



State of the Union: 5 things president failed to tell Americans

By Watchdog.org staff

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Throughout the rest of the week, politicians and pundits will spend long hours dissecting and reacting to **President Barack Obama**'s State of the Union address delivered Tuesday night to Congress and the country.

They'll pontificate — or is it bloviate? — about what the president said, and they'll talk about the plans for the year ahead.

The American people, though, should care about what the president didn't say. The commander-in-chief spoke at length about income inequality, gender fairness, entrepreneurship and increasing federal spending. But he failed to mention how disastrous some of his policies could be for jobs, civil rights and education.

Here are five things the president didn't say in his 2014 State of the Union speech:

1. Raising the minimum wage will kill jobs

Byron Schломach, director of the **Center for Economic Prosperity** at the **Arizona-based Goldwater Institute**, heard loud and clear the president's plea for Congress to raise the minimum wage from \$7.25 an hour to \$10.10.

Obama even took things a step farther, saying he will sign an executive order unilaterally increasing the minimum wage for workers under new federal contracts.

But what Schломach didn't hear the president say is the likely outcome of a minimum wage hike.

Schломach said the measure will hurt the very people it's trying to help by forcing companies to scramble for ways to cut costs, which could lead to fewer jobs.

Although the minimum wage is politically popular, Schломach said all it does is speak to the gross economic illiteracy on the part of the American people.

“Businesses don’t print their own money and they have to attract customers,” Schlomach said. “Part of the way they do that is by keeping costs down, and this is something that raises costs.”

Schlomach also said it was laughable when Obama asserted that increasing the minimum wage will lift citizens out of poverty.

“It’s a trope, a flat out falsehood when people claim, like the president did (Tuesday night), that people are trying to raise families on wages that are as low as the minimum wage,” Schlomach said.

Most workers who are paid a minimum wage are younger and not the head of a household, like **Nick Chute**, the **Minnesota** pizza cook who was a guest at the SOTU, according to Schlomach.

2. IRS harassment isn’t a big issue for the Obama people

Jordan Sekulow of the **American Center for Law and Justice**, which is suing the government on behalf of 41 conservative and tea party groups after allegations of targeting by the **Internal Revenue Service**, said he wasn’t surprised that Obama did not mention the controversy.

“They’re taking every step possible to minimize this scandal and the targeting that was done,” Sekulow said.

“This is your **Department of Justice**, your **FBI**, paid for with taxpayer dollars. It’s not a place for partisan politics ... To this date, no one’s been fired. Some people have retired, some have resigned. We’ve had one person take the Fifth — **Los Lerner** — and those are key finds that there was more than just bureaucratic mistakes afoot here.”

3. NSA spying will continue

Despite a major **National Security Agency** leak threatening to undermine America’s national and economic security, fueling domestic and international backlash over fears of a growing Orwellian electronic surveillance nightmare, President Obama gave the scandal a passing mention during his address.

Out of the speech’s 7,032 words, “privacy” and “surveillance” were both mentioned once, and in the same paragraph. He also did not endorse any measures to modernize the **Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986**, a federal privacy law that allows for federal government agents to access without a warrant emails and text messages older than 180 days.

Greg Nojeim, senior counsel at the **Center for Democracy & Technology** and a member of the **Digital 4th** coalition, said in a statement provided to Watchdog.org following the speech that his coalition was “disappointed” in Obama’s failure to endorse ECPA reform during his address.

“In neglecting to discuss an update to email privacy laws, he missed an opportunity to demonstrate his commitment to protecting Americans’ private online communications from unwarranted government intrusion,” Nojeim said.

“As the address fell on **Data Privacy Day**, it would have been the opportune moment for the President to show that he is serious about privacy reform,” Nojeim said in the statement.

The Digital 4th Coalition, a D.C.-based privacy reform organization, previously had urged Obama [to endorse ECPA’s modernization during the State of the Union](#).

“ECPA reform has broad bipartisan support, with legislation pending in both the House and the Senate,” Nojeim said.

“We will continue to work with Congress to pass bipartisan ECPA reform this year to ensure that Americans’ emails stored in the cloud receive the same protections as the documents stored in their desk drawers,” he said.

John Stephenson, director of the **American Legislative Exchange Council’s Communications and Technology Task Force**, however, viewed the president’s rhetoric as a positive sign for free-market forces to work in the nation’s technology sector.

“In tonight’s State of Union address, President Obama recognized that markets are working to provide quality broadband to consumers, check bad actors, and create new businesses and millions of new jobs,” Stephenson said in a statement provided to Watchdog.org following the address.

“He didn’t call for massive new government bureaucracy or new heavy-handed privacy laws or actions; in fact, he only called on Congress to adopt a bipartisan bill to curb patent trolls and litigation against innovation,” Stephenson said.

“This means that there is no need for new heavy-handed government efforts to overbuild broadband and no need to create new, burdensome and unworkable privacy regimes to go after perceived harms or design market outcomes,” he said.

4. Even the government knows pre-k doesn’t work

The president spent more time talking about preschool than programs that actually work to improve education, said **Jason Bedrick**, policy analyst at the **Cato Institute’s Center for Educational Freedom**.

“His pre-K idea is a mistake,” Bedrick said. “There is no real evidence that pre-K will do all the things his administration claims it’s going to do.”

[The government’s own study of its Head Start preschool program](#) showed that, if the program benefits children at all, the benefit disappears in a few years, he said.

“Head Start has been a complete failure,” he said. “We don’t have any results for this program and it does not make sense to expand it.”

The president should have turned the nation’s attention to school choice programs, which have been successful, he said.

The president should have announced that his administration would drop its [lawsuit against Louisiana’s school choice program](#), and that he would expand [the District of Columbia’s program](#), where the federal government actually has authority, Bedrick said.

“They should cease interfering with state-level policies because that’s where the constitutional authority is for education — at the state level.”

“There was a lot of talk about inequality,” Bedrick said. “If we really care about inequality, and we want to reduce it, states should follow the example of Arizona and Florida and other states that have enacted school choice programs and make them large enough for all students, especially low-income students.”

5. The private sector deserves credit for energy gains

Some in the energy industry didn’t like what they heard in Obama’s speech.

“When we produce more oil, more taxes are paid, more people are hired who also pay more taxes, and our energy prices go down and we save americans money at the pump,” **Ron Ness**, president of the **North Dakota Petroleum Council**, said in response to the president’s speech. “It also increases our energy security and reduces our fears of what the Middle East does with their energy resources. Raising taxes on energy production does exactly the opposite. It’s really pretty simple.”

The **Lignite Energy Council**, which represents North Dakota’s coal industry, found the president’s words on energy contradictory.

“He touts increased oil and gas development while ignoring the fact that the increases come on private land, while his own policies stifle development on federal lands,” **Jason Bohrer**, a spokesman for the group, said in response to the speech. “He talks about an ‘all of the above’ energy approach while embracing rules from the EPA that would take our most affordable source of energy — coal — out of production. And he talks about helping lower- and middle-income families while driving up their energy costs.”

Note: Watchdog.org reporters Adam Tobias, Josh Peterson, Rob Port, Rob Nikolewski, Mary C. Tillotson and Dustin Hurst contributed to this report.