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President Biden's First Address to Congress in Policy Quotes

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On April 28, President Joe Biden delivered his first address to a joint session of Congress. Here are the specific policy proposals he raised in that [speech](#):

Physical infrastructure: “The American Jobs Plan — a once-in-a-generation investment in America itself. This is the largest jobs plan since World War Two.”

- *Transportation:* “It creates jobs to upgrade our transportation infrastructure; jobs modernizing our roads, bridges, highways; jobs building ports and airports, rail corridors, transit lines.”
- *Clean water:* “The American Jobs Plan creates jobs replacing 100 percent of the nation’s lead pipes and service lines so every American can drink clean water.”
- *Broadband:* “It creates jobs connecting every American with high-speed Internet, including 35 percent of rural America that still doesn’t have it.”
- *Electric grid:* “The American Jobs Plan will create jobs that will lay thousands of miles of transmission lines needed to build a resilient and fully clean grid.”
- *Energy efficiency:* “The American Jobs Plan will put engineers and construction workers to work building more energy-efficient buildings and homes.”
- *Electric vehicles:* “Electrical workers — IBEW members — installing 500,000 charging stations along our highways so we can own the electric car market.”
- *Agriculture:* Incentivizes farmers to plant “cover crops so they can reduce the carbon dioxide in the air and get paid for doing it.”
- *Buy American:* “And all the investments in the American Jobs Plan will be guided by one principle: Buy American.”

Climate: “If we act to save the planet, we can create millions of jobs and economic growth and opportunity to raise the standard of living to almost everyone around the world.”

- *Global climate efforts:* “The climate crisis is not our fight alone; it’s a global fight.”

Workers’ rights: “Wall Street didn’t build this country. The middle class built this country. And unions build the middle class.”

- [H.R.842/S. 240](#), *Protecting the Right to Organize Act:* “I’m calling on Congress to pass the Protect the Right to Organize Act — the PRO Act — and send it to my desk so we can support the right to unionize.”
- [H.R.603/S. 53](#), *Raise the Wage Act:* “By the way, while you’re thinking about sending things to my desk — let’s raise the minimum wage to \$15.”

- [H.R. 7/S. 205](#), *Paycheck Fairness Act*: “Let’s get the Paycheck Fairness Act to my desk as well — equal pay. It’s been much too long.”

Care economy:

- *Home- and community-based care*: “Eight hundred thousand families are on a Medicare waiting list right now to get home care for their aging parent or loved one with a disability. ... This plan is going to help those families and create jobs for our caregivers with better wages and better benefits, continuing a cycle of growth.”
- *Paid leave*: “The American Families Plan will finally provide up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave.”
- *Child care*: “American Families Plan will provide access to quality, affordable child care ... I’m proposing legislation to guarantee that low- and middle-income families will pay no more than 7 percent of their income for high-quality care for children up to the age of 5. The most hard-pressed working families won’t have to spend a dime.”

Child Tax Credit: “Let’s extend that Child Care Tax Credit at least through the end of 2025.”

Education: “My American Families Plan guarantees four additional years of public education for every person in America, starting as early as we can.”

- *Universal pre-K*: “Adding two years of universal high-quality preschool for every three-year-old and four-year-old, no matter what background they come from.”
- *Free community college*: “Add two years of free community college”
- *College access and affordability*: “Increase Pell Grants and invest in Historical Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges, Minority-Serving Institutions.”

Taxation: “I will not impose any tax increase on people making less than \$400,000. It’s time for corporate America and the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans to just begin to pay their fair share.”

- *Corporate taxes*: “We’re going to reform corporate taxes so they pay their fair share and help pay for the public investments their businesses will benefit from as well.”
- *Raising marginal rates on wealthy individuals*: “We take the top tax bracket for the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans — those making over \$400,000 or more — back up to where it was when George W. Bush was President when he started: 39.6 percent.”
- *Capital gains tax*: “We’re going to get rid of the loopholes that allow Americans who make more than a million dollars a year and pay a lower tax rate on their capital gains than Americans who receive a paycheck. We’re only going to affect three tenths of 1 percent of all Americans by that action.”
- *IRS enforcement*: “The IRS is going to crack down on millionaires and billionaires who cheat on their taxes.”

Healthcare: “This is all about a simple premise: Health care should be a right, not a privilege in America.”

- *ACA premiums:* “The American Rescue Plan lowered healthcare premiums for 9 million Americans who buy their coverage under the Affordable Care Act. ... But let’s make that provision permanent so their premiums don’t go back up.”
- *ACA deductibles:* “Let’s lower deductibles for working families in the Affordable Care Act.”
- [H.R. 3, Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act:](#) “Let’s give Medicare the power to save hundreds of billions of dollars by negotiating lower drug prescription prices. And, by the way, that won’t just help people on Medicare; it will lower prescription drug costs for everyone.”
- *ACA and Medicare expansion:* “And the money we save [from lower prescription drug prices], which is billions of dollars, can go to strengthen the Affordable Care Act and expand Medicare coverage benefits without costing taxpayers an additional penny.”
- *ARPA-H:* “The National Institute of Health should create an Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health. It would have a singular purpose: to develop breakthroughs to prevent, detect, and treat diseases like Alzheimer’s, diabetes, and cancer.”

Racial justice: “With the plans outlined tonight, we have a real chance to root out systemic racism that plagues America and American lives in other ways; a chance to deliver real equity — good jobs, good schools, affordable housing, clean air, clean water, being able to generate wealth and pass it down two generations because you have an access to purchase a house. Real opportunities in the lives of more Americans — Black, white, Latino, Asian Americans, Native Americans.”

Civil rights:

- *White supremacy:* “We won’t ignore what our intelligence agencies have determined to be the most lethal terrorist threat to the homeland today: White supremacy is terrorism.”
- [H.R. 1280, George Floyd Justice in Policing Act:](#) “My fellow Americans, we have to come together to rebuild trust between law enforcement and the people they serve, to root out systemic racism in our criminal justice system, and to enact police reform in George Floyd’s name that passed the House already. ... I know Republicans have their own ideas and are engaged in very productive discussions with Democrats in the Senate. We need to work together to find a consensus. But let’s get it done next month, by the first anniversary of George Floyd’s death.”
- [H.R. 1843/S. 937, COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act:](#) “I also want to thank the United States Senate for voting 94 to 1 to pass the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act to protect Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. ... I urge the House to do the same and send that legislation to my desk, which I will gladly, anxiously sign.”
- [H.R. 5/S. 393, Equality Act:](#) “I also hope Congress can get to my desk the Equality Act to protect LGBTQ Americans. To all transgender Americans watching at home, especially young people who are so brave, I want you to know your President has your back.”

Voting rights: “If we truly want to restore the soul of America, we need to protect the sacred right to vote.”

- [H.R. 1/S. 1](#), *For the People Act, and John Lewis Voting Rights Act*: “Congress should pass H.R. 1 and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act and send it to my desk right away.”

Immigration: “Immigration has always been essential to America. Let’s end our exhausting war over immigration. For more than 30 years, politicians have talked about immigration reform, and we’ve done nothing about it. It’s time to fix it.”

- [H.R. 1177/S. 348](#), *U.S. Citizenship Act*: “If you believe we need to secure the border, pass it, because it has a lot of money for high-tech border security. If you believe in a pathway to citizenship, pass it so over 11 million undocumented folks — the vast majority are here overstaying visas.”
- *Border*: “Get at the root problem of why people are fleeing, particularly to our southern border, from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador: the violence, the corruption, the gangs, and the political instability, hunger, hurricanes, earthquakes, natural disasters” by restarting program from Obama Administration to address root causes of migration. Vice President Harris will lead the diplomatic effort.
- [H.R. 6](#), *Dream and Promise Act*: “Congress needs to pass legislation this year to finally secure protection for DREAMers — the young people who have only known America as their home. And permanent protection for immigrants who are here on temporary protected status who came from countries beset by manmade and natural-made violence and disaster.”
- [H.R. 1603](#), *Farm Workforce Modernization Act*: “As well as a pathway to citizenship for farmworkers who put food on our tables.”

Gun violence prevention: “I will do everything in my power to protect the American people from this epidemic of gun violence, but it’s time for Congress to act as well.”

- [H.R. 8](#), *Bipartisan Background Checks Act*, and [H.R. 1446](#), *Enhanced Background Checks Act*: “I don’t want to become confrontational but we need more Senate Republicans to join the overwhelming majority of Democrat colleagues and close the loopholes requiring a background check on purchases of guns.”
- [H.R. 1808/S. 736](#), *Assault Weapons Ban Act*: “We need a ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines.”
- [H.R. 1620](#), *Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act*: “Let’s authorize the Violence Against Women Act, which has been law for 27 years. ... It’ll close the ‘boyfriend’ loophole to keep guns out of the hands of abusers.”

Foreign policy: “The investments I’ve proposed tonight also advance the foreign policy, in my view, that benefits the middle class. That means making sure every nation plays by the same rules in the global economy, including China.”

- *Vaccine diplomacy*: “There’s no wall high enough to keep any virus out. And our own vaccine supply — as it grows to meet our needs; and we’re meeting them — will become an arsenal of vaccines for other countries, just as America

was the arsenal of democracy for the world and in consequence, influenced the world.”

- *Trade*: “America will stand up to unfair trade practices that undercut American workers and American industries, like subsidies to state-owned operations and enterprises and the theft of American technology and intellectual property.”
- *China*: “We’ll maintain a strong military presence in the Indo-Pacific, just as we do with NATO in Europe — not to start a conflict, but to prevent one.”
- *Human rights*: “America will not back away from our commitments — our commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms and to our alliances. No responsible American President could remain silent when basic human rights are being so blatantly violated. An American President has to represent the essence of what our country stands for. America is an idea — the most unique idea in history: We are created, all of us, equal. It’s who we are, and we cannot walk away from that principle and, in fact, say we’re dealing with the American idea.”
- *Nuclear nonproliferation*: “On Iran and North Korea — nuclear programs that present serious threats to American security and the security of the world — we’re going to be working closely with our allies to address the threats posed by both of these countries through diplomacy, as well as stern deterrence.”
- *Russia*: “I made very clear to Putin that we’re not going to seek escalation, but their actions will have consequences if they turn out to be true. And they turned out to be true, so I responded directly and proportionally to Russia’s interference in our elections and the cyberattacks on our government and our business.”
- *Afghanistan*: “And American leadership means ending the forever war in Afghanistan. ... We will maintain an over-the-horizon capacity to suppress future threats to the homeland.”
- *Terrorism*: “We have to remain vigilant against the threats to the United States wherever they come from. Al Qaeda and ISIS are in Yemen, Syria, Somalia, other places in Africa, the Middle East, and beyond.”