News



President Donald Trump delivers his State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress in the House chamber at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Feb. 24, 2026. (AP/Alex Brandon)



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Declaring his first year back in office as "the golden age of America," President Donald Trump on Feb. 24 praised his administration's record in a nearly two-hour-long State of the Union address marked by campaign-like promises and sharp partisan attacks on Democratic lawmakers in attendance.

Trump touted record-high stock market gains, foreign investments in the United States, tax cuts, reductions in inflation, tariff policy and the country's "tremendous" economic growth in making the case that the state of the union is "strong" because of his leadership.

"Our country is winning again. In fact, we're winning so much that we really don't know what to do about it," Trump said to loud applause from the Republican lawmakers and administration members in the House chamber.

On energy policy, Trump said American oil production was up "by more than 600,000 barrels a day" while adding that the United States would be receiving another 80 million barrels from its "new friend and partner, Venezuela."

"American natural gas production is at an all-time high," he said. "Because I kept my promise to drill, baby, drill."

Angered by Democratic lawmakers who did not stand to applaud his speech, Trump accused them of trying to destroy the United States.

"Look, nobody stands up. These people are crazy," he said.

Trump devoted a significant portion of his speech to his administration's hardline immigration policies, declaring that under his watch the United States has the "strongest and most secure border in American history by far."



Republican members of Congress stand while Democrats keep their seats during President Donald Trump's State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress in the House chamber at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, Feb. 24, 2026. (AP/Matt Rourke)

"In the past nine months, zero illegal aliens have been admitted to the United States," Trump claimed. "But we will always allow people to come in legally, people that will love our country and will work hard to maintain our country."

Trump did not address the widespread furor and controversy that federal immigration agents have caused with their aggressive enforcement tactics, especially in cities like Minneapolis, where agents this year shot and killed two American citizens protesting the administration's policies.

Several national polls released in February found that majorities of Americans believe that U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents have gone too far in their tactics. The polls also indicate that a minority of Americans think Trump is doing a satisfactory job on immigration.

However, an undeterred Trump doubled down on his anti-immigration rhetoric.

"The first duty of the American government is to protect American citizens, not illegal aliens," said Trump, who attacked former President Joseph Biden and Democrats for being in favor of open borders.

Trump also made contested claims that undocumented immigrants are responsible for crime and a host of social problems for American citizens.

Referencing fraud investigations in Minnesota involving members of that state's Somali community, Trump highlighted the case of "the Somali pirates who ransacked Minnesota" as a case study for why his administration's immigration policies are necessary.

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"Importing these cultures through unrestricted immigration and open borders brings us problems right here to the USA," Trump said. "And it is the American people who pay the price in higher medical bills, car insurance rates, rent, taxes, and perhaps most importantly crime."

Trump claimed that "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," as he called on states to pass laws making it illegal for undocumented immigrants to have commercial driver's licenses.

Accusing Democrats of being against efforts to deport "murderers" and "drug lords," Trump also demanded that Congress "end deadly sanctuary cities that protect the criminals" and that there be "serious penalties for public officials who block the removal of criminal aliens."

"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," said Trump, who highlighted the case of an undocumented immigrant who fatally stabbed a 16-year-old girl in 2023.

That case, Trump said, is why his administration is "deporting illegal alien criminals from our country at record numbers, and we're getting them the hell out of here

fast. We don't want them," he said.

In the hours leading up to the State of the Union, a group of 19 U.S. Catholic bishops released a statement calling for several reforms that they said need to be made to how immigration enforcement is conducted across the nation.

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In their statement, the bishops acknowledged the right of the government to enforce the law, but added that "those laws should be upheld in a manner that protects the God-given human dignity and rights of the human person."

Signed by several border bishops, the statement reaffirmed the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Special Message in November 2025 that opposed "the indiscriminate mass deportation of people," stating that mass deportations are "detrimental to the human rights of our fellow human beings and not in the best interest of the nation."

Despite tensions with the bishops, several of whom have raised religious liberty concerns because federal immigration agents are now able to arrest people in houses of worship, Trump spoke of "a tremendous renewal in religion, faith, Christianity and belief in God" that he correlated to his tenure in office.

"This is especially true among young people, and a big part of that had to do with my great friend Charlie Kirk," Trump said in referencing the conservative young adult activist who was shot and killed last September.

"We love religion," Trump added, "and we're bringing it back. And it's coming back at levels that nobody actually thought possible."

This story appears in the **Immigration and the Church** feature series. View the full series.