

February 1, 2017

The usual crowd is gathering.

The muted roar of multiple conversations reverberates on the dark wood walls. One can almost feel the insincerity of many of the platitudes being exchanged. This hallowed hall that now reflects the modern feeling of distrust among the people is once again being filled for the event that reflects the ultimate of dishonesty across the nation. More than 350 million people represented by the people in this room, but less than 25% of those same citizens will pay attention to the event this evening.

The joint session hall of the United State Capitol Building sees these people gather nearly every year. The faces sometimes change, but the attitude of the people remains the same. Most will ignore the event because they have an extreme distrust of everyone in attendance. Just a short three months ago, the same quarter of the population that is viewing this evenings event went to cast a ballot for a majority of those who now represent them in these halls.

Now, the 535 legislators, the justices of the Supreme Court, the confirmed Secretaries of the Executive Departments, senior military leaders, and of course the multitude of staffers gather to hear the man speak. The man who was chosen by the people those three months ago who embodies their scant hope for a change to take them into the future.

Three times the gavel strikes the surface of the pedestal at the center of the hall. The Speaker of the House gets the attention of all gathered as he sees the throng

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gather near the central entryway to the hall. He knows this signifies the arrival of the speaker for the evening. As the noise dissipates, and all present take their seats there is a sense of anticipation in the air. One portion of those present are confident they will find all of his words to be harmonious to their own plans. After all, he ran on the same party ticket as them. The remainder are sure they will have a battle ahead, as they are members of the opposing party. A few are open to both sides for the reason that they belong to neither party, or party affiliation has nothing to do with their position.

“Mr. Speaker,” the voice of the House Sergeant at Arms brings the last of the conversation to an end, “the President of the United States!”

The throng of entourage makes its way into the hall, surrounding the man everyone came to hear speak. Secret Service, staff, aides, advisors, they all move into the hall with a sense of purpose. The crowds forming at the aisle quickly realize this is going to be a different event than what they are used to. Where historically, the speaker would take time to move to the podium as he greets the multitude on his way down the aisle, he chooses not to do so. Instead, he enters the chamber, and moves deliberately and hastily to the podium from which he will address this gathering.

His quick motion sedates the crowd. Where the applause and cheering would go on endlessly, the multitude assembled quiets quickly. It takes no time for the speaker to reach the podium. However, he doesn't need to raise his hands and thank them multiple times to get the silence he requires. He very quickly gets silence as they take their seats. There is now uneasiness in the chamber. No one can anticipate the

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words that are to follow. Literally no one. The office of the President did not release any notes to the press prior to this address.

“Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice-President, Justices of the Supreme Court, legislators, Department Secretaries, thank you.” He begins somberly. He knows he has made them uneasy. Over the past several decades, Presidents have taken the time to enjoy the adulation of the crowd. This man takes no such time. He strives to demonstrate the necessary pleasantries, but get to the point.

“While traditionally, a president will wait for the passing of a year in office prior to giving a State of the Union address, and any such assemblies are not so recognized. I am here, however, to give you just that, the state of our Union as I see it. Not just as I see it, but as a majority of Americans see it. And I am here to tell you, while things have improved in some areas, the overall situation is bleak.

“First and foremost, the one thing a majority of Americans are concerned with is our national debt. Ladies and gentlemen, we, as a nation, are almost 20 trillion dollars in debt. Since the turn of the century, there have been many words about controlling spending. There have been attempts at cutting spending. The sequestration of 2013 was a catastrophic event that brought a lot of pain to portions of our government as we saw spending arbitrarily cut. What no one in this assembly was willing to tell to the American people, however, is that it was not a genuine cut in spending. All that the sequestration did was slow the growth of spending. The affected departments still increased their spending from 2012 levels. It increased again in 2014. Over a four year period, the affected departments still managed to add over 500 billion dollars to our deficit.”

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He pauses a moment. Normally, a break such as this would generate a standing ovation, at least from within his own party. This is not normal circumstances. There continues a somber silence in this great hall.

He suppresses his urge to grin as he continues, “The good news is we can reverse this trend. I am willing to wager that by the end of my first term as President of these United States of America, we can balance the budget of the federal government. We can do this while maintaining the required services that we provide and introduce new programs that will be beneficial to the betterment of this nation, and the world.

“The path will not be easy. We will meet resistance. Much of that resistance will come from people within this room. I will not, however, waver from my resolve in putting this nation back on its course to being THE world leader.

“The first step will be in the next bill to come across my desk. The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress and the previous administration have already passed, and began implementation of the Fiscal Year 2017 Budget. I am not going to make any attempt to change that budget. Any bill that comes to me for signature that includes any clause for additional spending, whether by design or amendment, will be vetoed. This will not be popular. Many legislators like to plug spending for pet projects into bills that are so popular and important. It may be breakthrough legislation that many Americans have been calling for. I will not let it be perverted by wasting any more taxpayer dollars.”

Another pause. More silence.

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“I have already passed on to the House of Representatives my proposal for the FY 18 budget. For anyone who has not yet reviewed this document, I will tell you that it remains relatively unchanged from the FY17 budget. Some monies have been shifted from one area to another; some areas have been cut completely.

“I am not going to be hypocritical on this topic. I cannot, in good conscience, ask anyone to make sacrifices when I am unwilling to do the same. I have refused to continue the appointment of ‘czars’ within the White House that merely repeat areas that already exist in the government. I am also in the process of reviewing the entirety of the White House staff and will eliminate positions that are frivolous, repetitive, or serve no purpose.”

There is a scant amount of applause. There are some things in this speech that people can get behind. There are some in attendance that just realized they may have a job that is on the chopping block.

The applause does not last long.

“I am also here to give guidance to all Executive Departments, in front of Congress, and all of the American people. My guidance is: no additional funding for any new programs will be considered until the Secretary can produce a cut in operating costs by one third.”

A collective gasp is all that can be heard throughout the chamber.

“I also ask for this same measure to be adopted by the other two branches of our government. I call on our Judicial System, and our Legislature to cut their operating budgets by one third.”

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Another pause. Nothing to break the silence.

“In an effort to encourage these cuts in costs, I call on this 115<sup>th</sup> Congress to initiate a salary freeze. I do know that some that are employed by the federal government are still struggling, most notable of which are the more junior members of our uniformed services. For this reason, I am not calling for an across the board freeze. I am proposing that all salaries drawn from the United States Treasury in excess of \$100,000 annually be frozen until our budget is balanced. I will do my part in achieving this goal by veto on any bill that attempts any increase beyond the \$100,000 mark.”

Every member of the audience looks to the speaker in disbelief.

“As you all are aware, I come from a middle class family. We struggled through the recession of the early 1980s. This experience while growing up did teach me that a budget isn’t balanced through spending cuts alone. Revenues must also increase.”

Some members present applaud ecstatically. There is a caucus that believes strongly in revenue increases. As long as it doesn’t affect their paycheck.

“Presidents Kennedy and Reagan,” he continues, “were able to gain an increase in revenue through cuts in taxes. I am not opposed to this idea. However, I am not prepared to propose decreasing taxes at this time.”

More applause from the increase revenue crowd. While they may not get the increase they desire, they are not getting cuts.

“What I am going do is go through the entire IRS code. This portion of law is an immense and imposing beast that makes most every American tremble in fear.

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“The laws of the United State should never make our law abiding citizens fearful. The IRS code is in desperate need of revision. Drastic revision. I will go through the code and find all of the loopholes and provisions that favor some but not all Americans. These revenue stealing provisions will be eliminated from our tax law.”

This brings the loudest applause of the speech. It still isn't the loud and thunderous ovation that previous Presidents have enjoyed, but it is still acknowledging a proposal that most present can back. At least in this venue.

“Let me be perfectly clear on this matter. I am not suggesting an increase or a decrease in our current tax rates. I am saying that we eliminate the portions of the law that allow some Americans to reduce their tax liability that is not available to all Americans.”

More applause. You almost get the feeling the members are beginning to relax. That they are seeing that this will not be a complete disaster for them.

“Almost everyone in this chamber has campaigned on the idea of fairness in our tax code. I pledge to everyone in this nation that I will do all I can to bring fairness to our law. Every American that enjoys the benefits of our Constitution will contribute to the administering of the government.”

Everyone present is on their feet for this point. Some members of the audience look sideways at others. Members of opposing parties are actually agreeing. This idea brings distrust to the surface.

“Going back to my previous point, though, is where we do need to focus most of our attention. Wasteful spending is a major threat to our fiscal well-being. One part of our promise to the American people is severely threatened by our uncontrolled

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spending. President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law in 1935. Since that time, the law has been revised numerous times, but its core has not changed. It is a guarantee to the American people that they will have resources available to them when they are no longer able to continue in the workforce.

“Many Americans that are retired and receiving their monthly Social Security Check. The benefits they receive is not enough to cover any of the highest expenses such as housing. This is unacceptable. It gets even worse when you consider some of the other truths about Social Security that many do not acknowledge.”

That one sentence was delivered in an almost dark tone. The change in tone is not lost on the audience. No one dares to make a sound. They all brace themselves for the bad news that is to be delivered.

“Social Security allows for any American, at the age of 65 to collect full benefits regardless of current income and assets, and regardless of how much was paid into the fund. That means that anyone can earn \$200,000 or more in a year, through employment, investment income, or interest earned, yet still collect \$30,000 from Social Security. This means that there is less available to those who are unable to continue working.”

The room is silent, despite the pause. A few looks of guilt fall across faces of some assembled.

“Many of you assemble in this room are in that category. You are drawing generous salaries for service in these hallowed halls, as well as additional investment income. Yet you still collect from the Social Security Administration merely because of your age. You are stealing from Americans that struggle to survive in their later years

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even after spending four or five decades living paycheck to paycheck in a blue-collar career.”

You can almost hear the collective gasp of disbelief. Not just from within the room, but from across the country.

“This is just one example of the pervasive waste across our government. It is far from the only instance. All across our ranks there are massive examples of fraud and waste performed that eats away taxpayer dollars. I intend to find and eliminate these wasteful expenditures.

“In the months ahead, I will be making proposals to our legislators to reorganize our Executive Branch. There are many repetitions within our government. In my opinion, as well as that of many Americans I was blessed to meet while travelling across this country during my campaign, repetition equals waste. This waste has led to the severe distrust that the American people have for everyone within this chamber. We cannot allow this distrust to continue. We cannot allow this waste to continue. Elimination of wasteful spending is the first step we can take in resurrecting the trust of the people who have chosen us to lead them.

“And lead we will. Not just this nation but the world.”

There is a pattering of applause, but it comes hesitantly. Many present started applauding when they realized the last comment was vote of confidence in the nation as a whole. To be seen not agreeing with that sentiment could cost them at the polls during the next election. Most members of the audience refuse to allow anything to happen that could jeopardize their career.

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“An area that the world is thirsting for our leadership in is energy production. For the past decade, energy production has been a major item of contention. Though we are not the largest population on Earth, we do consume the most energy per capita of anyone in the world. We use energy that makes us reliant on foreign entities that we are not sure we can trust. Energy production has created a hazard to our lives in the form of pollution and other environment hazards. I propose that we examine ways to increase our production of renewable energy and more environmentally friendly energy alternatives. I firmly believe that it is possible that we can eliminate our reliance on fossil fuels by the time we reach the halfway point of this century.”

This does produce a bit of applause, at least more than any other point the President has made in the course of this address. Everyone does seem a bit apprehensive. It is as though they expect the other shoe to drop and that will mean bad news for them.

“Our resources are limited. If we do not make an attempt to reduce our consumption, or increase our supply, we will consume ourselves to extinction. In light of this fact, I am sending out this blanket to any American that wishes to respond. I am creating a fund, utilizing savings from White House operational cuts, to offer an incentive to anyone who can make a viable proposal to enact any of our initiatives of responsible energy production and environmental care. We have many intelligent Americans that deserve to be heard, and not just employed by the federal government.

“The difference in this initiative as opposed to past programs is that this is a reward based program, not an investment program that can result in poor speculation and a loss of taxpayer monies. No money will leave the federal treasury until a product

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is demonstrated as workable and economical. Not just economical to the government. Not just economical for businesses and corporations. Economical for all Americans.”

The audience falls silent again. No one is sure how to respond to this idea.

“Before anyone asks, no I am not ignoring foreign policy. I have very specific guidance that I will be giving to the Secretaries of State and Defense in the coming weeks in regards to our international relations, and these will be announced for the American people to know as we implement these reforms. In this address, however, I am trying to impart onto the hearts and minds of everyone in this chamber that we need to concern ourselves more with domestic policy.

“We have all taken an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. We owe our jobs to the American people. Our Declaration of Independence states that the government derives its power by the consent of the governed. We must change the course we are taking as a government or we will lose this consent. I call for everyone in this chamber, elected or appointed, to remember who we work for. The American people. We are answerable to the citizens of this republic. I challenge each and every one of you to remember that fact in every action you take.

“I thank you all for your attention. I look forward to working with you all to ensure that we will always be the greatest nation on Earth. May God bless you, and the United States of America.”

He moves away from the podium, and proceeds out of the chamber the same route he took to enter. There is no applause. Just a continuous murmur as all in

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attendance discuss with each other what they just heard. Everyone is in disbelief of what they believe is the end of the status quo.

Some came into this chamber certain they were not going to like a single word they were to hear. Unfortunately, they were incorrect. There were portions they could agree with. Less fortunate, they agreeable words were quickly followed by additional words that seemed to spell their doom.

Others entered for this address certain they could stand behind every word uttered. They were sorely disappointed. There heard what could only be described as the death knell of their livelihood as they have known it to be.

One way or another, they, and every American that listened to this speech, know that they have just witnessed history.