Addressing the State of the Union: The Evolution And Impact of the President’s Big Speech

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Description
The State of the Union is no ordinary speech on at least two accounts: it is a fundamental statement of how a president approaches current policy debates, and it is the one presidential address that US citizens are most likely to hear each year. Donna Hoffman and Alison Howard document the political significance and legislative impact, or often, lack of impact, of this most visible of presidential communications. Exploring how and why the State of the Union address came to be a key tool in the exercise of presidential power, the authors outline the ways presidents use it to gain attention, to communicate with target audiences, and to make specific policy proposals. Their richly textured analysis offers a penetrating look at the complex relationship between contemporary presidential leadership and Congressional lawmaking.

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The State of the Union (SOTU) address is a communication between the Pres. and Congress in which the chief executive reports on the current conditions of the U.S. and provides policy proposals for the upcoming legislative year. The president and his speechwriter write the State of the Union address.

The last time this may have been true was during the Kennedy administration, when Ted Sorensen would have conferred with the president before writing the speech longhand on a yellow legal pad. Usually, though, the process involves legions of people. When I was a speechwriter in the Ford White House, the writer assigned to the speech briefly met with the president, drafted the initial language and worked with a team of researchers to insert the necessary facts. The speech was then "staffed" to appropriate Cabinet office Versions of the State of the Union have existed since the Middle Ages, and, antiquated door-slamming notwithstanding, most have been surprisingly good at evolving with the times. The oldest agenda-setting speech still going belongs to the United Kingdom, where the annual opening of Parliament is marked by a ceremonial address outlining plans for the coming year. Like many British things, the tradition has a number of names, ranging from colloquial ("The Queen's Speech") to more deferential ("Her Majesty's Most Gracious Speech"). Some historians think the general gist of this tradition dates ba