

EducationCounsel's Summary and Analysis of President Biden's 2022 State of the Union Address

On March 1, President Biden delivered his first State of the Union Address to Congress in which he both recognized the ongoing economic impacts of the pandemic and outlined his plan to address the burden of increased costs on American families. Before discussing his proposals to advance his domestic agenda, President Biden reserved the opening of his address to outline American actions intended to support the nation of Ukraine as they continue to defend themselves against Russia. Key themes from his address include highlighting the benefits of the American Rescue Plan, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, and outlining two new plans to support the American people: the "building a better America" plan and a bipartisan "Unity" agenda. The full text of the president's remarks is [here](#). Governor Kim Reynolds (R-IA) delivered the Republican response, and a transcript of her remarks is [here](#).

Key to Know:

- In highlighting two of his major legislative accomplishments from his first year in office, President Biden argued the American Rescue Plan and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law both helped the nation's economy and families recover from the pandemic. Specifically, the president noted that the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will help begin to "replace poisonous lead pipes – so every child – and every American – has clean water to drink at home and at school," and "provide affordable high-speed internet for every American." Pushing even further, the president said, "we also need to level the playing field with China and other competitors" and called for passage of the Bipartisan Innovation Act (The bill, which passed with bipartisan support in the Senate, is titled the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act. The House has also passed its version titled the America COMPETES Act). The bills aim to increase American competitiveness, including by expanding access to STEM education programs at the K-12 and postsecondary education levels.
- The president went on to detail his proposals to support American families as they continue to face increased everyday costs due to raising inflation. Although not explicitly titled as such, the president described the proposals as his plan to "build a better America." The proposals outlined mirror several that the president previously proposed in his Build Back Better plan, including limiting the cost of child care to 7% of an American family's income and providing pre-K for every 3- and 4-year-old.
- In a shift from his previous Joint Address to Congress, the president detailed that the nation is in a new phase of responding to the pandemic and argued that "we have the tools we need." The president called on schools and businesses to remain open and acknowledged that "our kids need to be in school." President Biden also noted that scientists continue to work on a vaccine for children under 5.
- Leading the Republican response, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds argued Democrats' policies have led to record levels of inflation and have caused harm to children and families. The governor argued that Democrats, under the leadership of President Biden, have not respected the rights of parents and families, including parents' rights to know what is being taught in schools.

Highlights from the State of the Union related to Issues of Interest:

- **Early Childhood Education and Child Care:** The president called out the high costs of child care and noted that, for those living in major cities, families could pay up to \$14,000 per year per child. To address this, the president proposed that middle class and working families should not have to pay more than 7% of their income, which would cut the cost for child care in half for most families and would help millions of women reenter the workforce. The president also called for legislation that would provide pre-K for every 3- and 4-year-old.

- **Paid Family Leave and Child Tax Credit:** In detailing his plan to support American families, President Biden called on Congress to pass “paid leave” and “extend the Child Tax Credit” so that “no one has to raise a family in poverty.”
- **Higher Education and Workforce Training:** The president called on Congress to increase Pell Grants and increase “our historic support of [Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)] and community colleges. President Biden referred to community colleges, citing First Lady Jill Biden, as “America’s best-kept secret.” The president also pledged to give workers a “fair shot” by providing more training and apprenticeships and to “hire them based on their skills not degrees.”
- **Mental Health and Student Supports:** As part of his proposed “Unity Agenda” – in which the president outlined four areas for bipartisan agreement – President Biden urged Congress to “take on mental health,” including for children and youth. The president noted that the American Rescue Plan provided funding to schools to hire teachers and to help students make up for lost learning and urged every parent to ensure schools use those resources accordingly. He further called on the American nation to “play a part” and to sign-up as a tutor or mentor.
 - Additional details on this part of the president’s Unity Agenda were included in a White House fact sheet released in advance of the State of the Union Address. The fact sheet outlines that the president will request, in his fiscal year (FY) 2023 budget, \$1 billion to help schools hire additional counselors and school psychologists; an additional \$400 million for the Full-Service Community School Program; double funding for Title I; an additional \$3.3 billion for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and \$450 million for IDEA, Part C to support early interventions for infants and toddlers. The full fact sheet is [here](#).
- **Protections for LGBTQ+ youth:** President Biden once again called on Congress to pass the bipartisan Equality Act. He stated that the “onslaught” of state laws targeting transgender Americans, including transgender children, is “wrong.”

Highlights from the Republican Response:

In her rebuttal, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds (R) argued that under President Biden’s leadership America is on the “wrong track” and the nation has “moved back in time.” Reynolds argued that it is impossible to “project strength abroad” when the nation is “weak at home.” The governor argued that under the president’s leadership, congressional Democrats have either ignored the issues facing Americans or made them worse by “plowing ahead” to spend trillions of dollars and “bankrupting our children.” Governor Reynolds noted several times that American families are tired of politicians trying to “control” the lives of their children and telling people what “they can and cannot say.” Governor Reynolds went on to argue that the American people are “tired of people pretending the way to end racism is by categorizing everybody by their race.” Additionally, the governor used her response to emphasize the role of parents in education and to argue that Democratic leaders have told parents to “sit down, be silent, and [to] let the government control their kids’ education and future.” Specifically, the governor noted that politicians have forced children to wear masks and that the Department of Justice (DOJ) has treated “parents like domestic terrorists.” Echoing statements previously made by Republican Members of Congress, Governor Reynolds noted that “Republicans believe parents matter” and that keeping schools open was only the start to the “pro-family, pro-parent revolution.” The governor stated that parents have a right to know and to have a say in what their kids are being taught. Governor Reynolds concluded by stating that Republicans are leading on “issues that are affecting Americans” and they are “standing up for parents and kids.”

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