



2015 SOTU Speech, Even Bigger Government for Obama

US President Obama Asks Congress for More Power, Proposes Middle-Class Economics

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On Tuesday, January 20, president Barack Obama addressed the Congress as he delivered his [2015 State of the Union speech](#).

“Middle-class economics”, immigration, and [big government](#) policies were some of the issues discussed by Obama in his address, considered ambitious, [unimpressive](#) and even [disappointing](#).

2015 SOTU's Key Points

A recovering economy

“The shadow of crisis has passed,” Obama said, as he pointed out the upturn that the United States economy is going through, “with a growing economy, shrinking deficits, bustling industry, and booming energy production.”

Now the challenge will be, according to Obama, the inequality promoted by lobbyists who “have rigged the tax code with loopholes that let some corporations pay nothing while others pay full freight.”

Obama’s protagonist, the middle-class

President Barack Obama centered most of his SOTU speech in, what he calls, the “middle-class economics”.

He assured his budget will help middle-class families to afford childcare, education, health care, and housing. In addition, Obama said he will send a “bold new plan” to Congress that seeks to eliminate the cost of community college.

Moreover, he argued that middle-class economics “is about building the most competitive economy anywhere”, with better infrastructure, and technology. “21st century businesses will rely on American science, technology, research and development.”

“That’s what middle-class economics is – the idea that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone plays by the same set of rules,” Obama said.

Workers’ rights and progressive taxation

President Obama argued that Congress needs to pass laws that guarantee equal pay for men and women, higher minimum wage, strengthened unions, and “give American workers a voice.” He also invited people to “vote to give millions of the hardest-working people in America a raise.”

Additionally, he pointed out the US is the only “advanced country” that doesn’t guarantee paid sick leave or paid maternity leave to employees. “Send me a bill that gives every worker in America the opportunity to earn seven days of paid sick leave. It’s the right thing to do.”

When it comes to taxation, Obama pledged to reduce the taxes of working families, as he called for a tax reform with more taxes for the richest. According to the President, this money can help more families pay for childcare and education.

“Let’s close the loopholes that lead to inequality by allowing the top one percent to avoid paying taxes on their accumulated wealth.”

Foreign policy: ISIL, Cuba and Iran

“I believe in a smarter kind of American leadership,” president Obama said. “We lead best when we combine military power with strong diplomacy.”

He assured the US will continue to unilaterally fight terrorist groups. In this vein, he asked Congress for an authorization of the use of military force against ISIL.

Furthermore, president Obama highlighted the progress achieved in the negotiations with Iran to slow down their nuclear program, and the possibility to avoid adding another conflict to the Middle East.

Nonetheless, he said that the sanctions passed by the Congress could jeopardize this diplomacy. “That is why I will veto any new sanctions bill that threatens to undo this progress.”

Regarding Cuba, Obama asserted that the US is “ending a policy that was long past its expiration date.” He said this new Cuba policy is capable of ending a “a legacy of mistrust in our

hemisphere”, as he invited Congress to end the embargo and “extend the hand of friendship to the Cuban people”.

Immigration and cyber terrorism

In terms of immigration, president Obama assured it is possible to shape a law that upholds the US’ tradition as a nation of immigrants.

“I want future generations to know that we are a people who see our differences as a great gift, that we are a people who value the dignity and worth of every citizen,” he said.

Obama also urged Congress to pass the legislation regarding cyber terrorism, which the country needs to respond against the threat of cyber-attacks, since if they don’t act, “we’ll leave our nation and our economy vulnerable.”

Republicans respond

Joni Ernst, newly elected republican senator from Iowa, delivered the [official G.O.P response](#) to President Obama’s speech.

She first addressed the [Keystone](#) jobs bill, the project for the construction of a major oil pipeline through the country, which [Obama doesn’t agree](#) with.

“President Obama will soon have a decision to make. Will he sign the bill or block good American jobs?”, Ernst said.

After briefly talking about her 20 years of service in the armed forces, she said that they will debate strategies to confront “terrorism and the threats posed by Al Qaeda, ISIL and those radicalized by them.”

In addition, Ernst asserted that the Congress will work to cut wasteful spending and “balance the budget with meaningful reforms, not higher taxes like the president has proposed.”

“With a little cooperation from the president, we can get Washington working again,” she asserted.

Rep. Carlos Curbelo of Florida [delivered the Spanish-Language Republican Address](#) but, unlike Ernst, he emphasized in the need for immigration reform.

“We should work through the appropriate channels to create permanent solutions to our immigration system, modernize legal immigration, and strengthen our economy,” he said.

What the experts say

Scholars of the libertarian [Cato Institute](#), reacted to Obama’s address.

In a [video response](#) released on Wednesday, [Aaron Powell](#) asserts that the “factions that turn people against one another” —as Obama mentioned in his speech— are a natural result of the policies of a government that is “taking from people to give to other people.”

Regarding the “all-time high” graduation rate Obama bragged about, Neal McCluskey explains that despite more people is graduating, the labor market does not have working places available for all.

“Essentially when we say we should give away more college ... we are promising that they are going to get a whole lot of benefits with more education that we simply can’t deliver.”