

What ‘President Promise-Keeper’ should say on Tuesday night

By [Hugh Hewitt](#) February 26 at 10:27 PM

“Ghostwriting” isn’t really what happens in a presidential speechwriting shop. There’s too much back and forth between the president and his writers to say a speech was actually ghosted for a president when it’s a big one like President Trump’s first address to Congress Tuesday night. Having helped edit speeches and books for Richard Nixon, Dan Quayle and Mitt Romney, however, and having worked next to the speechwriters’ row in the Reagan White House, I have a good enough feel to offer this draft to the president for use in preparing for Tuesday night. It’s his style, but it’s very much the content of what a Reagan Republican would love to hear:

Thank you. Thank you very much. Very, very much. You are very kind. Thank you. Thank you. How great is this? Isn’t this great? And a special thanks to the speaker and the vice president [turn, gesture, pause for applause]. How about these two guys, Paul and Mike, aren’t they great? Aren’t they good guys? You folks from the House already know Mike Pence, and know how great he is, and now you folks in the Senate are getting to know him and he’s terrific. The whole country saw that when Mike went down to St. Louis and helped repair the damage to the Jewish cemetery desecrated by terrible people. Thank you, Mike. We won’t have that in this country. We won’t. It’s gotta stop. It’s going to end, and Mike, you are a big part of that. Thank you.

Speaking of coming together, this is a little informal, but I’m not a politician — I mean I’m standing here in the Congress and talking to a joint session and I say to myself, “Wow, not bad for a guy who isn’t a politician” — so this is a little informal but I want to clear up a matter. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus: To each member wherever you are in here tonight, I just want to say, come on over on Saturday. Nothing formal. Bring your families. The White House, well the catering is pretty good, very good in fact at this. Call Reince. Tell him you are coming and how many, and just come down. We will have a get-to-know-each other picnic if it’s nice — inside if it’s raining. But bring the kids, the family. Let’s have some time to say hello, chat. Plenty of time for business later. We will have a lot of business to do because I am really and truly concerned for your districts. I’m concerned for all districts but trust me, trust me, I am going to help you help your districts and everyone in them. We are going to rebuild roads and bridges and schools. Trust me. We are going to get a lot done. But let’s start by having a little get together. Everyone in this country has got to get along, even if they, maybe, they disagree a little, or maybe a lot. We need to get along.

The intersection of culture and politics.

And that brings me to why I accepted Paul's — I mean the speaker, right, I should call him the speaker right? We get along so well. So well. It's fabulous. Reince helped with that, and he's a great chief of staff. The best. What is it about Wisconsin? They produce all these great people. They voted for me in November and Paul and Reince.

So the speaker and I and Leader McConnell, another great American — I mean such a gentleman, Mitch McConnell, and his wife, my transportation secretary, well, wow, that's a smart couple — the speaker and the leader and I have some plans for making America great again. I want to lay them out, so you know and the American people know what's coming. I'll be brief. I don't like long speeches. I like doing things. I like getting things done. Here's what I'd like to get done with you, all of you. Yes, even you, Democrats.

First, and I mean first, we need a supplemental appropriation for the military. Got to have it. They are starving. They aren't training. We are putting these guys in danger because too many people in Washington have forgotten them. This has to stop. The days of our military being a bargaining chip end now. I want the supplemental. Next week maybe. We all know we need it, but this isn't a deal making thing. This is our troops. And Chuck, where are you sitting, Chuck Schumer? Okay, there you are. Stand up, give a wave Chuck. Good guy ladies and gentleman. Good guy. We disagree on things, of course, but Chuck knows I'm a counter-puncher. But we are going to get things done, starting with the troops. You love our men and women in uniform, Chuck. I know you do. No tricks on this one Chuck. Just a straight bill. If your colleagues say "Hey, let's leverage this," say "No, I know this guy," cause ya do. And you know I'm serious about this. We aren't going to hold the military hostage anymore. We get them what they need and then we argue out the rest of the stuff. And if anybody tries to filibuster that Mitch, I want you to use that thing Harry Reid used, the Reid Rule, and just change the rule for Defense Department appropriations so they can't be filibustered.

So first thing the defense supplemental. Next thing: We need that corporate tax rate slashed, because that means jobs. Everyone here knows it. Everyone. We have two trillion stuck abroad. Many CEOs — really successful people, you know — say they can't bring the money back and be taxed at our ridiculously high rate! Cut that rate. Just cut it. 7.5 percent for six months. Then we'll raise it to 15 percent for good — that's my first step. It'll be amazing. We will get all the cash back and that will pay for my stimulus package that's coming and for a lot of the ship building we need. Our Navy is small right now. It's terrible. We've got to get to 350 ships. I promised that in Philly, and I'm going to deliver that because the country needs it — the world needs the big beautiful Navy and Marine Corps, and it's also a lot of jobs. A lot of jobs. A huge number of good jobs. And we need the ships and the infrastructure. So we need the tax relief window and then a realistic rate. Everyone knows that. That's easy.

Now, health care. It's a big problem. First off, we are going to repeal Obamacare. It just hasn't worked. The media has covered this very unfairly. They focus on the protesters, but the truth is Obamacare hasn't worked for most people. I'm going to talk about the people it has helped in a minute, but look, for most people — the vast majority of people, it's a disaster. You heard Humana is pulling out. You heard the head of Aetna, the president of Aetna call it a death cycle. A death cycle. He's right. It's

collapsed. People know this. You can't fool Americans about this, they write the checks. Yes, some people got health insurance they would never have got and they are alive. I get that. They'll still be able to get health insurance. But the whole system is collapsing. A disaster. A disaster.

So, look. I'm a builder. Let me tell you what you do when a building burns down. First, you clear off the ruins. Right down to the foundation. That's number one. Haul away the smoking embers.

Then, and this is key, remember what you liked most about the building before the burning down. Think about it and say, "I like this," "I liked that." The really good stuff. And then you bring it back, better. Redone, in a new building. Repeal and replace. Don't forget that word: "Replace"

We all like the idea of making sure a preexisting condition doesn't disqualify you from getting insurance. Period. We are going to keep that. And no lifetime cap on benefits. You get sick, you get the care you need. You paid for insurance, not insurance for a half or three quarters of what you need, so no lifetime limit.

And all the kids are staying on the policies until 26. So those three things are in the replacement. Count on it.

But here are three new things. First, the big one. One market. One market. You sell an individual policy in the U.S., anyone can buy it. Now maybe you sell one in Vermont with doctors and hospitals in Vermont, and well, for that one, no one in New Mexico, say, is ever going to buy, but they could if they want to. And some smart insurance companies, they are going to offer a national policy, good everywhere. More than one will in fact. There's money to be made with a good national insurance policy. These companies, they are going to compete. And we are going to have an exchange where all of these policies are listed, the national ones, and the ones by state, and priced and explained. One market. Erase the lines. I said that in the debate, and I meant it. One national market. Prices are going to fall believe me.

Now Medicaid. It costs the federal government \$375 billion this year. A lot of money. Divide that among the 50 states. Each state got an amount last year, right? Okay, that's it. Every year from now on the states get that much money. Done. They decide what to do with it for their poor people. States have different needs, different ideas. Washington needs to be out of the business of being the smartest people. We aren't. You aren't. I'm not. The states get this huge check, and they get to work. They figure it out for themselves. That's called federalism. Tom Price will help with ideas. He'll bring the best people together. They will talk and exchange plans, but we aren't going to run it from Washington. That's crazy. It's like trying to run local schools from Washington — and that's stopping too.

Finally, what if people can't afford a policy and don't qualify for their state's Medicaid? I don't know if that's going to happen, but it might. It might. Here's what I think. We wait and see and then if we need to, if we need to, we bring back a subsidy depending on what the market works out. Probably a tax credit, probably against payroll taxes, but I don't know. That's a year two issue. We may not need to. One market and everyone gets to shop, it's hard to see how you get stuck out in the cold, but we will work on it if it happens. We need to solve the big stuff first and then come back. If we work together, and don't do jam downs like Obamacare, we go step by step, we will figure this out. And there are some other things, like these health savings accounts. Like Roth IRAs. They will work. Gotta have them.

That's the outline. What we are not going to have is a mandate, and we are not going to have a tax for not buying it. You want to play the game of risking no insurance, well that's not a good idea, you could end up bankrupt. But we are returning freedom to the people. This country, it's all about freedom. Freedom. And if people want to run that risk — well, it's a crazy risk, but we are a free country.

And we aren't going to tell insurance companies what they have to cover. They want to cover something, great. But we are out of the business of being nannies. If the product is no good it won't sell. Period. People want this or that, they shop. They look around, and they look some more. Supply. Demand. It works. I know. I've sold a lot of things. Build something that people don't want, it doesn't sell. Don't build anything, you are broke. But these companies, they will figure it out. There will be great policies, and they will compete head to head.

One last note on insurance. This is key. You don't get to buy it in a so-called open season every year. Every two years maybe. Maybe three. Probably two, but maybe three. Insurance is just that. You buy against the uncertainty and you don't get to have hindsight. You don't buy car insurance after the accident and expect the insurance company to pay. So this is called the problem of adverse selection. People get sick and then they buy the best insurance. That won't work. It doesn't work. That's why we have the so-called death cycle starting. You are in or you are out for a couple of years at least or you turn 26 or some other event. I'll talk again about this, again and again and again, and Tom — he's a great guy, really smart — he's going to be talking a lot. You know why Obamacare collapsed? It was a political compromise, not a health-care plan. We are going with the plan. We are going with teaching people why they need it and why they have to have it every year. Just like car insurance, but no mandate, because we don't make you buy the car, we just make you buy the insurance if you are driving a car. Some people were very, very blessed by the program, but compared to the tens of millions who are just bleeding out financially, no way. Terrible plan. It's dead. It's D-E-A-D. Dead.

A word about President Obama. A very good man, right? Can we all agree on that? Yes, we can. He had good intentions, it just didn't work. Never had been in business but sincere, and he's been a gem to me, a very good man. Really, I mean that. Let's give him a hand, maybe he's watching. [Pause, prolonged applause.] And look. Because we are changing course doesn't mean he was a bad guy or had bad intentions. It just didn't work. Nobody gets everything right. We can change course and not condemn everyone for being a horrible person. Big difference between rotten and wrong. He was just wrong. We have to learn that people can be wrong and not rotten. On health care, President Obama was just wrong. But he wasn't always wrong.


Which brings me to immigration. We are going to build the wall. It's happening. Some of you don't like it but it's happening. But here's the deal. I'm not pulling the executive order on DACA — President Obama was sort of right on this, sort of. We aren't pulling that but we also got to do something. We need a statute. That executive order President Obama issued on DACA? Not legal, not legal. Making stuff up with executive orders when there's no law behind it, not good. Not good. My executive orders, whether the courts agree or not, they go back to laws. To laws already on the books. So we need a law on DACA, and it's got to be reasonable. And with that law we put in my infrastructure and some common sense regulatory reform and a few other things. And let's get my friend Neil Gorsuch on the Supreme Court. You've met Neil, isn't he great? C'mon, Democrats you can clap. It isn't the vote. He's a wonderful man. Lots of people you don't vote for you can say, "Yeah, he is a wonderful guy or she is a wonderful woman." That's right, big applause for Neil Gorsuch. He's going to make us all proud, make such a great justice. I

make a promise, I keep a promise. And 18 more circuit judges that I am going to nominate this week or next, more promises kept. You are going to start calling me the promise-keeper president.

We go to work. Chuck, you and Mitch and the speaker and Leader Pelosi. Come on down and wear comfortable clothes. We have a lot to do. We need to do it. We can do it. This country will be so great. We have to negotiate and put DACA and a few other things in a bill that's a win for everyone. You know the Homestead Act, you know, settled the West? There were a few of them actually but the big one? Four pages long. Four pages. Not 2,000, four. We can do a lot in a little bit of time and with a few pages, and we can read it and agree what it means and not leave it up to bureaucrats to decide. And that's what I invite you to do. Everyone in this chamber. Republican. Democrat. Even the socialists. Bernie, where are you? You too, Bernie. A lot of people love you. You should run again. You and me, that would be interesting. But that's in four years. Right now, work with me. We can get a lot done.

But remember, first the military. That supplemental. These men and women, they are in harm's way, and we are not doing what the civilians need to do for the people at the end of the spear. They need training. They need equipment. We need more of them. Next week please. Maybe it takes two but we aren't holding them hostage and they need their training and their equipment. No fooling around here.

But God bless you all. I hope to see the CBC down at the White House next week and the rest of you soon. Call me. I am ready to work with you. We'll make great deals, we'll get things done, and we'll make America great again. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.

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