

## State of the Union Primer: Behind Trump's Boasts

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When President Donald Trump gives his State of the Union address on Tuesday night, expect him to boast about what his administration has done over the past year. You'll likely hear him talk a lot about regulations, trade and the tax overhaul.

He shouldn't boast; he should be ashamed.

His administration has invited the corporate foxes to run the henhouse and has begun gutting the regulatory system. He aggressively pushed Congress to give corporations a mammoth tax break, ultimately at the expense of regular Americans.

None of this agenda squares with the populist agenda Trump campaigned on.

Below, we outline how Trump's corporate agenda hurts Americans. We also offer links to resources and Twitter handles of experts who will be live tweeting responses to Trump's speech.

Find all of Public Citizen's Trump-related work at [www.citizen.org/trump](http://www.citizen.org/trump).

### MAIN THEME NO. 1: TRUMP'S REGULATORY ATTACK

Trump's [self-serving](#) deregulatory agenda is [setting the stage](#) for large-scale disasters that could devastate communities and disrupt the lives of millions of Americans. The agenda is premised on a series of lies, misstatements and inaccuracies that Trump likely will repeat in his State of the Union address:

- Trump's deregulatory measures have not supercharged our economy.
- The benefits of regulation to the public vastly outweigh the hyped-up costs to industry.
- The regulatory protections Trump has rolled back, delayed and abandoned not only save lives, prevent injuries, stop consumer rip-offs and protect our planet, they ultimately make our economy stronger.
- We don't have to choose between regulations and jobs.
- Complaints about "red tape" and the number of rules or pages of regulation are highly misleading.

#### Experts:

Robert Weissman, president, Public Citizen

Lisa Gilbert, vice president of legislative affairs, Public Citizen  
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Amit Narang, regulatory policy advocate, Public Citizen's Congress Watch division

## **MAIN THEME NO. 2: TRADE**

[See Public Citizen's take on Trump's trade agenda.](#)

## **MAIN THEME NO. 3: TAX OVERHAUL**

- The tax overhaul fashioned by Trump and Republicans in Congress will worsen inequality and reward corporations that have avoided taxes by parking profits overseas.
- In addition, the revenue lost from the tax giveaways will lead to Republican demands – which already have started – to reduce deficits. These demands will translate into proposals to cut Social Security, Medicare and other vital government programs and investments.
- Despite promises to “drain the swamp,” the Trump/GOP tax bill was a boon for lobbyists. [More than half](#) of the federal lobbyists active in 2017 worked on tax issues.
- Trump's self-dealing during the tax debate was egregious. For instance, Trump called to eliminate the [estate tax](#) and pushed to lower the tax rate for certain kinds of businesses, such as partnerships and LLCs, when the majority of his nearly 500 businesses [are organized](#) in a way that would allow them to make use of this special tax treatment. This put the interests of Trump, his heirs and other billionaire families ahead of the needs of everyday people.

### Experts:

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Susan Harley, deputy director, Public Citizen's Congress Watch division

## **ALSO LISTEN FOR ...**

### Access to Affordable Medicines

- Trump promised to overhaul the medication market, speeding up approvals while bringing down prices.
- Instead, he empowered pharmaceutical corporation lobbyists in a working group that [produced a draft executive order](#) shifting the blame of unaffordable medications from the manufacturers to public programs, hospitals and even impoverished countries. The order would jeopardize medicine safety and efficacy review while doing little to make therapies more accessible in the U.S., and even potentially increasing pharmaceutical companies' monopoly power in the U.S. and overseas.
- Trump should get tough on pharma and allow competition from generics companies, which would lower costs for patients. Additionally, allowing Medicare officials to

participate in negotiations between manufacturers and the insurance companies would reduce medication costs.

Experts:

Peter Maybarduk, director, Public Citizen's Access to Medicines program

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Robert Weissman, president, Public Citizen

Steven Knievel, Access to Medicines advocate

Energy and Climate Change

- Trump's dirty energy agenda is one of the biggest stories of his first year, as his administration has demonstrated some of its greatest focus, determination and competence when working to destroy the U.S. by accelerating, rather than stopping, climate change.
- The list of Trump's pro-fossil fuel, anti-climate efforts is long, including pulling back from the Paris agreement, working to increase coal subsidies and drill more oil, scrapping major protections like the Clean Power Plan and fuel economy rules, and going to war with basic science.
- Trump has touted jobs in the dying coal mining industry. But if he cared about boosting jobs and the economy, he would invest in renewable energy and fight climate change: There are more than 2.5 clean energy and efficiency jobs in the U.S. for every fossil-fuel job. Solar jobs are growing 17 times faster than the U.S. economy. The single fastest growing occupation in the U.S. is wind turbine service technician.
- Climate-related disasters cost the U.S. more than \$300 billion in 2017. That's equivalent to 25 percent of annual federal discretionary spending. It's nearly as much as the U.S. spent on World War I. And it's enough to give each of the country's remaining 50,000 coal miners \$6 million [to retire on](#).
- If Trump were serious about rebuilding American infrastructure, he would invest in transforming our electricity and transportation sectors to run on 100 percent renewable power. Such [a program](#) would save millions of lives and trillions of dollars.
- Renewable energy is not just clean; it's rapidly becoming cheaper than fossil fuels. That's why Energy Secretary Rick Perry recently proposed that federal regulators make American families bail out failing coal-fired power plants based on Trumped up concerns, so to speak, about the "resilience" of the energy grid. In what might be a first of this fact-free presidency, Perry's proposal died when it ran into the buzz saw of reality: renewable power clearly [poses no threat](#) to grid stability.

Experts:

Tyson Slocum, director, Public Citizen's Energy Program

Twitter: @TysonSlocum

David Arkush, managing director, Public Citizen's Climate Program

Twitter: @David\_Arkush

Robert Weissman, president, Public Citizen

### Johnson Amendment and IRS Rules

- Trump has threatened to “totally destroy” the Johnson Amendment, a decades-old provision ensuring that charities and religious organizations remain nonpartisan.
- Without this rule, nonpartisan charities and churches would be open to manipulation for political ends – potentially turning churches and charities into super PACs.
- Repealing the Johnson Amendment would exacerbate the problem of undisclosed money in politics. Instead, changes should be made to the tax code to include clear definitions and safe harbors for nonprofit political activity.

#### Experts:

Emily Peterson-Cassin, project coordinator, Public Citizen’s Bright Lines Project

Lisa Gilbert, vice president of legislative affairs, Public Citizen

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## **WHAT HE WON’T TALK ABOUT ... BUT WE CAN**

### Corporate Policies and Conflicts of Interest

- Although Trump campaigned as a populist, he has governed as a corporatist, stocking his Cabinet and administration with billionaires and CEOs.
- In [more than 100 ways](#), Trump has sided with plutocrats. This includes dozens of deregulatory moves and giveaways the Trump administration has enacted on behalf of the superrich – from protecting hedge fund owners to rolling back consumer and worker safety protections, from going soft on corporate crime to coddling Big Oil and Wall Street.
- Forty-four allies of the Koch brothers [are staffing](#) the White House and other agencies.
- The Trump administration has withdrawn [critical safeguards](#) that were on industry hit lists but would have protected the public. They would have reduced workplace accidents, prevented fires and explosions, and protected the rights of same-gender couples.
- With his [worldwide business operation](#), Trump has an unprecedented conflict of interest.

#### Experts:

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Craig Holman, government affairs lobbyist, Public Citizen’s Congress Watch division

### The Russia Investigation

Trump reportedly has been itching to fire Special Counsel Robert Mueller, who is investigating possible ties between Trump's campaign and the Russian government. Public Citizen, along with MoveOn.org and other groups, has organized activists nationwide to protest if that were to occur. More than 180,000 Americans have signed up to participate in more than 700 protests in all 50 states if Trump attempts to fire Mueller or block his investigation.

In addition, nearly 80 national and state pro-democracy, civil rights, ethics, labor and advocacy groups have [called on](#) congressional leaders to support Mueller's investigation into Russia and ensure that Mueller be allowed to conclude his work unimpeded.

Expert:

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