

Opposition Responses to the State of the Union Messages

The first official, televised opposition response to a president's annual message came in 1966, when Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen (R-IL) and House Minority Leader Gerald Ford (R-MI) offered a critique of President Lyndon Johnson's annual message. The practice continued sporadically over the next decade and varied in format. Since 1982, members of the opposition party, usually members of Congress, have provided responses to the annual message, usually in a televised format.

- 1966: Senator Everett Dirksen (R-IL) and Rep. Gerald Ford (R-MI) offered a reaction to President Lyndon Johnson's State of the Union Message, the first organized and televised response to the annual message.
- 1967: Everett Dirksen (R-IL) and Rep. Gerald Ford (R-MI) responded to Johnson's address in a televised news conference later that evening.
- 1968: Republican members of Congress participated in a televised rebuttal to President Johnson's State of the Union Message. The program included comments from eight Republican senators and nine Representatives.
- 1970: Democrats responded to President Richard Nixon's annual message with a 45-minute televised program that included comments from Senator William Proxmire (D-WI), Rep. Donald Fraser (D-MN), Senator Mike Mansfield (D-MT), Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson (D-WA), Senator Edmund Muskie (D-ME), Rep. Patsy Mink (D-HI), and Rep. John McCormack (D-MA).
- 1979: Republicans responded to President Jimmy Carter's speech in a 45-minute televised response.
- 1982: Democrats responded to President Ronald Reagan's speech with a prerecorded program, televised on major networks, offering a Democratic review of the speech.
- 1983: Democrats responded to President Reagan's speech in a 28-minute prerecorded program.
- 1984: Speaker Tip O'Neill (D-MA) issued a written statement following President Reagan's speech.
- 1985: In response to President Reagan's State of the Union address, the Democratic party provided a televised discussion of randomly selected Democratic voters.
- 1986: Senators George Mitchell (D-ME), Lt. Gov. Harriett Woods (D-MO), Gov. Charles Robb (D-VA), Rep. Thomas Daschle (D-SD), Rep. William Gray (D-PA) responded to President Reagan's speech.
- 1987: Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) and Speaker Jim Wright (D-TX) responded to President Reagan's speech.
- 1988: Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) and House Speaker Jim Wright (D-TX) responded to President Reagan's speech.
- 1989: House Speaker Jim Wright (D-TX) and Senator Lloyd Bentsen (D-TX) responded to President

George H.W. Bush's first annual message.¹

- 1990: House Speaker Tom Foley (D-WA) offered the Democratic response.
- 1991: Senator George Mitchell (D-ME) offered the Democratic response.
- 1992: House Speaker Tom Foley (D-WA) responded to President George H.W. Bush's last State of the Union address.
- 1993: Rep. Bob Michel (R-IL) offered the Republican response to President Bill Clinton's first annual message.²
- 1994: Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) responded to President Clinton's speech.
- 1995: Governor Christine Todd Whitman (R) responded to President Clinton's speech.
- 1996: Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) offered the Republican critique of President Clinton's speech.
- 1997: Rep. J.C. Watts (R-OK) offered the Republican response.
- 1998: Senator Trent Lott (R-MS) provided Republican commentary on President Clinton's speech.
- 1999: Reps. Jennifer Dunn (R-WA) and Steven Largent (R-OK) commented on President Clinton's speech.
- 2000: Senators Susan Collins (R-ME) and William Frist (R-TN) responded to President Clinton's final State of the Union address.
- 2001: Senator Tom Daschle (D-SD) and Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-MO) gave the televised Democratic response.³
- 2002: Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-MO) gave the Democratic response to President George W. Bush's first State of the Union message.
- 2003: Governor Gary Lock (D-WA) offered a televised response to President Bush's annual address.
- 2004: Senator Thomas Daschle (D-SD) and Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) offered a televised response immediately following President Bush's State of the Union message.
- 2005: Senator Harry Reid (D-NV) and Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) offered a televised

¹This address before a joint session of Congress is not considered an official "State of the Union" message.

²This address before a joint session of Congress is not considered an official "State of the Union" message.

³This address before a joint session of Congress is not considered an official "State of the Union" message.

response following the president's speech.

2006: Governor Tim Kaine (D-VA) gave the televised Democratic response to the president's speech.

2007: Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) gave the televised Democratic response to the president's speech.

2008: Governor Kathleen Sebelius (D-KS) gave the televised Democratic response on January 28, 2008.

2009: Governor Bobby Jindal (R-LA) gave the televised Republican response on February 24, 2009.⁴

2010: Governor (R-VA) gave the televised Republican response on January 27, 2010.

Senate Historical Office
January 2010

⁴This address before a joint session of Congress is not considered an official "State of the Union" message.