

Trump's Joint Congressional Address will set the tone for his party's policy agenda this year

What to expect from Trump's Joint Congressional Address



Tone

- The speech is expected to be more positive than the dark dystopian American vision Trump presented in his inaugural address
- Stephen Miller is the speechwriter (he also wrote the inaugural address)
- The White House says the speech will be “sunny and optimistic”
- Trump's speech previews have not always been accurate considering the press was told his inauguration speech would focus on unity, which it did not



Achievement review

- Sean Spicer said Trump will discuss “where we've come and where we're going”
- It is expected that Trump will list his achievements much like he did in his first White House press conference
- He will likely repeat the claim that he “inherited a mess” and take credit for the health of the stock market and the decisions of American companies like Carrier and Intel to keep jobs and facilities in the U.S. or hire new workers



Specifics?

- Trump is not known for being a policy wonk, but, historically, Congress looks to these speeches for policy guidance and Republicans will want to know where he stands on the party's bigger legislative goals
- The question of replacing Obamacare will be a main focus because repealing it would help Republicans pay for tax cuts, but the party would be responsible for millions of people (many of whom voted for Trump) losing their coverage

Sources: Mara Liasson, “Here's what to watch for when Trump addresses Congress,” NPR, February 27, 2017; Jonathan Swan, “Axios sneak peak,” Axios, February 27, 2017.

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How the White House is preparing

1. **Briefing allies:** Trump communications staffers had a conference call with the RNC and NRCC, assuring them there would be fact sheets and talking points coming
2. **Outreach to regional media:** President Trump and Sean Spicer will have a dinner with regional TV and radio affiliates the night before the address as part of a strategy to get their message in 2018 battleground states
3. **Live stream:** The WhiteHouse.gov page will redirect to a joint address live stream where people can watch Trump's speech and follow the administration's social media posts

3 main themes: Safety, sovereignty and economic opportunity

Opposition party

- Democrats are planning to bring guests who do not benefit or are impacted negatively by Trump's policies – Muslim refugees, Hispanic immigrants, relatives of victims of gun violence and others
- This will be unusual for Trump, who is accustomed to speaking in front of crowds comprised mostly of supporters
- The Democrats will have two official response speakers
 1. Astrid Silva – a DREAMer and immigration activist who will deliver her speech in Spanish
 2. Steve Beshear – a former governor of Kentucky, a state with a lot of coal miners and Trump supporters where expansion of Medicaid under Obamacare covered hundreds of thousands of citizens

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