

# WALL STREET JOURNAL

## Obama Turns to a Little-Used Forum to Sell Health Overhaul

By: Jonathan Weisman

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President **Barack Obama**'s speech to a joint session of Congress on Wednesday is a rarity in post-World War II America, or all of American history, for that matter.

President **Harry Truman** was a master of the joint session speech, but since Harry stopped givin' 'em hell, there have been only 22 non-State of the Union joint addresses, and of those, 16 were either opening addresses of a presidency or on foreign policy matters, according to the office of the House historian.

**John Adams** was the first president to address Congress personally, in 1800, but when **Woodrow Wilson** addressed tariff concerns to a joint session in 1913, it had been over 100 years since a president had bothered to talk to Congress as a whole.

Truman gave non-State of the Union addresses to joint sessions nine times, on matters from the last push to end World War II to the 1952 steel industry dispute. After that, the art form went into eclipse. Domestic policy came up just six times: in 1965, when **Lyndon Johnson** spoke on voting rights; 1971, when **Richard Nixon** talked up his economic policy; 1974, when **Gerald Ford** gave an economic address; and 1977 with **Jimmy Carter** and the energy crisis.

**Ronald Reagan** addressed recession and inflation to a joint session in April 1981. And 16 years before Obama attempts to regain traction on health care, **Bill Clinton** went to Congress to press for his vision on a health care overhaul – a message that ultimately fell flat.

A list of joint session speeches, compiled by the Office of the House Historian,

follows...

**President Harry Truman (Democrat)** Sworn in on April 12, 1945 April 16, 1945: Prosecution of War October 23, 1945: Universal Military Training message May 25, 1946: Railroad Strike Message January 6, 1947: State of the Union Address March 12, 1947: Greek-Turkish Aid Policy November 17, 1947: Aid to Europe Message January 7, 1948: State of the Union Address March 17, 1948: National Security and Conditions in Europe April 19, 1948: 50th Anniversary Liberation of Cuba July 27, 1948: Inflation, Housing and Civil Rights January 5, 1949: State of the Union Address January 8, 1951: State of the Union Address January 9, 1952: State of the Union Address June 10, 1952: Steel Industry Dispute

**President Dwight Eisenhower (Republican)** Inaugurated on January 20, 1953 February 2, 1953: State of the Union Address January 7, 1954: State of the Union Address January 6, 1955: State of the Union Address January 5, 1957: Middle East Message January 10, 1957: State of the Union Address January 9, 1958: State of the Union Address January 9, 1959: State of the Union Address January 7, 1960: State of the Union Address

**President John F. Kennedy (Democrat)** Inaugurated First on January 20, 1961 January 30, 1961: State of the Union Address May 25, 1961: Urgent national needs, foreign aid, defense, & outer space January 11, 1962: State of the Union Address January 14, 1963: State of the Union Address

**President Lyndon Johnson (Democrat)** Sworn In November 22, 1963 November 27, 1963: Assumption of Office January 8, 1964: State of the Union Address January 4, 1965: State of the Union Address March 15, 1965: Voting Rights January 12, 1966: State of the Union Address January 10, 1967: State of the Union Address January 17, 1968: State of the Union Address January 14, 1969: State of the Union Address

**President Richard Nixon (Republican)** Inaugurated First on January 20, 1969 January 22, 1970: State of the Union Address January 22, 1971: State of the Union Address September 9, 1971: Economic Policy January 20, 1972:

State of the Union Address June 1, 1972: European Trip Report to Congress January 30, 1974: State of the Union Address

**President Gerald Ford (Republican)** Sworn In on August 9, 1974 August 12, 1974: Assumption of Office October 8, 1974: Economy January 15, 1975: State of the Union Address August 10, 1975: State of the World message January 19, 1976: State of the Union Address January 12, 1977: State of the Union Address

**President Jimmy Carter (Democrat)** Inaugurated First on January 20, 1977 April 20, 1977: Energy January 19, 1978: State of the Union Address January 23, 1979: State of the Union Address June 18, 1979: Salt II Agreements January 23, 1980: State of the Union Address

**President Ronald Reagan (Republican)** Inaugurated First on January 20, 1981 February 18, 1981: Economic Recovery April 28, 1981: Economic Recovery/Inflation January 26, 1982: State of the Union Address January 25, 1983: State of the Union Address April 27, 1983: Central America January 25, 1984: State of the Union Address February 6, 1985: State of the Union Address November 21, 1985: Geneva Summit February 4, 1986: State of the Union Address January 27, 1987: State of the Union Address January 25, 1988: State of the Union Address

**President George H.W. Bush (Republican)** Inaugurated First on January 20, 1989 February 9, 1989: Building a Better America January 31, 1990: State of the Union Address September 11, 1990: Invasion of Kuwait by Iraq January 29, 1991: State of the Union Address March 6, 1991: Conclusion of Persian Gulf War January 28, 1992: State of the Union Address

**President Bill Clinton (Democrat)** Inaugurated First on January 20, 1993 February 17, 1993: Economic Address September 22, 1993: Health Care Reform January 25, 1994: State of the Union Address January 24, 1995: State of the Union Address January 23, 1996: State of the Union Address February 4, 1997: State of the Union Address January 27, 1998: State of the Union Address January 19, 1999: State of the Union Address January 27, 2000: State

of the Union Address

**President George W. Bush (Republican)** Inaugurated First on January 20, 2001 February 27, 2001: Budget Message September 20, 2001: War on Terrorism January 29, 2002: State of the Union Address January 28, 2003: State of the Union Address January 20, 2004: State of the Union Address February 2, 2005: State of the Union Address January 31, 2006: State of the Union Address January 23, 2007: State of the Union Address January 28, 2008: State of the Union Address

**President Barack Obama (Democrat)** Inaugurated on January 20, 2009 February 24, 2009: First Address September 9, 2009: Health Care