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RECOGNIZING THE STOCKTON SYMPHONY'S CENTENNIAL

● Mr. SCHIFF. Mr. President, I rise today to recognize the centennial of the Stockton Symphony in Stockton, CA.

Founded in 1926 by Italian immigrant Manlio Silva, the Stockton Symphony is the third-oldest continuously operating professional orchestra in the State of California. In May of 1926, Mr. Silva assembled 20 local musicians to perform for the Stockton Musical Club, laying the foundation for a cherished and enduring cultural institution. Mr. Silva initially supported the symphony out of his own pocket, guided by a deep belief in the potential of music to enrich community life.

Over the past century, the symphony has grown from a 20-member community ensemble into a professional orchestra of metropolitan stature, drawing musical talent from across the globe. They have elevated artistic excellence in the region, expanded innovative educational programs, and achieved national recognition through high-profile composer residencies and critically acclaimed world premieres.

Throughout its history, the symphony has remained dedicated to Mr. Silva's mission of inspiring joy and building community through the power of music. Today's performers carry on his tradition of excellence as they electrify audiences and shape a vibrant and inclusive culture in the Central Valley.

As the Stockton Symphony celebrates its 100th anniversary, I commend the musicians, staff, and community whose commitment ensure its enduring success. I ask all Members to join me in honoring the centennial of the Stockton Symphony on July 1, 2026, and in recognizing a century of artistic excellence, community service, and cultural enrichment in California's Central Valley.●

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE UNION DELIVERED TO A JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS ON FEBRUARY 24, 2026—PM 52

The PRESIDING OFFICER laid before the Senate the following message from the President of the United States which was ordered to lie on the table:

To the Congress of the United States:

Speaker Johnson, Vice President Vance, First Lady of the United States, Second Lady of the United States, members of Congress, and my fellow Americans:

Our Nation is back—bigger, better, richer, and stronger than ever before.

Less than 5 months from now, our country will celebrate an epic milestone in American History—the 250th Anniversary of our glorious American Independence. This July 4th, we will mark two and a half centuries of liberty and triumph, progress and freedom in the most incredible and exceptional nation ever to exist on the face of this earth—and you've seen nothing yet, because we are entering the Golden Age of America.

When I last spoke in this chamber 12 months ago, I had just inherited a nation in crisis—with a stagnant economy, inflation at record levels, a wide-open border, horrendous recruitment for military and police, rampant crime at home, and wars and chaos all over the world. But tonight, after just one year, I can say with dignity and pride that we have achieved a transformation like no one has ever seen before, and a turnaround for the ages. We will never go back to where we were just a short time ago!

Today, our border is secure, our spirit is restored, inflation is plummeting, incomes are rising fast, the economy is roaring, our enemies are scared, our military and police are stacked, and America is respected again, perhaps like never before.

After 4 years in which millions and millions of illegal aliens poured across our borders totally unvetted and unchecked, we now have the strongest and most secure border in American history. In the past 9 months, zero illegal aliens have been admitted to the United States—but we will always allow people to come in legally, people that will love our country and will work hard to maintain it. The flow of deadly fentanyl across our border is down by a record 56%. And last year, the murder rate saw its single largest decline in recorded history—the lowest number in over 125 years, in fact, substantially before my father Fred was born.

The Biden administration and its allies in Congress gave us the worst inflation in the history of our country. But in 12 months, my administration has driven core inflation down to the lowest level in more than 5 years—and in the last 3 months of 2025, it was down to 1.7%.

Gasoline, which reached a peak of over \$6 a gallon in some states under my predecessor, is now below \$2.30 a gallon in many states, in some places \$1.99—and when I visited Iowa a few weeks ago, I even saw \$1.85 a gallon. Mortgage rates are the lowest in 4 years and falling fast—and the annual cost of the typical new mortgage is down almost \$5,000 just since I took office.

Low interest rates will solve the Biden-created housing problem—while at the same time protecting the values of those people, who already own a house, that are now rich for the first time in their lives. And I'm going to keep it that way.

The stock market has set 53 all-time record highs since the election—boosting pensions, 401ks, and retirement accounts for millions and millions of Americans.

In 4 long years, the last administration got less than \$1 trillion of new investment in the United States. In 12 months, I secured commitments for more than \$18 trillion pouring in from all over the globe. Think of it, less than \$1 trillion for 4 years, versus \$18 trillion for one year. A short time ago, we were a dead country—now, we are the hottest country anywhere in the world.

As thousands of new businesses are forming, and factories, plants, and laboratories are being built, we have added 70,000 new construction jobs in just a short period. American Oil production is up by more than 600,000 barrels a day—and we just received, from our new friend and partner, Venezuela, more than 80 million barrels of oil. American natural gas production is at an all-time high, because I kept my promise to drill, baby, drill. More Americans are working today than at any time in the history of our country. And 100% of all jobs created under my administration have been in the private sector. We ended D.E.I. in America. We cut a record number of job-killing regulations—and in one year, we have lifted 2.4 million Americans off food stamps.

For all these reasons, I say tonight—Members of Congress, The State of Our Union is strong.

Our country is winning again—in fact, we're winning so much, that we don't know what to do about it. People are asking me, "Please, please, please, Mr. President, we're winning too much, we can't take it anymore. We're not used to winning in our country—until you came along, we were always losing." And I say, "No, no, you're going to win again, and you're going to win big—there's no such thing as too much winning." And to prove that point, here with us tonight is a group of winners who just made our entire nation incredibly proud—the Men's Gold Medal Olympic Hockey Team. Come on in! They beat a fantastic Canadian team in overtime—as did the American women, who will soon be coming to the White House. Congratulations, Team USA! I have never seen a goal tender play as well as goalie Connor Hellebuyck. And I think the members of this great hockey squad will be happy to hear—and I'll only do this if they agree by a vote count—that I will soon be presenting him our highest civilian honor, which we have given to many athletes over the years, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Thank you all!

I am also pleased to say that the next time the Olympic torch is lit, it will be here in America for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles. And this year, we are hosting the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

But the biggest of all is America 250. This will be a year to celebrate our

country, and the heroes who have kept it free—men like Buddy Taggart. At age 17, Buddy volunteered to defend America in World War Two. Serving in the Pacific under the great General Douglas MacArthur, he fought bravely in the famous Battle of Manila, he was wounded and almost killed by enemy machine guns at Luzon, and 81 years ago this month, he liberated the largest internment camp in the Philippines. Buddy earned many honors, including a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star, came home, started a family, and tonight, he is in the gallery looking forward to July 4th, 2026—his 100th birthday. Buddy, we salute you. Please stand.

Even in times of challenge, setback, and immense heartache, the Spirit of 1776 has always shone through. It was July 4th of last year when floodwaters tore through a girls' summer camp in Central Texas, rising 26 feet in mere minutes, tragically claiming many lives. As the waters threatened to sweep her away, 11-year-old Milly Cate McClymond closed her eyes, and prayed to God. Those prayers were answered when Coast Guard rescue swimmer Scott Ruskan descended from a helicopter. It was Scott's first-ever rescue mission—and he lifted not just Milly Cate, but 164 others to safety. Tonight, Scott and Milly Cate are here together, reunited for the first time. And Petty Officer Ruskan, I'm pleased to inform you that I am now awarding you the Legion of Merit for Extraordinary Heroism.

From 1776 to today, every generation of Americans has stepped forward to defend life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for the next. Now, it is our turn. Together, we are building a nation where every child has the chance to reach higher and go farther—where government answers to the people, not the powerful—and where the interests of hardworking American Citizens are always our first and ultimate concern. That is the debt we owe to the heroes who came before us—and that is the promise we must keep to America for our 250th Year.

Last year, I urged this Congress to begin that mission by passing the largest tax cuts in American history, and our Republican Majorities delivered. All Democrats—every single one of them—voted against these massive tax cuts. They wanted tax increases. But we held strong—and with the great Big Beautiful Bill, we gave you no tax on tips, no tax on overtime, and no tax on social security for our great seniors. We also made interest on auto loans tax deductible—but only if the car is made in America.

Recently in Pennsylvania, I met Megan Hemhauser, a devoted mom who homeschools her two children during the day, while waiting tables at night—as her husband works overtime operating heavy equipment. Megan is here this evening, and she's very happy—because with No Tax on Tips, No Tax on Overtime, and our expanded child tax

credit, Megan and her husband will take home more than \$5,000 extra, cutting her tax bill in half. Megan—we are fighting for families just like yours. Thank you.

Under our bill, parents like Megan can also activate their children's brand-new Trump Accounts—tax-free investment accounts for every American child. Millions will be pre-funded courtesy of the U.S. Treasury and private individuals like Michael and Susan Dell, who have donated \$6 billion, \$250 million to fund Trump Accounts for 25 million American children, as well as others like Brad Gerstner who is donating to children in Indiana. With modest additional contributions, accounts could grow to \$100,000 or more by the time children turn 18. To make this investment in our children's future, go to TrumpAccounts.gov.

One of the primary reasons for our country's stunning economic turnaround, the biggest in history, where the Dow Jones broke 50,000 four years ahead of schedule, and the S&P hit 7,000 where it wasn't supposed to for years, were tariffs. I used these tariffs to make great deals for our country, both economically and on a national security basis. Everything was working well, countries that were ripping us off for decades are now paying us hundreds of billions of dollars a year—and yet, these countries were happy, and so were we. There was no inflation, tremendous growth, and the big story was how Donald Trump called the economy correctly, and 22 Nobel Prize winners in economics didn't, they got it completely wrong. And then, just 4 days ago, an unfortunate ruling from the United States Supreme Court came down. But the good news is that almost all countries and corporations want to keep the deal that they already made, knowing that the legal power that I, as President, have to make a new deal could be far worse for them, and therefore they will continue to work along the same successful path we had negotiated before the Supreme Court's involvement. So, despite the disappointing ruling, these powerful, country-saving, peace-protecting tariffs will remain in place under fully approved and tested alternative legal statutes, leading to a solution that will be even stronger than before. Congressional action will not be necessary. And as time goes by, I believe that tariffs, paid for by foreign countries, will, like in the past, substantially replace the modern-day system of income tax, taking a great financial burden off the people that I love. I would like to acknowledge Supreme Court Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, and Brett Kavanaugh for having the courage and conviction to do what they knew was right. Moving forward, factories, jobs, investment, and trillions of dollars will continue pouring into the United States of America—because we finally have a president who puts America First.

For decades before I came along, we had the exact opposite. From trade to healthcare, from Energy to immigration, everything was stolen and rigged in order to drain the wealth out of the productive, hardworking people who make our country run. Under Biden and his corrupt partners in Congress and beyond, it reached a breaking point—with the Green New Scam, Open Borders, and record-setting inflation that cost the typical family \$34,000 dollars in just a speck of time.

Now, the same people in this chamber who voted for those disasters suddenly use the word affordability—knowing full well that they caused the increased prices, not us. They knew their statements were a lie. Their policies created the high prices—our policies are rapidly ending them. The price of eggs is down 60%. The cost of chicken, butter, fruit, hotels, automobiles, and rent is lower today than when I took office, and even beef is starting to come down. And soon, you will see numbers that few would think were possible to achieve.

I am also confronting one of the biggest rip-offs of our times, the crushing cost of healthcare. Since the passage of the Unaffordable Care Act, sometimes referred to as Obamacare, big insurance companies have gotten rich, with our government giving them hundreds of billions of dollars, as their stock prices soared 1,000, 1,200, 1,400, even 1,700 percent. That's why I introduced The Great Healthcare Plan—I want to stop all payments to big insurance companies, and instead give that money directly to the people, so that they can buy their own healthcare, which will be better healthcare at a lower cost.

In addition, my plan requires maximum price transparency. I did that in my first term, and the Democrats immediately terminated it with full knowledge that they were doing a very bad thing for the people.

I am also ending the wildly inflated cost of prescription drugs. Other presidents tried to do it, but they never could. They were all talk and no action. I got it done. Under my just-enacted Most Favored Nation Agreements, Americans, who have for decades paid by far the highest prices of any nation for prescription drugs, will now pay the lowest price for drugs, anywhere in the world. So, in my first year, I took prescription drugs, a very big part of healthcare, from the highest price in the entire world to the lowest. The result is price differences of 300, 400, 500, 600 percent—all available right now at a new website, TrumpRX.gov. Here tonight is the very first customer ever to get the discount—Catherine Rayner. For 5 years, she and her husband have struggled with infertility, and they turned to I.V.F. One drug has been costing Catherine \$4,000 dollars per purchase. But a few weeks ago, she logged onto the Trump RX website, and got that same drug for just \$500 dollars—a reduction of \$3,500 dollars.

Catherine, we are all praying for you—you're going to be a great mom. Now, I am calling on Congress to codify my Most Favored Nation program into law.

Many Americans are also concerned that energy demand from A.I. data centers could unfairly drive up their electric utility bills. Tonight, I am pleased to announce that I have negotiated the new "Rate Payer Protection Pledge". We are telling the major tech companies that they have the obligation to provide for their own power needs, so that no one's prices will go up, and in many cases, prices will go down for the community, substantially. This is a unique strategy never used in this country before—it will ensure the companies' ability to get electricity, while at the same time lowering prices for you.

Another pillar of the American Dream that has been under attack is home ownership. With us tonight is Raysall Wiggins, a mom of two from Houston. She placed bids on 20 homes, and lost all those bids to gigantic investment firms that bypassed inspection, paid all cash, and turned those houses into rentals, stealing away her American dream. Stories like this are why last month, I signed an Executive Order to ban large Wall Street investment firms from buying up, in the thousands, single-family homes. And now I am asking Congress to make that ban permanent, because homes are for people, not corporations. Raysall, thank you.

We are also working to make it easier for Americans to save for retirement—and under this administration, we will always protect Social Security and Medicare for our nation's seniors.

Since I took office, the typical 401K balance is up almost \$30,000 dollars. Yet half of all working Americans still do not have access to a retirement plan with matching contributions from an employer. To remedy this gross disparity, I am announcing that next year, my administration will give these often-forgotten American workers access to the same type of retirement plan offered to every Federal worker—we will match your contributions with up to \$1,000 dollars each year.

As we ensure that all Americans can profit from a rising stock market, let's also ensure that members of Congress cannot corruptly profit using inside information. Pass the Stop Insider Trading Act without delay.

But when it comes to the corruption that is plundering America, there has been no more stunning example than Minnesota—where members of the Somali community have pillaged an estimated \$19 billion dollars from the American taxpayer. And in actuality, the number is much higher than that—and California, Massachusetts, Maine and many other states are even worse.

This is the kind of corruption that shreds the fabric of a nation. So tonight, although started 4 months ago, I am officially announcing The War on

Fraud, to be led by our Vice President, J.D. VANCE. And if we are able to find enough of that fraud, we will have a balanced budget overnight.

The Somali pirates who ransacked Minnesota remind us that there are large parts of the world where bribery, corruption, and lawlessness are the norm, not the exception. Importing these cultures through unrestricted immigration brings those problems right here, to the USA—and it is the American People who pay the price, in higher medical bills, car insurance rates, rent, taxes, and perhaps most importantly, crime. We will take care of this problem.

Dalilah Coleman was only 5 years old in June 2024, when an 18-wheel tractor trailer plowed into her stopped car traveling at 60 miles per hour. The driver was an illegal alien let in by Joe Biden and given a Commercial Driver's License by Open Borders politicians in California. Doctors said Dalilah would never be able to walk, talk, or eat on her own ever again. But against all odds, she is now in the first grade, learning to walk again, and she is here this evening with her dad Marcus. Dalilah—you are a great inspiration.

Many, if not most, illegal aliens do not speak English and cannot read even the most basic road signs as to direction, speed, danger, or location. That is why tonight, I am calling on Congress to pass what we will call the "Dalilah Law"—barring any state from granting Commercial Drivers Licenses to illegal aliens.

Yesterday at the White House, I hosted a ceremony with Americans who lost their treasured loved ones to the scourge of illegal immigration. These are the Angel Moms and Families that for decades our government betrayed, and our media totally ignored.

In 2023, a 16-year-old high school cheerleader named Lizbeth Medina was supposed to perform in her town's Christmas parade, but she never arrived. Her mother Jacqueline went home to look for her, and she found her—lying dead in the bathtub, after being stabbed 25 times. Lizbeth's killer was a previously-arrested illegal alien who had broken in, and brutally extinguished the brightest light in her family's life. Her heartbroken mother is in the gallery to remind everyone in this chamber exactly why we are deporting illegal alien criminals from our country—we want them out of here. Jacqueline, please stand.

We can never forget that many in this room not only allowed the border invasion to happen before I got involved—but indeed, they would do it all over again if ever given the chance. The only thing standing between Americans and a wide-open border right now is President Donald J. Trump and our great Republican patriots in Congress.

As we speak, Democrats in this chamber have cut off all funding for the Department of Homeland Security.

They have instituted another Democrat Shutdown, the first one costing us a 2-point reduction in the GDP. Now, they have closed the agency responsible for protecting Americans from terrorists and murderers. Tonight, I am demanding the full and immediate restoration of all funding for the Border Security and Homeland Security of the United States.

One of the great things about the State of the Union is how it gives Americans the chance to see clearly what their representatives believe. So tonight, I am inviting every legislator to join with my administration in reaffirming a fundamental principle—if you agree with this statement, then stand up and show your support: The first duty of the American government is to protect American citizens, not illegal aliens.

That is why I am also asking you to end deadly Sanctuary Cities that protect the criminals, and enact serious penalties for public officials who block the removal of criminal aliens, in many cases drug lords and murderers, from our country.

And perhaps most importantly, I am asking you to approve the Save America Act to stop illegal aliens and other unpermitted persons from voting in our sacred American Elections. It is very simple: All voters must show Voter I.D. All voters must show proof of citizenship in order to vote. And no mail in ballots, except for illness, disability, military, or travel. This should be an easy one. The new Mayor of New York city just said they want people to shovel the snow—but if you apply for that job, you need to show two original forms of I.D., and a Social Security card—yet they don't want identification for the greatest privilege of them all, voting in America. Both Republicans and Democrats overwhelmingly agree—and Congress should unite and enact this common-sense, country-saving legislation, right now.

And here is one more opportunity to show common sense in government. In the gallery tonight are Sage Blair and her mother Michelle. In 2021, Sage was 14 when school officials in Virginia sought to "socially transition" her to a new gender—treating her as a boy, and hiding it from her parents. Before long, a confused Sage ran away from home. After she was found in a horrific situation in Maryland, a left-wing judge refused to return Sage to her parents, because they did not immediately state that their daughter was their son. Sage was thrown into an all-boys state home and suffered terribly—but today, all of that is behind them, because Sage is a proud and wonderful young woman, with a full-ride scholarship to Liberty University. Sage and Michelle, thank you for your bravery. Who can believe we're even speaking about such things?

Surely, we can all agree—no state can be allowed to rip children from their parents' arms and transition them to a new gender against the parents' will. We must ban it, and ban it now. These people are crazy!

No one cares more about protecting America's youth than our wonderful First Lady. Over the past year, she has had an incredible impact—championing A.I. legislation, advancing a landmark Executive Order on foster care, and helping secure \$30 million dollars to launch the Melania Trump Foster Youth to Independence initiative. And students and educators in every state have joined the First Lady's efforts in the Presidential A.I. Challenge, keeping America's next generation positioned to succeed in the future. Tonight, we welcome two young people whose lives reflect the First Lady's impact—Sierra Burns and Everest Nevraumont. Thank you both, and thank you, Melania.

I am very proud to say that during my time in office, both the first four years and in particular this last year, there has been a tremendous renewal in religion, faith, Christianity, and belief in God in our country. This is especially true among young people—and a big part of that had to do with my great friend Charlie Kirk. Last year, Charlie was violently murdered by an assassin, and martyred for his beliefs. His wonderful wife, Erika, is with us tonight. Erika, please stand. In Charlie's memory, we must all come together to reaffirm that America is One Nation under God—and we must totally reject political violence of any kind. We love religion, and we love bringing it back.

Above all, unleashing America's promise requires keeping our communities safe. We have made incredible strides—yet dangerous repeat offenders continue to be released by pro-crime politicians again and again.

We are honored to be joined tonight by Anya Zarutska. In 2022, she and her beautiful daughter Iryna fled war-torn Ukraine to live with relatives near Charlotte, North Carolina. Last summer, 23-year-old Iryna was riding home on the train when a deranged monster—who had been arrested over a dozen times and was released through no cash bail—stood up and viciously slashed a knife through her neck and body. No one will ever forget the expression of terror on Iryna's face as she looked up at her attacker in the last seconds of her life. She had escaped a brutal war, only to be slain by a hardened criminal set free to kill in America. Mrs. Zarutska—tonight, I promise you, we will ensure justice for your magnificent daughter, Iryna.

I am asking this Congress to pass tough legislation to ensure that violent and dangerous repeat offenders are put behind bars, and importantly, stay there.

Starting last summer, I deployed our National Guard and federal law enforcement to restore law and order to our most dangerous cities—including Memphis, Tennessee, New Orleans, Louisiana, and our nation's capital itself, Washington, D.C. Here in Washington, crime is now at the lowest levels ever recorded—and murders in D.C.

this January were down close to 100% from one year ago.

One of the brave servicemembers who helped achieve this stunning turnaround was 20-year-old West Virginia Army National Guard Specialist Sarah Beckstrom. After a four-month deployment, she voluntarily extended her service. The very next day, she was on patrol near the White House when she was ambushed and shot in the head by a terrorist monster from Afghanistan, who should have never been in the country—all because she wore the uniform of her nation. Sarah Beckstrom died in order to defend our capital—and we are honored to be joined by her parents. Gary and Evalea, your daughter was a true American Patriot, and she will be greatly missed.

Serving alongside Sarah that day was Staff Sergeant Andrew Wolfe. The terrorist shot Andrew in the head—and no one thought he could possibly make it, except for his wonderful and very loving mother, Melody. I spoke to Melody that night, and the doctors thought that Andrew was gone. But his mother said "No, Mr. President, Andrew will be fine, He's going to make it; I have no doubt. Everybody is praying." The doctors did not understand what she was saying, and after looking at the results of the damage done, neither did I. She was so strong and conclusive that even Andrew's father felt she didn't understand the gravity of the situation, but she turned out to be right. With God's help, Andrew has battled back from the edge of death, and he is here tonight with his mom, on his way to a miraculous recovery. Now, I would like to ask General James Seward to present Staff Sergeant Andrew Wolfe and the great family of Sarah Beckstrom with the award created by our late, great President George Washington himself—the Purple Heart.

We are proudly restoring safety for Americans at home, and we are also restoring security for America abroad. Our country has never been stronger.

In my first 10 months, I ended 8 wars—including Cambodia and Thailand, Pakistan and India, Kosovo and Serbia, Israel and Iran, Egypt and Ethiopia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Congo and Rwanda, and of course, the War in Gaza. Under the ceasefire I negotiated, every single hostage—both living and dead—has been returned home. And we are working hard to end the 9th war—the killing and slaughter between Russia and Ukraine, where 25,000 soldiers are dying each and every month, a war which would have never happened if I were President.

As President, I will make peace wherever I can—but I will never hesitate to confront threats to America wherever we must.

That is why, in a breathtaking operation last June, the United States military obliterated Iran's nuclear weapons program with an attack on Iranian soil known as Operation Midnight Hammer. For decades, it has been the policy of the United States never to allow Iran

to obtain a nuclear weapon. Since they seized control of that proud nation 47 years ago, the regime, and its murderous proxies, have spread nothing but terrorism and death. They have killed and maimed thousands of American servicemembers with roadside bombs. And just recently, they have killed at least 20,000 protestors in their own country. They have already developed missiles that can threaten Europe and our bases overseas—and they are working to build missiles that will soon reach the United States. After Midnight Hammer, they were warned to make no future attempts to rebuild their weapons program—yet they continue, and are at this moment again pursuing their sinister nuclear ambitions. My preference is to solve this problem through diplomacy—but one thing is certain: I will never allow the world's number one sponsor of terror to have a nuclear weapon.

No nation should ever doubt America's resolve. We have the most powerful military on earth. I rebuilt our military in my first term, and continue to do so at an even more rapid pace—hopefully, we will seldom have to use it. It's called peace through strength.

Thanks to a Republican Congress, we are investing a record \$1 trillion dollars in the United States Armed Forces this year alone. And NATO countries, our friends and allies, have just agreed to pay 5% of GDP for military defense, up from 2%, something which everyone said would never be done.

Every branch of our Armed Forces is setting records for recruitment. And every service member recently received a Warrior Dividend of \$1,776 dollars.

We are also restoring American security and dominance in the Western Hemisphere—acting to secure our national interests and defend our country from violence, drugs, terrorism, and foreign interference.

For years, large swaths of territory in our region, including large parts of Mexico, have been controlled by murderous drug cartels. That is why I designated these Cartels as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, and I declared illicit fentanyl a Weapon of Mass Destruction. With our new military campaign, we have stopped record amounts of drugs coming into our country—and virtually stopped it completely coming in by water and sea.

We have also taken down one of the most sinister cartel kingpins of all. In January, elite American Warriors carried out one of the most complex, spectacular feats of military competence and power in world history. America's Armed Forces overwhelmed all defenses and utterly defeated the enemy, to end the reign of outlaw dictator Nicolas Maduro, and bring him to face American Justice.

This was a colossal victory for the security of the United States, and it also opens up a bright new beginning for the people of Venezuela. We are working closely with the new president, Delcy Rodriguez, to unleash extraordinary

economic gains for both of our countries—and to bring new hope to those who have suffered so terribly. With us tonight is Alejandra Gonzalez. She grew up in a tightknit Venezuelan family, and was especially close to her beloved uncle Enrique. But after Enrique ran for office and opposed Maduro, her uncle was kidnapped by Maduro's security forces—and thrown into the regime's infamous prison in Caracas. Alejandra feared she would never see her uncle again. But since the raid, we have worked with the new leadership, and they have ordered the closure of that vile prison, and released hundreds of political prisoners with the rest to soon come. Alejandra, I am pleased to inform you that not only has your uncle been released, but he is here tonight to celebrate his freedom with you in person. Enrique, please come down. Thank you, Enrique.

There were many heroes on that January raid to capture Maduro—but the deeds of one warrior that night will live forever in the eternal chronicles of Military Valor. Chief Warrant Officer 5 Eric Slover planned the mission and was the "flightlead" in the cockpit of the first helicopter in the raid, a massive Chinook carrying many American Warfighters. Wearing the dog tags his wife Amy had blessed with holy water before he left, Eric steered the Chinook under the cover of night, and descended swiftly upon Maduro's heavily protected military fortress, protected by thousands of soldiers, guarded by Russian and Chinese military technology. While preparing to land, enemy machine-guns fired from every angle, and Eric was hit, very badly, in the leg and hip, one bullet after another. He absorbed four agonizing shots, shredding his leg to pieces. And yet, despite the fact that the use of his legs was vital to successful helicopter flight, he kept that helicopter flying, to deliver the many commandos who would capture and detain Maduro. Then, even as he was gushing blood, he maneuvered his helicopter to face the enemy and let his gunners eliminate the threat, saving the lives of his fellow warriors from what could have been a catastrophic crash deep in enemy territory. Only after safely landing the helicopter with all warriors aboard, in the exact right spot which was vital to the mission, Eric told his copilot, also wounded, but not as gravely, to take over—he was passing out.

The success of the entire mission—and the lives of his fellow warriors—hinged on Eric's ability to take the searing pain of the bullets and keep on flying. Chief Warrant Officer Slover is still recovering from his serious wounds, but I am thrilled to say that he is here tonight with his wife Amy. Eric and Amy, come on in. In recognition of Eric's actions above and beyond the call of duty, I would now like to ask General Jonathan Braga to present Chief Warrant Officer Slover with our nation's highest military award—the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Thank you, Eric and Amy. And 10 of Eric's fellow warriors from that night will also be receiving medals at a private ceremony at the White House.

Tonight, we have celebrated many truly extraordinary American patriots, but there is one last living legend to honor before we go. He is one more heroic American Aviator. Navy Fighter Pilot Royce Williams served in World War Two, Korea, and Vietnam, flying more than 220 missions. In the skies over Korea in 1952, Royce was in the dogfight of a lifetime. Flying through blizzard conditions, his squadron was ambushed by 7 Soviet fighter planes. It was his first aerial combat of the war, and despite being massively outnumbered and outgunned, Royce led the take-down of four enemy jets, vanquishing his adversaries while taking 263 bullets to his own plane. His story was secret for over 50 years—he didn't even tell his wife. But tonight, at 100 years old, this brave Navy Captain is finally getting the recognition he deserves. He was a legend long before this evening. Royce, please stand up. I now ask the First Lady of the United States to present Captain Royce Williams with his Congressional Medal of Honor.

250 years is a long time in the life of a nation, but in another sense, it is a mere moment in the eye of history. Two of the gentlemen we met in the gallery this evening took their first breaths one century ago. One hundred years before that, on July 4th, 1826, the author of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, drew his last breath. Just a single long human lifespan separates the giants who declared and won our Independence, from the heroes who stand among us tonight.

Everything our nation has done, everything we have achieved, has been the work of those few great lifetimes. In those brief chapters, Americans built this nation from 13 humble colonies, into the pinnacle of human civilization and human freedom—the strongest, wealthiest, most powerful, most successful nation in all of history.

Americans ventured out across a daunting and dangerous continent, we carved paths through an unforgiving wilderness, settled a boundless frontier, and tamed the beautiful but very dangerous wild west. From empty marshes and wide-open plains, we raised up the world's greatest cities. Together, we mastered the world's mightiest industries, we shattered history's monstrous tyrannies, and we liberated millions from the chains of fascism, communism, oppression, and terror. Americans lifted humanity into the skies on wings of aluminum and steel—and then we launched mankind into the stars on rockets powered by sheer American will and unyielding American pride. We wired the globe with our ingenuity, we captivated the planet with American culture, and now, we are pioneering the next great American breakthroughs that will change the entire world.

All of this, and so much more, is the enduring legacy and unmatched glory

of the hardworking patriots who built and defended this country, and who still carry the hopes and freedoms of all humanity on their backs.

For years, they were forgotten, betrayed, and cast aside—but that great betrayal is over, and they will never be forgotten again.

Because when the world needs courage, daring, vision, and inspiration, it still turns to America—and when God needs a nation to work His miracles, He knows exactly who to ask. There is no challenge Americans cannot overcome, no frontier too vast for us to conquer, no dream too bold for us to chase, no horizon too distant for us to claim.

For our Destiny is written by the hand of Providence—and these first 250 years were just the beginning.

From the rugged border towns of Texas to the heartland villages of Michigan, from the sun-kissed shores of Florida to the endless fields of the Dakotas, and from the historic streets of Philadelphia, to right here in our nation's capital, Washington, D.C.—the Golden Age of America is now Upon Us. The Revolution that began in 1776 has not ended—it still continues, because the flame of Liberty and Independence still burns in the hearts of every American Patriot. And our future will be bigger, better, brighter, bolder, and more glorious than ever before.

Thank you, God Bless You, and God Bless the United States of America.

DONALD J. TRUMP.

THE WHITE HOUSE, February 24, 2026.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 2:10 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mrs. Cole, one of its reading clerks, announced that the House has passed the following bills, in which it requests the concurrence of the Senate:

H.R. 390. An act to utilize the Advanced Capabilities for Emergency Response to Operations project of NASA to improve aerial responses to wildfires, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2189. An act to modernize Federal firearms laws to account for advancements in technology and less-than-lethal weapons, and for other purposes.

H.R. 2600. An act to require the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to establish a program to identify, evaluate, acquire, and disseminate commercial Earth remote sensing data and imagery in order to satisfy the scientific, operational, and educational requirements of the Administration, and for other purposes.

H.R. 3679. An act to require the Director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology to develop resources for small businesses in utilizing artificial intelligence, and for other purposes.

H.R. 5235. An act to amend title 41, United States Code, to prohibit minimum educational requirements for proposed contractor personnel in certain contract solicitations, and for other purposes.

MEASURES REFERRED

The following bills were read the first and the second times by unanimous consent, and referred as indicated: