



### President Biden Delivers His First Address to a Joint Session of Congress

On the eve of his 100th day in office, President Biden delivered his first address to a joint session of Congress on Wednesday evening. The president spoke for a little over an hour and touched on a variety of issues including the ongoing vaccination drive against COVID-19, relations with China and Russia, the importance of ending the “forever” war in Afghanistan, advancements in education and family care, and other policy priorities to ensure that the United States continues to thrive in the 21st century. Biden highlighted some of the progress made since taking office in January, and laid out the vision for his administration’s infrastructure package, American Jobs Plan, and American Families Plan. President Biden also referenced his discussions with foreign leaders and his pledge that the United States was committed to both re-engaging in alliances around the world and showcasing the endurance of our democracy. Overall, the president struck an optimistic tone regarding the country’s prospects moving forward, and it remains to be seen how much of his ambitious agenda ultimately passes through Congress.

President Biden touted his administration’s progress in distributing the COVID-19 vaccine to hundreds of millions of Americans. Upon taking office at the beginning of the year, Biden had set an initial goal of 100 million vaccinations during his first 100 days in office. However, after exceeding that number in late March, he increased the figure to 200 million – a milestone that was also recently surpassed as of last week. Despite these strong numbers, Biden and his administration have continued to place a high priority on pro-vaccine messaging to ensure that a majority of the population receives the injection. Also pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic, Biden highlighted his administration’s effort to increase economic aid to Americans throughout the crisis. In total, he outlined nearly \$6 trillion in spending designed to jumpstart the economy.

During his first presidential address to Congress, Biden outlined his domestic agenda through the lens of government spending. His two signature pieces of economic relief legislation, the American Jobs Plan and American Families Plan, are part of his proposal to ensure a rapid and more equitable economic recovery. Biden has also proposed a \$2 trillion infrastructure blueprint to rebuild and improve American roads, bridges, and transportation facilities. Biden would also like to make community college tuition-free and increase government spending on child-care and other benefits for families, such as paid leave. To fund this, President Biden is seeking to increase taxes on corporations and the wealthiest Americans.

Biden also touched on foreign policy during his inaugural address, with specific focus on China and the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan. President Biden highlighted the strength of American democracy when it worked properly, and argued it could be a bulwark against growing authoritarianism in Russia and China. The president specifically criticized China for its human rights record, and promised his administration would hold Xi Jinping accountable for his government’s transgressions. He extolled the successes of the “war on terror” including the death of Osama bin Laden and degradation of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. However, he made it clear that the time was now to end “forever” wars and bring American forces back from Afghanistan after 20 years.

Finally, history was made during Biden’s address with two women seated on the dais behind the presidential podium. Vice President Kamala Harris is the first female VP in American history, and she joined House Speaker Nancy Pelosi in sitting behind the president, as is customary for the vice president and house speaker. Biden began his address with a nod toward the significance of this, saying that it was “about time” that two women were with him on the rostrum.