."

Trump may also mention his ongoing intent to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal established under the Obama administration, which he has long railed against. The agreement places strict limits on the country's nuclear development program in exchange for a lifting of U.S. and European sanctions.

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## Economy

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Trump is sure to highlight the record-high stock market and low unemployment rate, pointing to them as positive indicators of his administration's pro-business economic strategy (even though most economists agree that these are economic trends that actually started during the Obama administration).

Trump will also use the occasion to celebrate the recent passage of major tax reform, his one legislative victory to date, which permanently slashes tax rates for corporations and some of the wealthiest Americans, while offering modest temporary cuts for most lower and middle-class taxpayers. Trump and his Republican colleagues in Congress insist that the \$1.5 trillion tax cut will put more money in people's pockets and encourage U.S. corporations to expand and create more jobs.

Trump may also mention his administration's NAFTA renegotiations with Canada and Mexico. He has long lambasted the massive free trade agreement as a terrible deal for American workers. Although as a candidate, he consistently attacked the agreement and indicated a willingness to withdraw from it altogether, he has more recently suggested that there may be some possibility of compromise.

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### Infrastructure

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On the campaign trail, Trump consistently drew attention to the crumbling state of U.S. infrastructure, often equating the roads and airports to those of developing nations. As part of his platform, he promised a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill.

And just before Christmas, Trump expressed confidence that his plans to upgrade the nation's roads, airports and bridges would receive strong bipartisan support.

In his State of the Union address, Trump is still likely to call for a large infrastructure spending bill, but the scope of it will fall far short of what he originally proposed. His administration is expected to unveil a plan later this month to spend at least \$200 billion on infrastructure projects over the next decade, with the hopes of encouraging an additional \$800 billion in state and local funding.

Skeptics of the plan say it's not nearly enough money to adequately address the nation's infrastructure needs, and they argue that the chances of Congress committing to even that lesser amount is pretty unlikely, given the \$1.5 trillion tax cuts and growing deficit.

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### Cutting regulations

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In his first month in office, Trump signed an executive order requiring agencies to slash two regulations for every new regulation put into place. In a December press event, he claimed to have far exceeded this goal: "We aimed for 2-for-1 and in 2017, we hit 22-for-1," he said. "We have decades of excess regulation to remove," he added. "To help launch the next phase of growth, prosperity and freedom, I am challenging my cabinet to find and remove every single outdated, unlawful and excessive regulation currently on the books."

Indeed, the Trump administration has jumped at the opportunity to kill off as many federal regulations as possible, attacking them as harmful to economic growth and a blatant abuse of government power. And while it's doubtful that Trump has overseen the largest regulatory rollback in U.S. history, as he claims, his ongoing efforts to purge the rule books have already had far-reaching impacts, effectively reversing many of the policies introduced by his

predecessor. Since taking office, Trump has rolled back a slew of regulations related to environmental protections (particularly related to coal mining), health care, financial services and other industries, many of which were implemented under Obama.

In his speech, Trump will likely tout these rollbacks as a necessary step towards bringing back U.S. manufacturing and mining jobs.

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