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The Ten Biggest Lies From Trump's State of the Union Address

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President Trump's State of the Union address drew people in with vague, cliché calls to bipartisanship, but was ultimately overshadowed by the sheer number of statements seemingly designed to divide the nation. As he pushed a wedge further into the partisan crack, he utilized his favorite tool: straight-up fibbing. We've selected the ten largest lies to escape his mouth last night in order to set the record straight.

1. “ We have ended the war on American energy — and we have ended the war on beautiful, clean coal. We are now very proudly an exporter of energy to the world.”

According to the *New York Times*, although the U.S. has become a net exporter of natural gas, the country is still a net importer of energy sources, most notably oil. As for the continual touting of the misnomer “clean coal”, the EPA has rolled back regulations on the burning of coal, but nothing has been done to revive the dying coal industry.

Also, clean coal still isn't a real thing.

2. “ The third pillar ends the visa lottery — a program that randomly hands out green cards without any regard for skill, merit or the safety of our people.”

The visa lottery is far more regulated than the president lets on here. The program was installed to offer visas to people from countries with low U.S. immigration rates and has many requirements and evaluations for those wanting to utilize it. According to the *New York Times*, the State Department requires applicants to undergo a medical exam, possess a high school education or two years of work experience in the past five years, and they must submit to a lengthy background check and have no criminal record. Oddly enough, a lot of these gating procedures are very similar to the merit-based immigration system the president and GOP have publicly desired.

3. “Under the current broken system, a single immigrant can bring in virtually unlimited numbers of distant relatives.”

Much like the visa lottery, Trump's messaging around chain migration is misleading. Yes, immigrants possessing green cards or U.S. citizenship can file petitions to bring relatives to the U.S., but the process is nowhere near as automatic or exploitative as Trump claims. Beyond the background and national security checks required for any applicant, annual caps on family members that can be sponsored and the whole system is backlogged. According to *CNN*, there are five million immigrants currently in the backlog and processing queue. Depending on the

type of relative and origin nation's rate of application to the program, applications can take anywhere between six to 23 years to process their application.

4. “We enacted the biggest tax cuts and reform in American history.”

Trump's only substantial policy enacted during the first year of his administration is not the largest in American history. It's top-ten, but not top of the pops like Trump brags. *Politifact* reports that the 2017 tax cuts rank fourth in inflation-adjusted dollars since 1940 and seventh in terms of a percentage of the GDP, and the *New York Times* reports that Reagan implemented larger tax cuts and Trump's tax cuts rank twelfth in American history as a share of the economy.

5. “In the past, we have foolishly released hundreds and hundreds of dangerous terrorists, only to meet them again on the battlefield — including the ISIS leader, al-Baghdadi, who we captured, who we had, who we released.”

Trump's claim of “hundreds and hundreds” of detainees transferred from Guantanamo is another blatant exaggeration on his part. According to an October 2017 report from the Director of National Intelligence, of the 700-plus detainees transferred from Guantanamo since 2002, 122 were confirmed to have re-engaged in terrorist activity of some kind.

As for the U.S.'s role in the release of al-Baghdadi, Trump's comments are misleading. *Politifact* states that the leader of ISIS was held by the U.S. in December 2014, but he was not released to the public like Trump claims. He was turned over to Iraqi forces per a legal contract set up during the Bush administration and was eventually released by the Iraqis.

6. “Many car companies are now building and expanding plants in the United States — something we have not seen for decades.”

Car companies have been building and expanding manufacturing facilities for quite some time, and yes, some have done it under Trump's watch, but his claim that it hasn't been “seen for decades” is far from accurate. Toyota built a plant in Mississippi in 2011 and BMW announced plans to build a new factory in Georgia in January 2016.

Beyond facilities, automotive employment is down from one year ago, according to the *New York Times*, and Trump's further claims regarding the revitalization of the automotive industry as a whole are nothing more than an attempt to piggy-back on the efforts of the Obama administration's industry-saving policies that began in 2009.

7. “What the Border Patrol and ICE have done, we have sent thousands, and thousands, and thousands of MS-13, horrible people out of this country or into our prisons.”

The president is at least consistent in one area: vague statistical exaggeration. Trump's claim that thousands of MS-13 members have been arrested as immigration forces focus more heavily on the gang flies in the face of statistics. According to *CNN*, a total of 1,024 MS-13-related arrests were made by ICE and Customs and Border Protection during the fiscal year ending in September 2017, far less than multiple thousands. Trump derived that number from a statement by Attorney General Jeff Sessions regarding the U.S.'s cooperation with Central American allies to “arrest and charge some 4,000 MS-13 members.” That number is not wholly made up of arrests and convictions made in the U.S., even though the White House has fallen back on “4,000” at multiple points when promoting its anti-gang efforts.

8. “We eliminated an especially cruel tax that fell mostly on Americans making less than \$50,000 a year — forcing them to pay tremendous penalties simply because they couldn’t afford government-ordered health plans. We repealed the core of disastrous Obamacare — the individual mandate is now gone.”

The individual mandate and the penalty for those without health insurance that accompanies it are not going away until 2019. While the penalty was widely unpopular since the ACA’s inception, the Kaiser Family Foundation reported that a large amount of low-income Americans that paid the penalty could find health insurance for less than what they paid in penalties. In many other cases, exemptions from the penalties were available.

9. “For decades, open borders have allowed drugs and gangs to pour into our most vulnerable communities ... Most tragically, they have caused the loss of many innocent lives.”

Putting aside the gross generalization equating immigrants to criminals, incarceration statistics do not support the president’s claim. According to the Department of Justice, more than 13% of the U.S. population is foreign-born while only 5.6% of the American prison population is foreign-born. The Cato Institute reports that undocumented immigrants have an incarceration rate of .85% as compared to the 1.53% rate of native-born Americans.

A more specific example Trump cited was that of the two alleged terrorist attackers in New York City. He claimed that the two radicals utilized family connections or immigration policies to gain entry into the U.S., but *CNN* reported that both attackers were radicalized years after entering the country.

10. “We are proud that we do more than any other country to help the needy, the struggling, and the underprivileged all over the world.”

Statements like this really makes the public question whether the president reads those well-bound papers he signs before showing them off like perfect attendance certificates to photogs.

His first major policy was the travel ban enacted against seven predominantly Muslim nations that has since been blocked multiple times by federal courts.

The U.S. has also drastically reduced the admittance of refugees as the world faced the largest number of people seeking asylum. The U.S. admitted 29,022 refugees in between Trump’s inauguration and Dec. 31. According to the State Department, that’s the lowest amount since 2002. Trump’s 2018 refugee cap of 45,000 is also the lowest figure since the program began in 1980. Add in the protections his administration removed for 240,000 refugees from El Salvador, Haiti, Sudan and Nicaragua that will force them back to devastated and war-torn lands, along with Trump’s desire to pull aid from nations he doesn’t deem as “friendly”, it is extremely hard to view the White House’s worldview as having any substantial veil of compassion globally.