



By: TA | AP Insight

Trump will use his State of the Union address to sell skeptical midterm voters on his plans



President Donald Trump's State of the Union address on Tuesday is likely to be a test run of the message Republicans will give to voters in November's elections for control of the House and the Senate.

The president and his party **appear vulnerable**, with polls showing much of America distrusts how Trump has managed the government in his first year back in office.

In addition, the Supreme Court last week struck down one of the chief levers of his economic and foreign policy by ruling he lacked the power to impose many of his sweeping tariffs.

Though Trump is expected to focus on domestic issues, his intensifying threats about launching military strikes on Iran over its nuclear program cast a **shadow over the address**.

Economy and immigration are no longer strengths for Trump

Trump swept back into the White House on promises to bring down prices and restore order to immigration in America. But on both issues, public sentiment has turned against him.

Only 39% of U.S. adults approve of his **economic leadership** and just 38% support him on immigration, according to the latest Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research survey.

Those low numbers show the country is still fretting about the costs of groceries, **housing** and utilities, a problem compounded by Trump's **whipsawing use of tariffs**.

They also show how the public was disturbed by videos of violent **clashes with protesters**, including two U.S. citizens killed by federal agents.

Trump has yet to unveil major new policy ideas on the economy

Since his party passed a massive **tax cut bill** last year, Trump has yet to unveil major new policy ideas on the economy.

In recent speeches, he has largely offered the public reruns about his tax cuts, plans to reduce mortgage rates and a new government website for buying prescription drugs.

The Supreme Court ruling against many of Trump's far-reaching global tariffs on Friday and the president vowing to use other means to forge ahead with import taxes will only prolong the economic turmoil over trade and prices.

"I think it makes it even more important that the speech really focus on the economy," said Alex Conant, a Republican strategist.

Conant said between the tariff ruling and a Commerce Department report on Friday that showed U.S. economic growth slowed in the final three months of last year, "the president needs to bolster his economic message."

Blame everything on Biden

The administration is trying to make the case that despite Trump's rewiring of global trade and tax cuts, the **economy is still struggling** because of choices made in 2021 and 2022 by his Democratic predecessor Joe Biden.

But Trump is also seeking to take credit for positive signs in the current economy, such as recent stock market gains.

We're going to be talking about the economy. We inherited a mess - Donald Trump

"Watch the State of the Union. We're going to be talking about the economy. We inherited a mess," Trump said at the White House on Wednesday.

Of course, Trump made the same kind of argument in his address to a joint session of

Congress last year, invoking the Biden name 13 times.

Trump's focus on foreign policy has yet to resonate politically

Despite Trump's America First credo, his aggressive approach abroad over the past year has sparked **concerns among some of his supporters** about whether he should spend more time focusing on voters at home.

Trump, who's made it clear he covets a **Nobel Peace Prize**, is likely to use the speech to remind Americans of his attempts to try to broker peace accords in global conflicts.

But in many respects, the president hasn't been extending olive branches.

Within the past year, his administration has launched strikes in Yemen, Nigeria and Iran, along with an ongoing campaign of lethal military strikes on alleged drug-trafficking vessels near South America.

Trump also shocked the world in January with a surprise raid to capture Venezuela's then-leader, **Nicolás Maduro**, and floated the idea of using force to seize Greenland.

In recent weeks, as he pressures Iran, Trump has bolstered the U.S. military's presence in the Middle East.

You're going to hear a lot about the importance of bringing jobs back into our country - JD Vance

But he has yet to make a clear case to voters about what his actions overseas mean for their lives.

He might even minimize foreign policy in his State of the Union despite his belief that it's been a major success.

"For as much as foreign policy has dominated his last year in office, this speech will mostly

focus on the economy," Conant predicted.

Vice President JD Vance offered a similar prediction, saying in an interview Saturday on Fox News Channel that in the speech, "you're going to hear a lot about the importance of bringing jobs back into our country, of reshoring manufacturing, of all these great factories that are being built."

He said Trump would also speak about lowering energy costs.

Trump has made the State of the Union his own

The State of the Union used to be about recapping accomplishments and seeking to unite the country, but it increasingly reflects divisions in society.

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"What you're going to expect is some version of a campaign speech in which the Democrats are the villains, the Republicans he likes are the heroes, and he is the savior not only of the nation but of the globe," said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a communications professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

Trump supporters might cherish the moment in 2020 when the president midspeech **reunited a military family**.

He also bestowed the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Rush Limbaugh, the conservative radio host and author who died in 2021. But that moment turned off Democrats who saw Limbaugh as a destructive figure in political media.

Reaction in the room could matter as much as Trump's words

Trump is delivering the speech, but his audience sitting in the House chamber has a big role, too. When Trump delivered his 2020 State of the Union, then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi theatrically ripped up a copy of the speech afterward, overshadowing much of what Trump said.



It is important to have a strong, determined and dignified Democratic presence in the chamber - Hakeem Jeffries

House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York has said in a letter to colleagues “it is important to have a strong, determined and dignified Democratic presence in the chamber,” indicating some members might choose not to attend in protest to Trump.

But there's also the possibility of Democrats razzing Trump as Rep. Al Green, D-Texas, did in 2025, leading him to be **removed from the chamber**.

If Trump in his speech lays out a fuller case for why he's using other mechanisms in federal law to continue his tariffs, Conant said it'll be interesting to see the reaction from lawmakers.

“I think that any House Republicans that don't applaud his tariffs are going to be featured prominently on the telecast,” he said.

State of the Unions have short

shelf lives

While some presidential phrases endure, much of the rhetoric in State of the Unions is forgettable.

People hear the president talk all of the time, so the State of the Union has lost much of its luster - Matt Latimer

And with Trump — who's known for veering off-script — there's a good chance a stray comment or a social media post could step on his message.

Matt Latimer, a former Republican speechwriter for then-President George W. Bush, noted in an email that people hear the president talk all of the time, so the State of the Union has lost much of its luster.

A State of the Union “only matters in moments when the country is undergoing a great trauma — a war, an attack, a global crisis — and a president and Congress want to speak in a (mostly) united voice to the country,” he said. “That’s not what we are experiencing now.”