

Remarks at a Dinner With Governors

February 21, 2026

The President. Well, thank you very much. This is a great honor. It's a great place. There's no place like it.

Please, sit down. Thank you.

You know, I told my—now I can say my movie-star wife. Do you believe this? [*Laughter*] I have to live with now another title. She said, "Well, tell me about the group tonight." I said, "They're all Governors and just about"—we have a couple of Cabinet Secretaries, so we can probably include them—"and every time they look in the mirror, every time they wake up or go to sleep, they look in that mirror and they say, 'I should be President, not him.'" [*Laughter*] So I said, "Despite that, it's a very friendly group." And it really is too. Many, many friends and very competent people.

Over the past year, we've already achieved a historic turnaround for our country. With unprecedented speed, we solved intractable problems. We really have done something. It's been an incredible first year for all of us. We've transformed stagnation into growth, weakness into strength, and chaos into order, liberty, and justice. We have done that.

Today, our border is secure. Murders are at a 125-year low. Think of it. Core inflation is the lowest in 5 years and going down. Prices are going down really rapidly. We inherited a mess, and we brought them down a lot, and we're going to go still further.

And our military is more powerful than ever before, and we're just respected all over the world like, I would say, we have maybe never been, but certainly not for many decades.

Working with your States wherever we can, we can achieve so much more. You're Governors. You're great people. You're great leaders. You're just about all very popular. I know every one of you, and you've all had a pretty easy time become—becoming Governor. That's because you've done really good work.

From Thomas Jefferson to today, America's Governors have been among the smartest, most creative, most talented Americans our country has ever produced. So many people, they leave other positions—I will not say the Senate, but we can say that—and they want to be Governor. Would you explain that to me, Mr. Governor? [*Laughter*]

And we're going to save the Great Salt Lake. You know that, right? He's got a problem. He came in to see me today. These are the kind of things—he said, "Sir, we have to save the Great Salt Lake." I said, "Explain this to me, please." And in that city called Salt Lake City, somebody said, "Where is it located?" I said, "It's located in Salt Lake City." Right? So he said, "We're losing water rapidly. Rapidly. And it's getting smaller, smaller, drier, drier."

And you tell those people we're going to work on it really hard. We're going to save it. We're not going to let that go.

That is what I call an environmental—a real environmental problem, not using hair spray and I'm going to ruin the ozone. [*Laughter*] Okay? I'm in my apartment in Trump Tower, the building is totally sealed off, and if I use hair spray, they say, "Sir, you're creating an environmental hazard." That's not the kind of thing we want to talk about. But saving the Great Salt Lake, that's what we're going to be doing. Okay?

So this was a good trip for you, Governor, I tell you what, because I heard you're the most popular guy there now. We put out a statement, and you're in pretty good shape.

But there's no coincidence that 17 Governors have gone on to become the President of the United States. I am not surprised by that at all.

Whether it's reforming education, defending public safety, bringing back manufacturing from overseas, or responding to natural disasters—like, I think they could call that a natural disaster—I view each of you as essential partners in our mission to make America great again and just in time for America 250. This is a big, big deal.

I invite everyone in this room to bring forward ideas and opportunities to better serve our people, and in turn, never hesitate to let us know if there's anything we can do for you. This administration is open and available.

I met with Governor Abbott today, and you had a couple of requests, unfortunately. He always has very expensive—you know, it's Texas. *[Laughter]* And he did tell me I got the greatest vote in the history of Texas by far, and that's an honor. But it's Texas. It's always big dollars, but I always approve them for Texas, right? *[Laughter]* So we've taken care of business.

I hope everyone here tonight will be back in Washington this summer as we celebrate the glory of the unique heritage of your individual States with a Great American State Fair. And you know all about it. Our National Mall is going to be transformed into something that's actually unbelievable.

But first, we have to clean up some mess that Maryland and Virginia left us. We're going to be cleaning it up. It's unbelievable what they can do with incompetence.

Together, we're going to make our 250th year the greatest in the history of our country. And we have a couple of other events coming up also, very shortly thereafter.

We have the World Cup, and we have the Summer Olympics. And the World Cup has gone out with their tickets. And more than double—they sold more than double what they ever sold before, way early. And it's unbelievable. The numbers they've done, Susie, are unbelievable. They just came back, and it's really—really special. It's going to be something that—I think that there will be nothing like this period of time.

You know, when the election was rigged and I missed my, what—normal second term, I said, "This is terrible." But I was the one that got the Olympics and I was the one that got the World Cup. The problem was I was going to be President for another 4 years, and this was going to take place—Mr. Governor, you're doing a good job in Louisiana. We did a good job in that very special city of yours too, with crime, didn't we? Huh? He said, "You cleaned it out." New Orleans: We cleaned it out. You never had—and your Mardi Gras was a big success, right?

Governor Jeffrey M. Landry of Louisiana. Big success.

The President. But we have so many different things that we can be so proud of. And what's going to happen, and what has happened when this horrible event took place—with the election of 2020—and I said, "This is terrible." And then I said: "You know what? I've got to do it again." Because we did so well in that second election, I said, "I've got to do it again." And I did it again. And then all of a sudden, they're saying: "Sir, the Olympics are coming up. Sir, the World Cup is coming up. Sir, 250 years is coming up."

Now, I took credit for the Olympics, I took credit for the World Cup, and I'm trying to take credit for the 250 years—*[laughter]*—but I'm not getting away with it. I'm getting hammered. I'm getting hammered. I tried to take credit for three, but I'll take credit for two of the three.

But we're going to have an incredible few years. I mean, we're going to have something special. And you know, factories are being built all over the country at numbers—I don't know if you saw, but they did—job reports just came out, and the numbers of construction jobs is at a record. Well, those jobs are at a record because they're building plants and factories all over the country.

We hit—the Dow hit 50,000. When I got elected, they said, "It would be great if he could hit 50,000 in—by his fourth year, by the end of his fourth year." And I hit it by the end of my first year. And then we hit 7,000 on the S&P, and 7,000 was even more difficult. They said, "It's probably impossible" in 4 years, but 5 or 6 years out. Well, we did it in 1 year, and you're all the beneficiaries of it. So I just want to thank you. I want to congratulate you for all of the incredible work you've done.

Now, we're with some very special reporters tonight. It—I often say the fake news, but I will not say that tonight, even though I'm on live television. I will not call you fake news. Okay? [Laughter] As the cameras are roaring and they say, "That guy always"—but we have tonight incredible entertainment, as good as you'll ever see anywhere in the world. We have the greatest violinist in the world. And we had an event here about 2 months ago, and she played with Andrea Bocelli right in this room. And she blew the roof off, as they say. She was unbelievable.

And when I thought of the Governors dinner, I said we have to invite her back. So, we invited her back. She's here tonight. And of course, we have these genius military musicians who are as good as any musicians in the world.

So I said to myself, "The press has been relatively fair to me over the last year"—meaning they've been bad but not horrible. And I said, "If you'd like, should we, by vote, allow the press to watch the great finale that we have planned tonight with the musicians? If you'd like to do it, you can do it." And look at all—they're dressed up and all looking beautiful.

So, if you'd like, should we vote, Governors? Who's in favor of letting the media watch the great finale tonight of the greatest musicians in the world? I'm in favor. Anybody in favor? [Applause] Okay. Well, you win by a slight—it's not exactly unanimous, but that's all right. [Laughter] We understand they—they are politicians, after all.

So, if you'd like to come back a little bit later, we'd love to have you. You'll see some unbelievable entertainment.

So, Governors and spouses and everybody that's here, and my Cabinet members—my great Cabinet members, so many are here, I just want to thank you for doing a fantastic job. Our country is back on track. We had a horrible, horrible, dead country. One and a half years ago, we were dead. Now we have the hottest country anywhere in the world, as said by many leaders of the world.

And speaking of leaders, we have a great leader—a great military leader named Pete Hegseth, and he is going to say grace. He's a man who turned out to be absolutely fantastic at what he does, and you know what he does. And he is—he's turned out to be an incredible inspiration to the men and women in our military.

Again, a year and a half ago, 2 years ago, we couldn't get anybody to go into the military. We couldn't get them for the police, for the military, for anything—for firefighters—anything with a uniform on, Governor. Right? And now we're setting records in every—even police departments—police departments, fire departments.

But the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Space Force, Coast Guard, we have waiting lists to get in. In fact, if you'd like to make those great services larger, this is an awfully good time to do it. Let's make them larger, if you want. But we've never had anything like it. We went from a year

and a half ago, nobody wanted to join—we could not even come close to our recruitment numbers—and now we're setting records. We have never had anything like it. And all it is is spirit and love for our country. It's very simple.

So you have done a fantastic job. And, Pete, you are doing incredible. And please say grace. Thank you.

Secretary of War Peter B. Hegseth. If you would, bow your head.

Dear Heavenly Father, King Jesus, we come humbly before your throne, praising you for all the providence you've bestowed upon this Nation.

For over 250 years, from George Washington to President Trump, we have dedicated this Nation to one Nation under God. And certainly, in God we trust. And as we think 250 years ago, to George Washington on bended knee in Valley Forge, appealing to Heaven on behalf of his troops in this young nation, we have appealed to you from the beginning and may we continue to appeal to you.

And tonight we pray for our President, President Trump. Give him safety. Give him wisdom.

Lord, we pray for our Vice President, our First Lady, our Second Lady, the Cabinet members here, all the Governors assembled here as well, our civil magistrates. Lord God, I ask that you give them the wisdom to see what is right and the courage to do it. Wisdom defined as the fear of the Lord, the fear of the Lord being the source of all knowledge and wisdom. Lord God, your eternal truths, may they rule.

So this evening, also, I would be remiss if I did not pray for our great troops, our men and women all around the globe, defending our great Nation, as they have for 250 years. Lord God, watch over them and protect them.

It is in your holy name, the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, that we pray and we bless this food too.

Amen.

Audience members. Amen.

Secretary Hegseth. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Great job. Thank you very much.

I'd like to just ask J.D. Vance—he's doing a fantastic job. JD, could you come up and say a few words, please? Thank you, J.D.

Vice President James D. "J.D." Vance. Well, I didn't expect that, sir, so I don't have anything prepared. But I will say that, like Marco Rubio and a few others, I served in the United States Senate. And, Mr. President, what I admire so much about you and the Governors is that you guys actually have to make decisions, you have to live by those decisions, and you have to suffer the consequences or enjoy the rewards of those decisions.

The good thing about being a United States Senator, like the good thing about being Vice President, is that nobody blames you when anything goes wrong. [*Laughter*]

So, to the Governors here, we admire your courage. We admire your leadership.

And, to the President of the United States, we admire you for all the great things you're doing for our country.

Thank you, sir.

The President. So—and just in closing, I wanted to—you've read a lot: We're building a ballroom. For 150 years, they've wanted a great ballroom, at—even a ballroom, not a great one. Just give me a room, because this is a very small room. Can hold very small numbers of people. And they've wanted a great ballroom. And we're building—we're going to build the greatest ballroom anywhere in the world. There'll be nothing like it.

And you're looking right here at the entrance. This is a knockout panel, exactly where the gold curtains are. And when that gets opened, there's a magnificent walkway that goes into what will be the most beautiful ballroom anywhere in the world.

So we did this no charge to the taxpayer whatsoever. This was all donations made by friends of mine and people that are—that love our country. They love the White House, the Preservation Society, the whole group. But not one penny of—and it's a very expensive building, very expensive ballroom, but beautiful, beautiful, in keeping with the White House, an enhancement to the White House. But they've needed it for years.

When they had a big event, when the President of China comes in, when somebody comes in of magnitude, they put a tent out on the lawn. If it rained, you were in deep trouble, because the only part of the lawn that they can do it is a very low section. So, it would be, you know, a little embarrassing when you're sitting down with the King of Saudi Arabia and he's sitting in a puddle with 4 inches of water over his shoes. It's—was not exactly good. But we're—it's under construction.

But right through—that's going to be a very famous portal for hopefully hundreds of years, because what we're building is really special. But so important to say because nobody ever reports it: It will be totally, totally tax-free. Not one penny of tax will be donated to this. And it's going to be something that I think the country will be very proud of when it opens, but for hundreds—hopefully, hundreds and hundreds of years.

So thank you all very much, and this is a great honor, and we'll talk later. And, media, we'll see you in a little while. Okay?

Thank you very much. Thank you, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:38 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Spencer J. Cox of Utah; White House Chief of Staff Susan Wiles; violinist Rusanda Panfili; musician Andrea Bocelli; President Jinping Xi of China; and King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Secretary Hegseth referred to Usha Chilukuri Vance, wife of Vice President Vance. The transcript was released by the Office of Communications on February 23.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Governors, dinner.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Abbott, Gregory W.; Bocelli, Andrea; Cox, Spencer J.; Hegseth, Peter B.; Landry, Jeffrey M.; Panfili, Rusanda; Salman bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud, King; Trump, Melania; Vance, James D. "J.D."; Wiles, Susan; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: America's 250th birthday celebration; Armed Forces, U.S., recruitment efforts; California, 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles; China, President; Crime rate; Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup; Governors, dinner with President; Louisiana, Governor; Saudi Arabia, King; Secretary of War; Stock market; Texas, Governor; Utah, Governor; Vice President; White House Ballroom construction project; White House Chief of Staff.

DCPD Number: DCPD202600132.