

have faced and this Congress will face. Our challenge is to be able to work together, not for one side to gain political advantage over the other but to see how we can best solve these problems. Many of them, if not most, will have to be dealt with in a bipartisan way so that our country truly does come together not only to make ourselves more secure, but in that security to be able to live in a good life, to be able to have the resources and the wherewithal to sustain life in both a livable and enjoyable fashion. That is the American dream. Most important, that is the American responsibility, be it here at home or to the world at large. That is our challenge.

I believe our President will once again challenge us this evening to greatness.

With that, Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senator from Illinois is recognized for 15 minutes.

THE PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this is one of those big days in Washington. It happens every year with the President's State of the Union Address. We look forward to it. It is an opportunity for the entire membership of the Senate and House to gather on the floor of the House of Representatives and bring in the Members of the Cabinet, Supreme Court Justices, the diplomatic corps, and Joint Chiefs of Staff. The President of the United States comes before us in a well-publicized event to speak from his heart about the State of the Union, our Nation.

For about an hour—some Presidents take a little longer than others—the President has center stage, as he should; he is our leader, our Commander in Chief. There is an air of anticipation during this lead-up time to the State of the Union Address because, until he speaks the words, we are never quite sure what he is going to say. The White House, whether it is under a Democrat or Republican, will tantalize us with hints and little notions, but I have found in the time I have served in Congress that sometimes they are misleading and they don't tell you the whole story. It is not until you go into the House Chamber and sit in the chair and listen to the President that you hear firsthand what is on his mind.

You are not certain, as well, about the people he will honor and pick out. It has become a standing tradition, I think since President Reagan, for the President to invite people to sit in the gallery, usually with the First Lady. They are pointed to with pride as great Americans who have done extraordinary deeds. There is a lot of speculation who will be up there. Will it be the family of a Reservist who has been activated for a potential war in Iraq, a firefighter, a policeman, or a member

of the health professions who has distinguished himself or herself in our homeland security? You are never sure. It is this uncertainty which leads to the excitement about the State of the Union Address.

But we learned today in a story published in the Chicago Tribune that some people living here in Washington, some who work on Capitol Hill, have no uncertainty about what the President is going to say. This morning, in the Chicago Tribune, in an article written by Jeff Zeleny, it was disclosed that the White House has invited a select audience of Republican lobbyists and political executives down to the White House today to hear the State of the Union Address. I think that is unprecedented. I don't think there has been a time before when a President has invited in lobbyists, special interest groups, to hear the State of the Union Address in advance.

These top strategists and opinion leaders are going to attend a "closed-door State of the Union briefing inside the White House complex." Who will be included? We are not sure of all of them. There will be about 70 top strategists, pollsters, and conservative groups, such as American Cause, founded by Pat Buchanan; Americans For Tax Reform, whose leader is Grover Norquist, someone who is well known in political circles in Washington. Then, of course, the lobbyists for the biggest corporations are going to be there in advance for the sneak preview, including personnel from AT&T and Eli Lilly, which is a major pharmaceutical company. They get a chance, before the American people, to hear the State of the Union Address.

Why would the White House want to open the doors for these special interest groups to hear the State of the Union Address before the President speaks to the American people? Well, it is certainly a special privilege he has granted to them. But it also reflects on what he is going to say in that State of the Union Address. He is certainly not bringing in these Republican strategists and business leaders and special interest groups to hear something they are going to find unsettling. He is really assembling a chorus of praise for those who will say after the speech that it is the best ever.

When the President really speaks to America and its issues, I just wonder, will we witness the same level of moral outrage from the conservative cable commandos as we heard in years gone by when special interest groups were invited to the White House? For this President to make history by bringing in lobbyists to hear the address before the people of the Nation, I am anxious to hear all of the people you see on cable channels and the reaction they will have.

Frankly, I am disappointed. I think this is a special moment for all of America. It is really not a special treat for lobbyists. Traditionally, this has been a moment for all America, to hear

the President speak from his heart. When I reflect on what the President might say this evening, I know for certain he will speak about security, terrorism, North Korea and Iraq. That goes without saying. Those will be the issues that certainly will draw together many in Congress, Democrats and Republicans, on a bipartisan basis to stand behind our fighting troops and behind America as a leader in the world.

Mr. REID. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. DURBIN. Yes, I am happy to yield to the Senator.

Mr. REID. I also read that article in the Senator's hometown newspaper, and I am wondering, if this is a closed hearing, is this a focus group? And I wonder if the lobbyists don't like certain lines of that speech, or certain paragraphs or phrases, do you think he will change the speech?

Mr. DURBIN. I don't know. Someone said this morning the White House said it is baked and he is not going to change a word of it. I cannot say if they are being called in as a focus group to see if there is anything they find objectionable. I think it is probably more likely that they already know in advance they are going to have a warm reception from the special interest groups for the State of the Union Address.

Mr. REID. I ask the Senator, also, based on what was reported in the Senator's home State newspaper, it appears to me, in answering my own question, that maybe they had a lot more to do with writing that speech than one would necessarily think. I think these people already know what is going to be in the speech, if you represent Eli Lilly. You can tell about that from what went on on the floor last week.

Mr. DURBIN. Eli Lilly is a special case. You will remember when we passed the homeland security bill to keep America safe from terrorism, someone stuck in a special provision that helped that drug company, which is based out of Indianapolis, IN. There was, I guess, embarrassment all around when it was discovered. Many times, these provisions are stuck in a bill in the hopes nobody will find them. Well, they were found and many people objected to that on the floor. If the Senator will remember, we had a vote on this issue. Several Republican Senators said they were embarrassed that a drug company would get a special break in the homeland security bill, which had nothing to do with homeland security, and it was going to come out soon. Despite that momentary embarrassment, the fact is that Eli Lilly is front and center in the White House when special interest groups are called in to have a preview of the President's State of the Union Address. That is troubling. I hope the press will ask those who made this decision whether they have not compromised the integrity of that institution as relates to the State of the

Union Address. Why in the world is the President letting this happen?

I know what is going to be said tonight. The President is going to speak to us about Iraq. I think it bears repeating, as I said last week, America's future is about more than Baghdad. It is about the challenges that moms and dads across America worry about every single day. It is about more than Iraq. It is about the rock and the hard place which millions of Americans find themselves between when they deal with the Bush-burdened economy. How bad is this economy? How likely is it that this President will do something now at the end of 2 years to turn it around? The numbers are staggering. The numbers I give you are not cooked by Democratic strategists. These are numbers reported by President Bush's own agencies of Government.

We have had the first back-to-back years of job loss in America in 50 years; the worst job creation record of any President in 58 years, with 2.3 million private sector jobs lost since the beginning of this administration; a 43 percent increase in unemployment rates since President Bush took office—43 percent; the loss of \$4.9 trillion in the stock market. Did my colleagues notice what happened yesterday in the stock market? People who follow this, as they should, know the Dow Jones hit 8,000. It lost 141 points in 1 day. What does it mean? It means for people who have stocks that they own directly or through mutual funds for their savings or their retirement, as the people say on the late night talk shows, they have seen their 401(k)s turn into 201(k)s—and maybe 101(k)s, if we are not careful. It is hard to even smile at that suggestion because a lot of people who counted on the stock market for their future have seen it disappear over the last 2 years during the Bush administration.

We have seen the elimination of a surplus in our budget. When President Clinton left office—and these are indisputable facts—we were generating a surplus each year to pay off the debt of America. Well, we are back in debt again. We are back in deficit. The projection is that this next year, the deficit we will face in America will be the worst deficit in 20 years, worse than any deficit under President Ronald Reagan, President Bush's father, or the early years of the Clinton administration. We are back in the deficit world.

What will the President say about that tonight? Will he remind us that his response to the deficit is a \$676 billion tax break primarily for the wealthiest people in America? Think about that for a moment. At a time when we are in recession, at a time when we are most certainly to be involved in war in the Middle East—I pray that does not happen, but most certainly we are going to see that, with added expense to the taxpayers—at a time when we should be funding the security of America, our homeland security, instead of meeting those obliga-

tions, the President has said give a tax break to the wealthiest people in America—a \$90,000-a-year tax break to people who make \$1 million a year in income.

Because of our deficits and because of the President's tax cuts, he is unable to fund things which are critically important to America. President Bush's plan is no stimulus to our economy. It is, in fact, a debt burden that we are passing on to our children and grandchildren. We have classrooms that assemble with us regularly in Washington to talk about what is going on in Washington. The sad news for those young students is that this administration, with the cooperation of this Republican Congress, is running up the balance on America's mortgage for our kids to pay. That mortgage, incidentally, is money taken directly out of the Social Security trust fund to fund the tax breaks for the wealthy people in America. That is not fair.

I think the President should address the real challenges facing America, real job creation, a stimulus plan that will put people back to work, not one that is going to help the folks who sit around the country club and try to figure out what to do with their portfolios but the people on Main Street who are trying to keep their small businesses open and the folks who are struggling to keep their jobs.

One million American workers who have run out of unemployment have been left behind by this administration. There will be more to follow unless the President changes his approach.

Secondly, this President should address the costs of health care in America. Health insurance expenses have become a crippling liability on businesses and families who cannot afford to buy protection. Instead, the President is going to talk about tort reform, an important issue but one that does not bear directly on the cost of health insurance and the run-up we have seen there. He is going to talk about privatizing Medicare. So we are going to say to senior citizens, for the first time they have a choice: They can pick their doctor or they can have their prescription bills paid, but they cannot have both. Boy, is that the future of health care in America?

We also need to give a helping hand to middle-income families. Would it not be great to have the President say tonight: We are going to provide a tax deduction for college education expenses for middle-income families? Think about families worried whether their kids can afford to graduate from college because of all the debts they are going to have. Would it not be great for the President to say, "I believe in education"; instead of this being a tax break for millionaires, this will be a tax break for working families. Unfortunately, we should not hold our breath.

The President should also promise to fund his program of No Child Left Be-

hind. He has created a mandate on every State and school district in America to do certain things, but he has refused to fund it. It is an unfunded mandate when the States are deep in debt. That is not fair, and the President should rise to that challenge.

Senator BOXER of California will speak to protecting the environment, so I will not dwell on that, but this President in 2 years has a dismal record. When it comes to the polluter pays for Superfund sites, the President says, no, the taxpayers should pay, not the polluting industries. That is plain wrong.

The President should commit himself to protecting Social Security. We know the baby boom generation is coming along in big numbers and they will be needing Social Security and Medicare. This President ignores that and instead increases the deficit and the debt of America at the expense of Social Security.

Finally, as to homeland security, listen carefully to see if we hear the following words tonight in the State of the Union Address: Osama bin Laden. Let's see if the President even mentions the name of the person we believe was responsible for September 11 who has disappeared from the headlines, disappeared from the news stories, because our pursuit of him has, frankly, not ended as we wanted. Let's see if the President mentions that effort. Let's see if he mentions investing in police and firefighters and health care across America to provide real security to the people of this Nation.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from California.

AN ANXIOUS NATION

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I say to my friend from Illinois I always appreciate his remarks both on the floor and when he is out meeting with people via the media. He puts his finger on a lot of important issues. He mentioned that I was going to speak about the environment. This afternoon, I will take on that issue. I will mention it this morning, but my idea this morning, in the few hours before the State of the Union, is to basically address the President of the United States from this Chamber in a way to urge him to address the anxiety of the American people because I think the state of the Union, if it can be summed up in one word, is anxious.

I want to go through why I think that is the case. So as we get ready to take part in a wonderful ritual where the Members of the Senate will gather in this Chamber—and I know the Chair, as a new Member, will experience this amazing feeling of patriotism and excitement as we gather here to make that march across the Capitol to join our colleagues in the House—we think very seriously about the state of our Union and what we hope the President will say.