

## **Long's Short Report – The history of the State of the Union address**

By: U.S. Rep. Long

On January 8, 1790, President Washington gave the first State of the Union address to Congress at Federal Hall in New York City. At a little over 1,000 words, President Washington's State of the Union address was the shortest ever given. Although brief, his remarks left a lasting impact and shaped the way future presidents would give their yearly addresses, usually around January.

Mandated by Article II, Section 3, Clause 1 of the Constitution, the State of the Union has been around for centuries. However, it wasn't always called the State of the Union address. From 1790 to 1946 it was known as the Annual Message and from 1942 to 1946 it was informally called the State of the Union. It wasn't until 1947 until it was officially called the State of the Union address.

Since 1790, there have been a total of 95 in-person State of the Union addresses. After both President Washington and President Adams delivered their speeches directly to Congress, President Jefferson decided to mix things up and instead give a written State of the Union address to Congress. All presidents followed President Jefferson's example until 1913 when President Wilson broke with tradition and began in-person State of the Union addresses again.

Due to technological advances, the structure of the State of the Union address has changed significantly over the years. What was first intended as a way to talk to Congress about a president's priorities and agenda soon changed to a way to rally support and talk directly to the American people. In 1923, President Coolidge gave the first radio broadcast of the State of the Union address. More than 20 years later, in 1947, fellow Missourian President Truman, gave the first televised broadcast.

Just like previous years, President Trump will soon give his second State of the Union address in February. He will use this time to talk to Congress and the American people about the state and condition of the U.S. and provide policy proposals for the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress.

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