

Trump Connects Policy Success to Patriotic Heroes in Masterful State of the Union Address

By Conrad Black

President Trump's [State of the Union speech](#) was a tactical and substantive masterpiece.



Though it continued for an hour and 47 minutes, it was not rambling or discursive but proceeded in logical sequence and attached policy [aims and accomplishments](#) of the administration explicitly to heroic individuals who were commended and decorated. This included two Medals of Honor: one presented to Korean War veteran E. Royce Williams, and the other to Eric

Slover, who led the 2026 special operations raid in Venezuela.

The president undoubtedly judged correctly that if he had attempted a conciliatory approach, the Democrats and the national political media would have construed it as an act of panic and defeatism and a concession of the total failure of the administration. If he had simply raged at his opponents, mocked them personally and no doubt humorously and heaped billingsgate on them, it would have been raucously entertaining but widely criticized as undignified and completely inappropriate for the occasion, which for most of American history has been a sober comment from the president on the current condition of the country.

Trump made the point that the recent Supreme Court tariff decision was “disappointing” but of no practical significance as the tariffs in question could be sustained by other statutes. (To illustrate his disappointment, he shook hands with Justice Kavanaugh who supported the government on the tariff issue and ignored Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Barrett who did not; only four of the justices attended.) He emphasized that no country in the world sought to renegotiate tariff arrangements, and that both the fiscal and trade deficits had been very substantially reduced by the collection of tariffs even as the rate of inflation declined

Trump cited the recent declines in the prices of important commodities including gasoline, beef, and eggs, and stated that in the last three months the rate of inflation had fallen to 1.7 percent. One assumes that this is a defensible claim, in which case the Democrats’ affordability argument will collapse well before the midterm elections. He emphasized the number of convicted rapists and murderers and other violent offenders who had entered the country illegally in the Biden years and were expelled under his program. He told his audience that death from drug overdoses had declined 20 percent, and that there had been huge declines in crime in the cities where the federal government had assisted the municipal

authorities in strengthening the local police, specifically Washington, Memphis, and New Orleans. He noted the remarkable fact that the per capita murder rate was at the lowest point in 126 years. If any of the statistics that Trump cited had been vulnerable to contradiction, the numerous Democratic spokespeople and media personalities would have been swift to contradict him.

When Trump referred to the Somali-led fraud and embezzlement now allegedly totalling \$9 billion, Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, wearing "Expletive ICE" and "Release the Files" (Epstein) buttons, cheered noisily. Speaker Johnson later explained to Fox news that he only decided not to have them expelled because their conduct was shaming to their party and could be usefully reproduced in political advertising.

Some of Trump's techniques were remarkable acts of showmanship, such as bringing in the men's hockey team that had just won the gold medal in the Winter Olympics and awarding goaltender Connor Hellebuyck the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Various other awards, including the Legion of Merit, were granted to worthies whom it was impossible not to admire.

Since the Democrats had no real notice of what was coming, they had not coordinated a response to this barrage of patriotic fervor punctuated by the recitation of the administration's achievements and objectives. The result was that while the Republicans applauded energetically, the Democrats sat on their hands and looked unimpressed. With exquisite finesse, Trump gradually built up this sequence, occasionally gesturing at them and saying "They're sick!" This reached its climax when he asked everyone on the floor of the chamber to stand if they agreed with the statement that the principal duty of the government of the United States was to protect the American people, including from criminals who entered the country illegally. The Republicans naturally stood while the Democrats, whose ranks were thinned by the boycott

of 73 Democratic congressmen and senators—with the exception of the redoubtable John Fetterman dressed in a well-fitting suit—sat solemnly in their places. It was the unanimous view of commentators after the address that this was a mistake which would be featured in Republican advertising ad nauseam throughout the balance of this midterm election year

On perhaps the most important subject of the night—the possibility of conflict in Iran—the president emphasized that his preference was to resolve matters diplomatically, and he focused the entire issue on the Iranian regime’s ambition to have a nuclear weapon and continue to sponsor terrorist activity. He said that neither was acceptable, and while deploring any recourse to force, he invoked “peace through strength” and left no one in any doubt that he would have no hesitation in resorting to force to accomplish those ends if diplomacy was unable to do so

The anti-Trump media have been throwing their hats in the air proclaiming his decline in the polls and the onset of a national feeling of Trump fatigue: that the country has tired of him. His speech to Congress and the nation left no one in any doubt that he would conduct an extremely aggressive campaign for the midterm elections based on the positive accomplishments of his administration and the penchant of some Democrats to align themselves with profoundly unpopular and extreme policies. It would be surprising if the next polls did not show at least a slight rebound in the president’s favor.

As someone who has been watching these addresses for 65 years, I would say that the only president who rivaled this one for effectiveness was Ronald Reagan, who was an almost hypnotic public speaker.

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