

# President Trump refuses to yield on border wall and immigration policies

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President Donald Trump delivers his State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., as Vice President Mike Pence (left) and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat from California, look on, February 5, 2019. Photo by: Andrew Harnik/AP Photo

President Donald Trump delivered a State of the Union address at a vulnerable moment for his presidency on February 5. He stood face-to-face with newly confident Democrats, whose party won a majority in the House of Representatives in the 2018 elections. In his speech Trump called on Washington to cast aside "revenge" and "resistance" and end "ridiculous" investigations of one party against another.

## **Divisions On Display**

Trump appealed for both parties to work together. However, he refused to yield on the tough immigration policies that have infuriated Democrats and forced the recent government shutdown. He renewed his call for a border wall and cast illegal immigration as a threat to Americans' safety and economic security.

Trump accepted no blame for his role in creating the bitter atmosphere in the nation's capital, and he didn't outline a clear path for working together with Democrats who are eager to block his agenda. Their opposition was on vivid display as many Democratic congresswomen in the audience wore white in a nod to early-20th-century suffragettes. The suffragettes fought for women's right to vote.

Trump is staring down a two-year stretch that will determine whether he is re-elected or leaves office in defeat. His speech sought to boost Republican support that had declined slightly during the recent government shutdown. The speech also previewed a fresh defense against Democrats as they ready a round of investigations into every aspect of his administration.

"If there is going to be peace and legislation, there cannot be war and investigation," he declared. Lawmakers in the cavernous House chamber sat largely silent.

## **Government Shutdown Deadline Approaching**

The president's address came less than two weeks before a fast-approaching February 15 deadline to fund the government and avoid another shutdown. Democrats have refused to give in to his demands for a border wall, and Republicans are increasingly unwilling to shut down the government to help him fulfill his signature campaign pledge. Nor do Republican lawmakers support the president's plan to declare a national emergency if Congress won't fund the wall.

Wary of publicly highlighting those divisions within the Republican party, Trump made no mention of an emergency declaration in his remarks. He did offer a lengthy defense of his call for a border wall, declaring, "I will build it." However, he delivered no demands about what it would take for him to sign legislation to keep the government open.

"I am asking you to defend our very dangerous southern border out of love and devotion to our fellow citizens and to our country," he said. He painted a dark picture of the risks posed to Americans by illegal immigration.

The 72-year-old Trump recalled past moments of American greatness, celebrating the moon landing and heralding the liberation of Europe from the Nazis. He led the House chamber in singing happy birthday to a Holocaust survivor sitting with first lady Melania Trump.

The president ticked through a list of issues with crossover appeal, including boosting infrastructure, lowering prescription drug costs and combating childhood cancer. He also appealed to his political base, though. He had harsh words for immigration and called for Congress to pass legislation to prohibit the "late-term abortion of children."

## **Trump Speaks About Foreign Policy**

Trump devoted much of his speech to foreign policy, another area where Republicans have increasingly distanced themselves from the White House. He announced details of a second meeting with North Korea's Kim Jong Un, outlining a February 27 and 28 summit in Vietnam.

Trump and Kim's first summit garnered only a vaguely worded commitment by North Korea to phase out its nuclear weapons. The president said his outreach to North Korea had made the U.S. safer, though.

"If I had not been elected president of the United States, we would right now, in my opinion, be in a major war with North Korea," he said.

Trump condemned political chaos in Venezuela, where President Nicolás Maduro's leadership is in question. Maduro belongs to the United Socialist Party of Venezuela, which led Trump to declare that "America will never be a socialist country." The remark may also have been targeted at high-profile Democrats who identify as socialists. Socialists believe that all people should share control of a society's resources, not just the wealthy and powerful.

## **Democratic Opposition To President**

The president was surrounded by symbols of his newly confident political opposition. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who was praised by Democrats for her tough negotiating during the shutdown, sat behind Trump as he spoke. Several Democratic senators running for president were also in the audience, including Senators Kamala Harris of California and Cory Booker of New Jersey.

Another Democratic star, Stacey Abrams, delivered the party's response to Trump. Abrams narrowly lost her election in November to become America's first black female governor, and party leaders are aggressively recruiting her to run for U.S. Senate from Georgia.

Speaking from Atlanta, Abrams called the shutdown a political stunt that "abandoned not just our people, but our values."

One bright spot for the president has been the economy, which has added jobs for 100 straight months.

"The only thing that can stop it," he said, are "foolish" wars or "ridiculous" investigations of one party against another. It was an apparent swipe at the special counsel investigation into ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 campaign, as well as the upcoming congressional investigations.

The group of Democratic lawmakers in attendance, which includes a sizable number of women, sat silently for much of Trump's speech. They leapt to their feet when he noted there are "more women in the workforce than ever before," though.

The increase is due to population growth and not something Trump can credit to any of his policies.

The president also defended his decisions to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria and Afghanistan over the opposition from national security officials and many Republican lawmakers.

"Great nations do not fight endless wars," he said.

## Quiz

1 Read the list of sentences from the article.

1. *He renewed his call for a border wall and cast illegal immigration as a threat to Americans' safety and economic security.*
2. *Democrats have refused to give in to his demands for a border wall, and Republicans are increasingly unwilling to shut down the government to help him fulfill his signature campaign pledge.*
3. *Nor do Republican lawmakers support the president's plan to declare a national emergency if Congress won't fund the wall.*
4. *He did offer a lengthy defense of his call for a border wall, declaring, "I will build it."*

Which two sentences taken together provide the BEST evidence to support the idea that plans for the border wall have generated opposition?

- (A) 1 and 2
- (B) 1 and 4
- (C) 2 and 3
- (D) 3 and 4

2 Is the author suggesting that Trump can count on the Republicans to support his foreign policies? Which selection from the article BEST supports your answer?

- (A) Yes: Wary of publicly highlighting those divisions within the Republican party, Trump made no mention of an emergency declaration in his remarks.
- (B) Yes: He also appealed to his political base, though. He had harsh words for immigration and called for Congress to pass legislation to prohibit the "late-term abortion of children."
- (C) No: It was an apparent swipe at the special counsel investigation into ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 campaign, as well as the upcoming congressional investigations.
- (D) No: The president also defended his decisions to withdraw U.S. troops from Syria and Afghanistan over the opposition from national security officials and many Republican lawmakers.

- 3 Which of the following statements BEST represents Trump's approach toward the issue of immigration in his State of the Union address?
- (A) He relaxed his hard-line views on immigration and communicated that both parties should work together to form reasonable policies.
  - (B) He emphasized his commitment to defending the southern border and outlined why illegal immigration is bad for America.
  - (C) He asserted that immigration has had a negative impact on the economy and suggested that supporters of immigration were likely socialists.
  - (D) He expressed a desire to minimize illegal immigration and to explore options for doing so without building a wall.
- 4 How does the author analyze the content of Trump's speech?
- (A) by highlighting the points he made while drawing conclusions about what he included and what he omitted
  - (B) by beginning with topics from the speech that were least controversial and ending with more controversial issues
  - (C) by summarizing his arguments and then providing counterarguments
  - (D) by detailing the issues that he brought up while describing the public's response to each one