

Opposition Responses to the State of the Union Message

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 On January 17, Senate Minority Leader [Everett Dirksen](#) (R-IL) and House Minority Leader [Gerald Ford](#) (R-MI) responded to President Lyndon Johnson's State of the Union address (which had taken place on January 12) in the Old Senate Chamber. Their speeches were recorded and broadcast later that evening by several networks, becoming the first organized and televised response to the annual message.
- 1967 On January 10, following President Johnson's State of the Union address, Senate Minority Leader [Everett Dirksen](#) (R-IL) and House Minority Leader [Gerald Ford](#) (R-MI) responded in a televised news conference.
- 1968: On January 23, from the auditorium of the New Senate Office Building (Dirksen Building), Republican members of Congress participated in a televised rebuttal to President Johnson's State of the Union address (which had taken place on January 17). The program included comments from eight Republican senators and nine representatives.
- 1969: No response. President Johnson delivered his State of the Union message on January 14. Richard Nixon was inaugurated on January 20, 1969.
- 1970: On February 8, Democratic members of Congress responded to President Richard Nixon's annual message (which had taken place on January 22) with a 45-minute televised program that included comments from Senators [William Proxmire](#) (D-WI), [Mike Mansfield](#) (D-MT), [Henry "Scoop" Jackson](#) (D-WA), [Edmund Muskie](#) (D-ME), [Albert Gore](#) (D-TN), [Ralph Yarborough](#) (D-TX), and [Philip Hart](#) (D-MI), and Representatives [Donald Fraser](#) (D-MN), [Patsy Mink](#) (D-HI), [Carl Albert](#) (D-OK), and [John McCormack](#) (D-MA), and informal discussions by senators and representatives with voters in various sections of the country.
- 1971: On January 26, [Senator Mike Mansfield](#) (D-MT) responded to President Nixon's annual message (which had taken place on January 22) in an interview-style format, with four network correspondents asking questions.
- 1972: On January 21, Democratic members of Congress responded to President Nixon's message (which had taken place on January 20) with a 53-minute television program that included phone calls from the public with unrehearsed questions for the panel of senators and representatives, which included: [Senators William Proxmire](#) (D-WI), [Frank Church](#)

(D-ID), [Thomas Eagleton](#) (D-MO), and [Lloyd Bentsen](#) (D-TX), and Representatives [Leonor Sullivan](#) (D-MO), [John Melcher](#) (D-MT), [John Brademas](#) (D-IN), [Martha Griffiths](#) (D-MI), [Ralph Metcalfe](#) (D-IL), [Carl Albert](#) (D-OK), and [Hale Boggs](#) (D-LA).

1973: No State of the Union address

1974: On February 1, [Senator Mike Mansfield](#) (D-MT) responded to President Nixon's annual message (which took place on January 30) from his desk in his office.

1975: [Senator Hubert Humphrey](#) (D-MN) and Representative [Carl Albert](#) (D-OK) responded to President Gerald R. Ford's State of the Union message (which took place on January 15) in two, separate, televised speeches. Albert's speech aired on Mon., January 20, and Tuesday, January 21; and Humphrey's speech aired Wednesday, January 22.

1976: On January 21, [Senator Edmund Muskie](#) (D-ME) responded to President Ford's annual message (which took place on January 19) in a televised speech recorded in Sen. Mansfield's office.

1977: No organized response to President Ford's annual message.

1978: On January 26, Senate Minority Leader [Howard Baker Jr.](#) (R-TN) and House Minority Leader [John Rhodes](#) (R-AZ) responded to President Jimmy Carter's State of the Union message (which took place on January 19) in a televised 30-minute question-and-answer program.

1979: On January 24, Senate Minority Leader [Howard Baker, Jr.](#) (R-TN) and House Minority Leader [John Rhodes](#) (R-AZ) responded to President Jimmy Carter's State of the Union message (which took place on January 23) in a televised news conference from Rep. Rhodes' office. Later that evening, Baker and Rhodes, together with Senator [Robert Dole](#) (R-KS) and Representative [Barber B. Conable Jr.](#) (R-NY) were interviewed for half an hour on NBC television.

1980: On January 28, Acting Senate Minority Leader [Ted Stevens](#) (R-AK) and House Minority Leader [John Rhodes](#) (R-AZ) responded to President Carter's annual message (which took place on January 23) in a prerecorded, 30-minute program that aired on ABC at 10:30 p.m. Eastern time.

1981: No State of the Union Address

1982: On January 26, Democrats responded to President Ronald Reagan's State of the Union message with a 28-minute prerecorded, documentary-style program, televised on major networks following President Reagan's address, offering a Democratic review of the speech and man-on-the-street interviews. Participants included California governor Jerry Brown, Senators [Donald Riegle](#) (D-MI), [James Sasser](#) (D-TN), [Robert Byrd](#) (D-WV), [Edward Kennedy](#) (D-MA), [Gary Hart](#) (D-CO), [Paul Sarbanes](#) (D-MD), [J. Bennett](#)

Johnston (D-LA), and Alan Cranston (D-CA); House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill (D-MA), and Representative Albert Gore Jr. (D-TN).

- 1983: On January 25, Democrats responded to President Ronald Reagan's State of the Union message with a 28-minute prerecorded program that aired on all major networks after the president's speech. Participants included Senators Robert Byrd (D-WV), Paul Tsongas (D-MA), Bill Bradley (D-NJ), and Joe Biden (D-DE); Representatives Tom Daschle (D-SD), Barbara Kennelly (D-CT), George Miller (D-CA), Les AuCoin (D-OR), Paul Simon (D-IL), Timothy Wirth (D-CO), and W. G. "Bill" Hefner (D-NC); and House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill (D-MA).
- 1984: On January 25, Democrats responded to President Reagan's annual message with a televised response, partly taped and partly live, that aired after the president's speech. Participants included: former vice president Walter Mondale, Senators Joe Biden (D-DE), David Boren (D-OK), Carl M. Levin (D-MI), Max S. Baucus (D-MT), Robert Byrd (D-WV), Clairborne Pell (D-RI), and Walter Huddleston (D-KY), Representatives Dante B. Fascell (D-FL), Tom Harkin (D-IA), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), and William Gray (D-PA), and House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill (D-MA).
- 1985: On February 6, Democrats responded to President Reagan's State of the Union address with a prerecorded program featuring discussions of randomly selected Democratic voters in four sites around the country, interspersed by remarks from party leaders. The moderator was Governor Bill Clinton (D-AR). Other speakers included Governor Bob Graham (D-FL), House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill (D-MA), and Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV). NBC and CBS aired the program following President Reagan's speech. ABC aired the program two days later.
- 1986: On February 4, Senator George Mitchell (D-ME), Lt. Gov. Harriett Woods (D-MO), Gov. Charles Robb (D-VA), Rep. Tom Daschle (D-SD), and Rep. William Gray (D-PA) responded to President Reagan's State of the Union message in a program that was aired by all the major networks following the address. (The address was originally supposed to have taken place on January 28 but was delayed due to the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster.)
- 1987: On January 27, Senate Majority Leader Robert C. Byrd (D-WV) and House Speaker Jim Wright (D-TX) responded to President Reagan's State of the Union address in separate speeches that were broadcast live immediately following the speech..
- 1988: On January 25, Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd (D-WV) and Speaker Jim Wright (D-TX) responded to responded to President Reagan's State of the Union address in a live broadcast aired immediately following the speech.
- 1989: On February 9, House Speaker Jim Wright (D-TX) and Senator Lloyd Bentsen (D-TX) responded to President George H. W. Bush's first annual message.*

- 1990: On January 31, Speaker of the House [Tom Foley](#) (D-WA) offered the Democratic response to President George H. W. Bush's State of the Union address.
- 1991: On January 29, [Senator George Mitchell](#) (D-ME) offered the Democratic response to President George H. W. Bush's State of the Union address.
- 1992: On January 28, Speaker of the House [Tom Foley](#) (D-WA) responded to President George H. W. Bush's last State of the Union address.
- 1993: On February 17, House Minority Leader [Bob Michel](#) (R-IL) offered the Republican response to President Bill Clinton's first annual message.*
- 1994: On January 25, [Senator Robert Dole](#) (R-KS) responded to President Bill Clinton's State of the Union address.
- 1995: On January 24, Governor Christine Todd Whitman (R-NJ) responded to President Bill Clinton's State of the Union address.
- 1996: On January 30, [Senator Robert Dole](#) (R-KS) offered the Republican response to President Bill Clinton's State of the Union address.
- 1997: On February 4, Representative [J. C. Watts](#) (R-OK) offered the Republican response to President Bill Clinton's State of the Union address.
- 1998: On January 27, Senate Minority Leader [Trent Lott](#) (R-MS) offered the Republican response to President Bill Clinton's State of the Union address.
- 1999: On January 19, Representatives [Jennifer Dunn](#) (R-WA) and [Steven Largent](#) (R-OK) offered the Republican response to President Bill Clinton's State of the Union address.
- 2000: On January 27, Senators [Susan Collins](#) (R-ME) and [William Frist](#) (R-TN) responded to President Bill Clinton's final State of the Union address.
- 2001: On February 27, Senate Minority Leader [Thomas Daschle](#) (D-SD) and House Minority Leader [Richard Gephardt](#) (D-MO) gave the Democratic response to President George W. Bush's speech.*
- 2002: On February 27, Senate Minority Leader [Thomas Daschle](#) (D-SD) and House Minority Leader [Richard Gephardt](#) (D-MO) gave the Democratic response to President George W. Bush's speech.*
- 2003: On January 28, Governor Gary Lock (D-WA) gave the Democratic response to President Bush's State of the Union address.
- 2004: On January 20, Senate Minority Leader [Thomas Daschle](#) (D-SD) and House Minority Leader [Nancy Pelosi](#) (D-CA) gave the Democratic response to President Bush's State of the Union message.
- 2005: On February 2, Senate Minority Leader [Harry Reid](#) (D-NV) and House Minority Leader [Nancy](#)

Pelosi (D-CA) gave the Democratic response to President Bush's State of the Union message.

- 2006: On January 31, Governor Tim Kaine (D-VA) gave the Democratic response to President Bush's State of the Union message.
- 2007: On January 23, Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) gave the Democratic response to President Bush's State of the Union message.
- 2008: On January 28, Governor Kathleen Sebelius (D-KS) gave the Democratic response to President Bush's final State of the Union address.
- 2009: On February 24, Governor Bobby Jindal (R-LA) gave the televised Republican response to President Barack Obama's address.*
- 2010: On January 27, Governor Bob McDonnell (R-VA) gave the televised Republican response to President Obama's first State of the Union address.
- 2011: On January 25, Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI) gave the televised Republican response to President Obama's State of the Union address.
- 2012: On January 24, Governor Mitch Daniels (R-IN) gave the televised Republican response to President Obama's State of the Union address..
- 2013: On February 12, Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL) gave the televised Republican response to President Obama's State of the Union address.
- 2014: On January 28, Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) gave the televised Republican response to President Obama's State of the Union address.
- 2015: On January 20, Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA) gave the televised Republican response to President Obama's State of the Union address.

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