



**UNIVERSITY
OF TURKU**

How Speech Acts Are Used to Achieve Political Goals in President Biden's 2023 State of the Union Address

A Mixed Methods Study

Markus Vuorela
Bachelor's Thesis
Department of English
School of Languages and Translation Studies
Faculty of Humanities
University of Turku
April 2024

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Bachelor's thesis

Subject: English

Author(s): Markus Vuorela

Title: How Speech Acts Are Used to Achieve Political Goals in President Biden's 2023 State of the Union Address: A Mixed Methods Study

Supervisor(s): Dr Timo Savela

Number of pages: 16 pages, 32 appendices

Date: 23.04.2024

Speech act theory is based on the theory that words are not only used to give information, but are also used to do actions, such as making promises, asking questions, and many other kinds of actions. This mixed methods study examines what kinds of political goals are being pursued based on the use of speech acts, and how different kinds of speech acts are utilized to achieve those goals. This thesis follows John R. Searle's system for categorization of speech acts, which divides speech acts into five categories based on the illocutionary verb used. The different categories of speech acts according to Searle are assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives, which can be divided further by the type of illocutionary verb used. The source material is the U.S President Joe Biden's State of the Union Address of 2023, which has an official purpose of informing members of the congress about the state of the nation, but also serves as a way for the President to talk about topics important to him. This address specifically marks the beginning of for President Biden's campaign for the 2024 Presidential election. The address is an opportunity for President Biden to establish his political stances on currently relevant topics and to build up an image of a competent leader, capable of leading the nation for four more years. President Biden would also need to succeed in garnering support for the remainder of this presidential term, as at the time of the address President Biden had historically low approval rates.

The address uses a mixture of speech acts for a variety of purposes. Speech acts in the address are split towards two different audiences, members of the congress and the public, as different speech acts are intended only for the other. Assertives are used to inform the audience of President Biden's political views and what kinds of accomplishments his administration has had. The general topics of the address are likely to be central in the campaign. Directives and commissives are used decisively to appeal for bipartisanship from the Republicans, by using polite forms of speech acts, which also gives the President an image of a well-mannered, rational, and reasonable politician, while making a refusal from the Republicans seem childish. Speech acts with a more serious tone are used to emphasize political messages to the public, indicating that the topics are important to President Biden and that he understands what kinds of issues Americans are currently concerned with. The address gives President Biden an image of a strong leader, who is capable of leading the nation further on, regardless of his age. This thesis is intended to supplement existing research on political speeches and of President Biden. By utilizing a less conventional theory for political speech analysis, this thesis presents a unique perspective on the use of language in politics.

Key words: State of the Union Address, speech act theory, President Biden, John R. Searle.

Table of contents

1	Introduction	4
2	Theoretical background	6
3	Material and methods	10
4	Results	12
4.1	Assertives	12
4.2	Directives	13
4.3	Commissives	15
4.4	Expressives	16
4.5	Declaratives	17
5	Discussion	18
6	Conclusion	20
	References	21
	Appendices	23

1 Introduction

With the 2024 presidential elections looming in the horizon, the 2023 State of the Union Address by President Biden marked an important point of time in his presidency.

Approximately two years prior to the next Presidential election, the address would introduce much of the material his campaign would focus on and would establish his capability to be the U.S President for four more years. President Biden's approval rates were at relatively low numbers at the time of the address, with his disapproval being at 55 % and his approval at 41% (Gallup 2021), which is historically low compared to other U.S presidents. Another goal of the address would then be to improve President Biden's popularity, as that also strongly impacts the Democrat party's election success in midterm elections (Jones 2018). Several seats in both the House of Representatives and the Senate are being contested in elections taking place on November 5th, 2024, which adds to the importance of regaining the public's trust.

The State of the Union address is an annual speech held by the U.S president. The article II, section 3 of the U.S Constitution states that the U.S president is obligated to inform the congress on the current state of the union and to provide recommendations on how to govern ("The Constitution of the United States" 1787). The address has evolved since its original inception, changing both form and purpose. The speech has over the years evolved to more represent the President's personal views on relevant topics and to promote bipartisanship (Shogan and Neale 2012). The speech is typically held once a year around February, meaning each president gets to hold four State of the Union addresses per term. The 2023 address, held on the 7th of February, was President Biden's third address. The address is usually attended by all members of the congress and selected individuals invited by the Oval Office, but the address is also broadcast to the public through easily accessible channels.

President Biden has been predicted to be in for a tough re-election. Voters have had concerns of his age, as he would be 86-years old at the end of his potential second term (Holland and Reuters 2023). Polarization in the U.S has been a major topic in the recent years, with more and more Americans being unable to trust voters of the opposing party (Pew Research Center n.d.). With many Americans feeling disappointed and unsatisfied with the current administration, President Biden would need to address issues with his image and relating to his policies. The address would need to push for bipartisanship in Congress, which is needed

in order to secure political decisions the presidency wishes to achieve, which means that he and his party would have participate in the political “game” the congress operates with.

What kinds of messages the address attempts to message and how it attempts to achieve them by using speech acts is the aim of this thesis, which will be done through a mixed methods approach. This thesis will follow a structure of exploring the background of speech acts and the parts of the theory that are relevant to this thesis, then an explanation on the methodology and the choice of a material, followed by a results section, where the results inspected and analyzed. The results section is followed by a discussion section, which takes a look at the results and how they answer some of the questions related to the topic. Finally, the thesis ends with a conclusion section.

2 Theoretical background

Academic research relating to the State of the Union address does exist in numerous ways, ranging from research regarding the political contents to analysis of public speaking. Research of the rhetorical content exists in abundance, like Ben Wasike's research on the use of charisma and leadership rhetoric in State of the Union Addresses from George Washington to Barack Obama (Wasike 2017). Most studies inspect State of the Union addresses as part of larger contexts, for instance, a corpus-based study made by Amaireh Hanan analyzed the use of classical rhetoric in political speeches made by President Biden, which utilized President Biden's prior State of The Union Addresses as part of a bigger set of data (Amaireh 2023). Studies focusing on specific addresses do exist as well, but due to the recency of the 2023, there is little research that specifically focuses on the 2023 address. Research on President Biden's speeches does exist, although research on presidencies tends to increase after a president has finished their term. However, research on speeches from the earlier years of President Biden's presidency has been made, specifically a good amount from his inauguration speech analyzing what kind of rhetorics was used and the linguistic constructs of the speech. This thesis would add to the research made of the current presidency, although it is worth noting that this thesis will be made during the presidency, as the real impact and significance of the 2023 address will be seen after the 2024 presidential election.

This thesis will primarily utilize John Searle's version of speech act categorization, which is a refined version of J.K Austin's theory. This thesis focuses on theories and concepts presented in John Searle's *Foundations of Illocutionary*, published in 1985, which is a continuation to *A Taxonomy of Illocutionary acts*, published in 1975. Searle's classification bears resemblance to Austin's, but additional factors for classification were added to reduce overlapping between categories and to create a more scientific formula for speech act categorization. Searle adjusted Austin's theories in *Speech acts* (1969) and in *A taxonomy of illocutionary acts* (1975), which Searle used as a basis for his later works. *Foundations of Illocutionary logic* provided improvements to categorization and theory presented in prior research relating to illocutionary logic, while the other aspects of speech acts are further explored in Searle's other works.

Speech act theory is based on the idea that humans are actively doing something with utterances, by saying something a person is always doing an action. Utterances have been defined in numerous ways, Austin and many other linguists have referred to utterances as

individual linguistic expressions in speech, which tend to range from single words, loose phrases and complete sentences (Austin 1962). As defined initially by Searle in *Speech acts* (1969), utterances are composed of three acts, utterance acts, propositional acts, and illocutionary acts (Searle 1969, 23). The utterance act is the utterance's form in words and sounds, as in what the utterance is made of in a literal sense, meaning morphemes and sentences. The propositional act refers and predicates in a speech act, essentially contents of the speech act. The illocutionary act is the action done by the speech act. Searle also uses J.K Austin's concept of perlocutionary acts, which is the real world effect of the speech act (Searle 1969, 25).

Searle (1975) classifies speech acts into five categories, assertives, which are also known as representatives, commissives, directives, expressives, and declaratives. Assertives, which are also known as representatives, are illocutionary acts where the speaker commits to something being the case, which often utilize illocutionary verbs such as *claim* and *state*, like in "I claim that it is Monday". Commissives commit the speaker to an act to the hearer, for instance with promises and threats. With directives the speaker implores the hearer to do something. For example, questions implore the hearer to answer. Expressives tell of the psychological state of the speaker, for example by describing how the speaker feels about something, like in 'I like Mondays'. Declaratives change the world with words, for instance when someone is appointed into a role, they become that role. As an example, if someone is nominated to become a candidate, that makes the nominee the candidate. Most declaratives require either a divine or an institutional power for them to legitimate declaratives, with the exception being with declaratives that function as *abbreviations*, *naming*, and *calling*, which are unique as they only cause changes in language.

Searle's *Taxonomy of speech acts* (1975) introduced a base for his system of categorization, which was later enhanced in *Foundations of illocutionary logic* (1985) by focusing on illocutionary force. Illocutionary force is composed of seven components, which are the primary factors for separating speech acts from one another. The seven components are illocutionary point, degree of strength of illocutionary point, mode of achievement, propositional content conditions, sincerity conditions, and degree of strength of sincerity conditions. Illocutionary point refers to the purpose of the speech act. Different types of speech acts have a different direction of fit. Assertives attempt to match the words with the world, as common assertive illocutionary verbs merely describe the world surrounding the speaker (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 13). Commissives, directives, and declaratives have a

direction of fit of world to words, meaning the speaker changes the world with the utterance. Expressives do not have a direction of fit, as an apology does not necessarily declare anything or cause any actions from the hearer.

Speech acts can differ in the strength of illocutionary point (Searle 1975), for instance a *prediction* is a stronger illocutionary verb than *guess*, since a *guess* leaves room for the possibility that the proposition is incorrect. Mode of achievement refers to the special conditions required for the speech act, as in that illocutionary verbs like *command* require the speaker to be in a position of authority. Mode of achievement is a less common condition, but it is relevant when dealing with all forms of authority. Propositional content conditions refer to the conditions the illocutionary force imposes on the content of the speech act. A *promise* would require the speaker to be able to complete the promise and that the action is beneficial to the hearer (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 16). Preparatory conditions refer to the conditions required for the speech act to be successful and non-defective (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 16). An *offer* would require the presupposition that the speaker will not withdraw from the agreement, as Searle defined that the illocutionary verb *offer* is binding once the hearer accepts the offer.

Some speech acts demand sincerity conditions to be completed (Searle 1975), meaning that the speech act has to be made in good faith. A *promise* would need the speaker to genuinely want to commit the action to the benefit of the hearer, if the speaker does not intend to fulfill the promised action, then the speaker would be committing a lie. Different speech acts have differing strength of their sincerity condition, as in *urge* has greater intensity than a simple *request*. These seven components are used to separate and analyze speech acts, which is how the classification will be done in this thesis. While the analysis section of this thesis will not delve into the components that make up speech acts, it is important to understand what makes one speech act different from another in this paper.

Research on the use of speech acts exists, with some categorizing speech acts in a similar manner as this thesis, like with Daan Schueler's and Maarten Marx's study on the use of speech acts in Dutch Covid-19 press conferences (Schueler and Marx 2023). Another study focusing on speech acts is Aboh's and Agbedo's analysis of the now former President of Nigeria Buhari's use of speech acts, which focuses on the more authoritarian and violent forms of speech the former President used while in office (Aboh and Agbedo 2020). However, studies that could serve as directly comparable to this thesis are not common. Most

studies on political speeches, specifically State of the Union Addresses or made by President Biden, utilize other theories, like systemic functional linguistics in an analysis of President Biden's inaugural speech (Herman et al. 2022), and in research emphasizing the use of power in a comparative study between former President Trump and President Biden (Körner et al. 2022). There are several aspects that can be researched when it comes to speech acts, as some research focuses on very specific aspects, some of which are ignored in this thesis, like the use of indirect speech acts. It should be noted that Searle's system of categorization could be considered outdated, as researchers have been refining his theories further, but the potential limitations are inconsequential for this thesis.

3 Material and methods

This thesis will utilize a mixed methods format, with which the thesis will be focusing on dividing the speech acts based on their general type, and then they will be analyzed on what recurring elements appear and how they play significance to the messaging of the address. The speech acts were manually categorized by inspecting each speech act in detail, meaning there is a possibility for humane errors. The categorization is based on theories presented in Searle's *Speech acts* (1969) *Taxonomy of speech acts* (1975), and *Foundations of illocutionary logic* (1985). Speech acts will be divided into assertives, commissives, directives, expressives, and declarations. The illocutionary verbs used will also be categorized, with the exception of assertives, in order to understand what kinds of specific speech acts are used. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, assertives will not be categorized based on their illocutionary verb, but this is not a major hindrance, as commissives and directives will be the primary focus, due to their functions in political speeches.

Defining where one speech act begins and ends can be difficult, as there is no consensus as to what exactly counts as a single utterance in a speech. This thesis will consider a section of a speech to be a single utterance when it contains a clear single thought in it. Incomplete sentences surrounded by pauses will be assumed to be separate utterances, as even though in text it might seem like President Biden makes at times abnormally long run-on sentences, but these instances are only done to achieve intended rhetoric effects. Lone dependent clauses can be interpreted to have implied illocutionary purpose behind them under the contexts surrounding the dependent clause, making them function practically as complete units.

As this thesis focuses more on what was said and how language is used to message that, the thesis will not take into consideration parts of the address that were adlibbed and unintentional. The address contained several moments where President Biden stuttered or misspoke, which I will ignore. In addition, President Biden was occasionally interrupted by hecklers in the crowd, to which President Biden would respond to with adlibbed quips, which I will also ignore, as this thesis will focus on the scripted contents of the address. This thesis will use the transcript provided by the White House, as it is the most accurate transcription of the intended contents of the speech. The White House transcript contains only the scripted contents of the address, and it ignores instances where President Biden mistakenly said something with improper grammar due to mispronunciation, which is why it suits this thesis

sufficiently, as political speeches are typically created by a group of writers to pursue certain specific goals.

Speech acts are a way to do things with words, which is very common in political speeches, where politicians often make promises and other types of speech acts. I chose to research speech acts with this material, as to find out what President Biden intends to achieve during his remaining two years of presidency and how those goals were messaged through the use of speech acts. The 2023 State of the Union Address was chosen as it loosely marks the beginning of President Biden's campaign to continue his presidency onto a second term. A second term is usually a continuation to the first term in terms of the political themes the president chooses to pursue. This State of the Union Address reflects the presidency and the possible second term, which is why inspecting the speech acts used in this instance could be greatly significant, but that significance will be left to be seen after the 2024 presidential election.

Searle's system of categorization has faced some criticism among academia, as his earlier works were criticized for being somewhat poorly constructed in terms academic standards (Koller 1970). Additionally, a common criticism for Searle's theories has been that they do not sufficiently present a superior version to Austin's system of categorization, but rather Searle's categorization offers a different perspective on speech acts. The categorizations of a political speech might be influenced by political biases, in order to achieve desired results. Searle's categorizations do have some conflicting components, as certain speech acts could be placed into multiple categories. Speech acts will be categorized based on their most fitting and prominent characteristics, and they will only be placed in one category, even if the speech act would qualify for multiple ones.

4 Results

Overall, there were 531 speech acts, of which assertives composed the majority, followed by directives, expressives, commissives, and declaratives. This is further illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Speech acts used in the 2023 State of the Union Address by President Biden.

Type of speech act	Number	Percentage
Assertives	441	83%
Directives	64	12%
Commissives	17	3%
Expressives	6	1%
Declaratives	3	1%
Total	531	

4.1 Assertives

Assertives are the most common type of speech act in the address, making up 83% of the speech. Assertives have a direction of fit of world to words, meaning assertives generally describe the world as it is. Due to the limited scope of this thesis, I did not categorize all assertives by the illocutionary verb used, which is fine for the purpose of the thesis, as the purpose of assertives in the speech is rather limited. A thorough dissemination would be both a very time consuming and relatively fruitless endeavor for the purposes of this thesis.

Assertives in the address are generally divided into ones that are, for the most part, referring to prior events and to ones that have a clearly intended impact on the audience. Understanding the intentions behind the use of the assertives and what they achieve in the address is crucial, but the details between them are relatively inconsequential, as many of the different assertive illocutionary verbs serve a similar purpose in practice.

Illocutionary acts using illocutionary verbs such as *state*, *report*, *predict*, *affirm*, *claim*, and *assert* are prominent throughout the address, as they generally serve the purpose of providing the audience with information about the quality and state of things but also how the speaker feels about them. In relation to a statement about the success that prior administrations had fighting against HIV/AIDS, President Biden makes the remark of “It’s been a great success”, which would be a *report* assertive. *Report* assertives report what has happened and what will happen (Searle and Vanderveken 1985), which is why mentions of past success often use *report* assertives. *Report* assertives are used throughout the address to remind people of what

the current administration has done and is working on, which is why many utterances in the speech may appear to be commissives but are rather statements of what most people already know the current administration is working on.

Assertives using the illocutionary verb *inform*, give new information to the hearer (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 186). For example, President Biden brings up that he and other Democrat legislators have created a piece of legislation, which he essentially introduces to the audience. The assertive is “We’ve written a bill to stop all that”, which is then followed up by another speech act, a declaration, where the name of the bill is introduced. This bill is likely not entirely new to the congress, as other legislators uninvolved with the creation of the bill would have likely heard of the bill. However, the general public, especially the voters that do not actively follow politics, might not be familiar with the bill, which is to whom the assertives directed towards. While a majority of the assertives in the address refer to concepts that most politically knowledgeable individuals would be aware of, the *inform* assertives differ in that they provide new information in the form of an announcement.

Another unique set of assertives used in the address are related to addressing the Republicans. Assertives such as *accuse*, *blame*, and *criticize* are directed in the address towards the Republicans and have clear emphasis behind them. While talking about the economy, President Biden says “Under the previous administration, America’s deficit went up four years in a row”, which would be an *accuse* assertive. *Accuse* assertives are defined as placing blame for a state of being to someone, which differs from *blame* in that *accuse* is done publicly and *blame* is done privately. (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 190). The speech act are intended to bring up a negative fact about President Biden’s rivals, which he then follows up by talking about how the current congress has achieved much more in comparison. The address contains many of these kinds of juxtapositions, where a negative flaw of the Republicans is followed up by a comparison to the Democrats.

4.2 Directives

The address contained 64 directives, which make up 12% of all the speech acts in the address, as was seen on Table 1. Directives are significant in speech, as while assertives are generally statements of the state of things, directives attempt to make the intended hearers to do a certain action. The address had six different kinds of directives, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Directive speech acts used in the address by the illocutionary verb used.

Illocutionary verb used	Number	Percentage
Request	31	48%
Tell	13	20%
Ask	11	17%
Direct	7	11%
Recommend	1	2%
Beg	1	2%
Total	64	

The directives used in the address could be split between which audience is used as the hearer, the congress, or the general public. 31 of the address' 64 directives use the illocutionary verb *request*, which are generally meant for members of congress. *Requests* allow the hearer to refuse from the directive, which is opposite to the other common directive, *tell*, which does not allow for a refusal (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 199). For instance, President Biden uses *requests* to ask the Republicans in the congress, who hold a majority in the House of Representatives, to agree to work together. When talking about climate change and environmental practices, President Biden says, "Let's face reality.", meaning he pleads that the Republicans, who often attempt to hinder Democrat led projects with any means possible, would collaborate with the Democrats on something that is beneficial for everyone.

"Let's" is used in numerous *requests* throughout the address, as it contains a certain kind of politeness, since it is more or less an invitation to commit an action together. This is because the Republicans hold control over the House of Representatives, and so the president can merely plead for them to collaborate for the common good. President Biden says in the middle of explaining his economic plan, "Let's finish the job", with which he is asking members of the congress to approve his plans. The utterance also could be interpreted to include the general public as well, where President Biden invites the entire nation to work together for a better America. The use of "Let's" functions both as a strong sound bite, but also as a rallying cry to his political allies.

Tell is similar to a request, but the hearer is not given an opportunity to refuse (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 200). President Biden uses a *tell* directive when talking about gun control

by saying, “Ban assault weapons once and for all”. The *tell* directive signals that the subject matter is important to the speaker due to the stern tone of it. The speech act might be unsuccessful, since the president cannot command members of the congress to do anything, but with which he is imploring them to do so without any real authority. As President Biden likely knows that telling the 2nd amendment supporting republicans to ban assault weapons is a futile effort, the speech act is possibly more intended to the audiences at home to whom the topic is important, making it a statement intended as purely of rhetoric nature.

4.3 Commissives

Commissives composed 3% of the total amount of speech acts, as seen on Table 1. The address had a total of 17 commissives, of which 15 were *promise* commissives and two were *threaten*, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Commissive speech acts used in the address by the illocutionary verb used.

Illocutionary verb used	Number
Promise	15
Threaten	2
Total	17

Promises differ from the *commit* commissives in that they require the speaker to promise to do something beneficial to the hearer and that the speaker commits to do the action in the future (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 192). President Biden makes promises to both the Republicans in the audience and to the general public. He makes a promise to the Republicans by saying “We’ll fund your projects”, which is an attempt to assure the Republicans that the Democrats will fund projects proposed by the Republicans. This promise is meant to tease the Republicans that refuse to vote for Democrat led projects, by telling them Democrats will do what they will not. This promise also appeals to the masses, by telling the audience the Democrats in charge are actively doing work. The *promise* commissives are different from the assertives that talk about future actions, as *promises* involve the introduction of a new future action, as the assertives are merely statements on already known future actions that have been set in motions in the past.

Some of the *promises* are directed towards the general public. A *promise* like “I will not raise taxes on anyone making under \$400,000 a year”, would generally be targeted to regular voters who earn less than \$400,000 annually, but also to the more libertarian kind of Republicans that oppose all forms of taxation. *Promises* like this one are more intended to build up reputation for President Biden, as being a president for the working class and to regular civilians is a major recurring theme in the address. Another *promise* President Biden makes to voters is a *promise* intended to build trust, “I will not allow them to be taken away.”, where President Biden wants to assure voters that he will not.

Threaten type commissives are similar to *promises*, but involve an action that is not beneficial to the hearer (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 193). The address features two, where in both President Biden aims threats towards the Republicans that slow down political processes. The first threat, “Make no mistake, if you try to do anything to raise the cost of prescription drugs, I will veto it”, has President Biden make a *threat* towards Republicans that are planning to repeal a bill he sponsored. The stern tone implies that the President Biden is serious with his threat, and that this bill has personal significance to him. President Biden has always been a more “working class” politician, which is why the stern tone might also be meant to appeal towards working class voters, to whom the topic is of importance. The other *threat* is of similar style, where President Biden says, “Make no mistake; if Congress passes a national abortion ban, I will veto it”. The use of “Make no mistake” is for the purpose of reminding the audience, that President Biden is certain of his *threat* and that he can be trusted complete the *threat*.

4.4 Expressives

The address contains six expressives, which are divided into five *congratulations*, and one *thank*. The address begins with President Biden acknowledging certain people that are present, which is followed up by the President congratulating members of the congress that received promotions recently or achieved a noteworthy accomplishment. President Biden congratulated Mitch McConnell by saying “Congratulations to the longest serving Senate Leader in history, Mitch McConnell”. The only other type of expressive in the address is the *thank* expressive, which President Biden uses by saying, “I sincerely thank my Republican friends who voted for the law.”. Both of these examples have in common that they involve a positive commemoration of a politician of the opposing party. President Biden is thanking the

Republicans that collaborated with the bill, where the added politeness invites for further bipartisanship, as he also follows up by scolding the Republicans that voted against the bill.

4.5 Declaratives

Only three declaratives could be found in the speech. As declaratives are used to “declare” some kind of a change in the world, which are reserved for other kinds of ceremonies. The three declaratives fall under the *naming* type of illocutionary verbs since they both involve giving a name to something, which is unique to them among declaratives, as *naming*, *abbreviate*, and *call* only cause change in language and not in the real world (Searle and Vanderveken 1985, 210). The first instance is during a part where President Biden introduces a new piece of legislature, and he announces the name of that legal act by saying “It’s called the Junk Fee Prevention Act”. The Illocutionary verb in this instance would be *calling*. Another type of declarative is from a part of the speech where President Biden refers to a couple attending the address as “Kindred spirits”, with which President Biden gave the couple nickname, making it a *naming* declarative.

5 Discussion

Assertives were the most common type of speech, which makes sense considering many of the background contexts and the audience for this address. President Biden must assure both the congress and the public of his achievements and what he intends to achieve in the future. Most of the assertives are intended to the public, as a summary of why the public should trust President Biden to do a good job for both the remainder of his current term and during potential second term. The distribution of speech acts is similar to the Dutch COVID-19 press conferences, with President Biden's address having a higher share of assertives (Schueler and Marx 2023). Although it should be noted that comparisons to other speech act analyses are difficult to make, as differences between different speeches can be due to numerous factors.

Assertives in the address are used to talk about the state of things, what will be happening in the future, and how the President feels about these things. The public gets to know better President Biden's achievements, plans, and proposals, many of which will be relevant themes in his presidential campaign, but of course a lot could change between February of 2023 and the actual election day. The address allows President Biden to evaluate how his character and choices of topics hold up in a major speech, providing his campaign vital data on what to possibly change for the elections. The address builds a narrative using assertives, especially in segments where President Biden talks about the American Dream, American values, and other intangible imagery, which are intended to remind people that President Biden is the President of every American, and that he is a stout believer of American values.

A more populist politician might make many more *promises*, *vows*, and *pledges*, but the address seems to focus more on factual accomplishments and future plans than making commissive *promises*. *Promise* as an illocutionary verb has less strength than a *vow* or a *pledge*, which keeps President Biden grounded to reality, rather than making outlandish promises he would not be able to keep. The careful and precise use of commissives throughout the address makes the primary points of the address very clear and easy to remember. The commissive *promises* are also constructed to be more likely to be successful speech acts, as the mode of achievement is set at tangible goals than can be done, instead of promising to achieve intangible value-related promises or overly ambitious promises that end up being impossible.

Achieving a bipartisan support in the congress would help President Biden and the Democrats pass key legislations during the remaining years of current administration, which would allow them to have a proven record of success as political leaders. President Biden calls for bipartisanship mostly with the more polite directives, like *request* directives, which has less strength than a more authoritarian *command* or *require*. *Request* has a more polite tone and allows the hearers, as in Republican electors, to decline the request, which is also why any kind of a strong directive would fail, since the President cannot *command* the Congress to do anything.

The *requests* used in the address often appeal for collaboration in the name of common good or common sense. Many of the *requests* are posed as reasonable and realistic, which might be intended as compromises or as reasonable solutions from the perspective of the Republicans. The *requests* might also make the Republicans seem irrational when proposed with reasonable suggestions in a polite manner, as some Republicans are habitually against anything the Democrats propose and a declination to a reasonable suggestion that is good for everyone seems irrational and childish. Some of the expressives used in the address were directed towards Republican members of Congress, which serves as a reminder that even though President Biden and the Republicans disagree on a lot of things, he will still treat them as honorable fellow politicians, although it would have been in poor taste and against protocol to not congratulate his fellow politicians.

President Biden has always had a working-class reputation, which is reflected in the themes of the address, especially with the use of “Let’s”, which implies he is inviting the audience to work together. Certain speech acts have a more serious tone, implicating that they are more important to President Biden personally, which would likely appeal to the public more than to the congress. While appealing to the congress with politeness can help gain more mutual understanding, the more authoritative and stern directives give President Biden a better image as a strong leader, but the limited use of commissives like *threaten* and directives like *tell* does not come off as too authoritarian or mean. *Threaten* and *tell* bear a much greater amount of illocutionary strength, which is why they are reserved for topics the President wants to emphasize. President Biden’s age has been a major concern for many Americans, and to some voters from all political circles, it has become the primary reason to consider not voting for President Biden. The strong image helps to deter the image of a foolish old man, which is what he has been ridiculed with.

6 Conclusion

Overall, the address utilizes speech acts to accomplish its goals in numerous ways. The combination of the polite and stern tone of the speech acts helps to build an intended image for President Biden, while the assertives are intended to inform the public. The careful use of commissives and directives gives him an image of a rational and down to earth politician, which is meant to ensure that President Biden would not appear to be an overaged populist politician, who is clearly out of touch with the common folk. A more serious tone is reserved for the more important and significant topics, which is reserved to clearly mark where the two parties disagree on. The Republicans are being challenged and politely asked to co-operate, in order for the Democrats to achieve important political goals and to eventually gain a majority throughout Congress. The calls for bipartisanship are also attempts to combat polarization in Congress. The address sets the Democrats and Joe Biden better equipped with a concise image and with a set of good political goals for the upcoming elections.

There is plenty of room for further research, which would be needed for a more precise assessment of the messaging of the speech and of the methods used to signal that. Further research could be conducted using other methods and focusing on different characteristics, but also focusing on matters already introduced in this thesis. There is still relatively little research using speech act analysis on political speeches, at least in the Western world, as most of the prior studies of similar kind were from non-English speaking countries. Other linguistic elements could be further researched or by focusing on specific elements brought up in this thesis, like focusing on the use of indirect speech acts or a more thorough inspection of *promise* commissives. This thesis might also be of use for research for other fields of social sciences, such as political sciences, who might be able to evaluate the success and impact of the address' messaging.

References

- Aboh, Sopuruchi Christian, and Chris Uchenna Agbedo. 2020. "Between Statements and Actions: A Speech Act Analysis of President Buhari's Media Political Discourses." *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 11, no. 6: 948–955. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1106.11>.
- Amareh, Hanan A. 2023. "Biden's Rhetoric: A Corpus-Based Study of the Political Speeches of the American President Joe Biden." *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 13, no. 3: 728–735. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1303.22>.
- Austin, J.L. 1962. "How to Do Things with Words." Oxford University Press.
- Gallup. 2021. "Presidential Approval Ratings -- Joe Biden." *Gallup.Com*. Accessed February 5, 2021. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/329384/presidential-approval-ratings-joe-biden.aspx>.
- Herman, Herman, Nanda Saputra, Magdalena Ngongo, and Endang Fatmawati. 2022. "Delivering A Good Speech by Identifying the Interpersonal Meaning Found in Joe Biden's Victory Speech: A Case on Systemic Functional Linguistics." *Journal of Intercultural Communication* 22, no. 3: 65–73. <https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v22i3.77>.
- Holland, Steve, and Reuters. 2023. "Biden Turns 81 as Worries about His Age Weigh on Re-Election Prospects." *Reuters*, November 21, 2023, sec. United States. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/biden-turns-81-worries-about-his-age-weigh-re-election-prospects-2023-11-20/>.
- Jones, Jeffrey M. 2018. "Midterm Seat Loss Averages 37 for Unpopular Presidents." *Gallup.Com*. Accessed September 12, 2023. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/242093/midterm-seat-loss-averages-unpopular-presidents.aspx>.
- Koller, Alice. 1970. "Reviewed Work: Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language by John R. Searle." *Language* 46, no. 1: 11.
- Körner, Robert, Jennifer R. Overbeck, Erik Körner, and Astrid Schütz. 2022. "How the Linguistic Styles of Donald Trump and Joe Biden Reflect Different Forms of Power." *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 41, no. 6: 631–658. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X221085309>.
- Pew Research Center. 2022. "Political Polarization in the American Public." Pew Research Center. Accessed September 14, 2023.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.

Schueler, Daan, and Maarten Marx. 2023. "Speech Acts in the Dutch COVID-19 Press Conferences." *Language Resources and Evaluation* 57, no. 2: 869–892.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10579-022-09602-7>.

Searle, John R. 1969. *Speech Acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Searle, John R. 1975. *A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Searle, John R., and Daniel Vanderveken. 1985. *Foundations of Illocutionary Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Accessed November 11, 2023.

Shogan, Colleen J., and Thomas H. Neale. 2012. *President's State of the Union Address: Tradition, Function, and Policy Implications*. Washington, D.C: Congressional Research Service.

"The Constitution of the United States." 1787. *National Archives*.

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.

Wasike, Ben. 2017. "Charismatic Rhetoric, Integrative Complexity and the U.S. Presidency: An Analysis of the State of the Union Address (SOTU) from George Washington to Barack Obama." *The Leadership Quarterly* 28, no. 6: 812–826.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2017.04.002>.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Distribution of speech acts

Type of speech act	Number	Percentage
Assertives	441	83%
Directives	64	12%
Commissives	17	3%
Expressives	6	1%
Declaratives	3	1%
Total	531	

Appendix 2 Distribution of Directive speech acts

Illocutionary verb used	Number	Percentage
Request	31	48%
Tell	13	20%
Ask	11	17%
Direct	7	11%
Recommend	1	2%
Beg	1	2%
Total	64	

Appendix 3 Distribution of commissive speech acts

Illocutionary verb used	Number
Promise	15
Threaten	2
Total	17

Appendix 4 Utterances from the address with their speech act classified

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. Mr. Speaker. Madam Vice President. Our First Lady and Second Gentleman.</p> <p>Assertive</p> | <p>10. And I want to give special recognition to someone who I think will be considered the greatest Speaker in the history of this country, Nancy Pelosi.</p> <p>Expressive, congratulation</p> |
| <p>2. Members of Congress and the Cabinet. Leaders of our military.</p> <p>Assertive</p> | <p>11. The story of America is a story of progress and resilience. Of always moving forward. Of never giving up.</p> <p>Assertive</p> |
| <p>3. Mr. Chief Justice, Associate Justices, and retired Justices of the Supreme Court.</p> <p>Assertive</p> | <p>12. A story that is unique among all nations.</p> <p>Assertive</p> |
| <p>4. And you, my fellow Americans.</p> <p>Assertive</p> | <p>13. We are the only country that has emerged from every crisis stronger than when we entered it.</p> <p>Assertive</p> |
| <p>5. I start tonight by congratulating the members of the 118th Congress and the new Speaker of the House, Kevin McCarthy.</p> <p>Expressive, congratulation</p> | <p>14. That is what we are doing again.</p> <p>Assertive</p> |
| <p>6. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working together.</p> <p>Assertive</p> | <p>15. Two years ago, our economy was reeling.</p> <p>Assertive</p> |
| <p>7. I also want to congratulate the new leader of the House Democrats and the first Black House Minority Leader in history, Hakeem Jeffries.</p> <p>Expressive, congratulation</p> | <p>16. As I stand here tonight, we have created a record 12 million new jobs, more jobs created in two years than any president has ever created in four years.</p> <p>Assertive</p> |
| <p>8. Congratulations to the longest serving Senate Leader in history, Mitch McConnell.</p> <p>Expressive, congratulation</p> | <p>17. Two years ago, COVID had shut down our businesses, closed our schools, and robbed us of so much.</p> <p>Assertive</p> |
| <p>9. And congratulations to Chuck Schumer for another term as Senate Majority Leader, this time with an even bigger majority.</p> <p>Expressive, congratulation</p> | <p>18. Today, COVID no longer controls our lives.</p> <p>Assertive</p> |

19. And two years ago, our democracy faced its greatest threat since the Civil War.

Assertive

20. Today, though bruised, our democracy remains unbowed and unbroken.

Assertive

21. As we gather here tonight, we are writing the next chapter in the great American story, a story of progress and resilience.

Assertive

22. When world leaders ask me to define America, I define our country in one word: Possibilities.

Assertive

23. You know, we're often told that Democrats and Republicans can't work together.

Assertive

24. But over these past two years, we proved the cynics and the naysayers wrong.

Assertive

25. Yes, we disagreed plenty.

Assertive

26. And yes, there were times when Democrats had to go it alone.

Assertive

27. But time and again, Democrats and Republicans came together.

Assertive

28. Came together to defend a stronger and safer Europe.

Assertive

29. Came together to pass a once-in-a-generation infrastructure law, building bridges to connect our nation and people.

Assertive

30. Came together to pass one of the most significant laws ever, helping veterans exposed to toxic burn pits.

Assertive

31. In fact, I signed over 300 bipartisan laws since becoming President.

Assertive

32. From reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act, to the Electoral Count Reform Act, to the Respect for Marriage Act that protects the right to marry the person you love.

Assertive

33. To my Republican friends, if we could work together in the last Congress, there is no reason we can't work together in this new Congress.

Assertive

34. The people sent us a clear message.

Assertive

35. Fighting for the sake of fighting, power for the sake of power, conflict for the sake of conflict, gets us nowhere.

Assertive

36. And that's always been my vision for our country.

Assertive

37. To restore the soul of the nation.

Assertive

38. To rebuild the backbone of America, the middle class.

Assertive

39. To unite the country.

Assertive

40. We've been sent here to finish the job.

Assertive

41. For decades, the middle class was hollowed out.

Assertive

42. Too many good-paying manufacturing jobs moved overseas.

Assertive

43. Factories at home closed down.

Assertive

44. Once-thriving cities and towns became shadows of what they used to be.

Assertive

45. And along the way, something else was lost.

Assertive

46. Pride. That sense of self-worth.

Assertive

47. I ran for President to fundamentally change things, to make sure the economy works for everyone so we can all feel pride in what we do.

Assertive

48. To build an economy from the bottom up and the middle out, not from the top down.

Assertive

49. Because when the middle class does well, the poor have a ladder up and the wealthy still do very well. We all do well.

Assertive

50. As my Dad used to say, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, "Honey –it's going to be OK," and mean it.

Assertive

51. So, let's look at the results.

Directive, *direct*

52. Unemployment rate at 3.4%, a 50-year low.

Assertive

53. Near record low unemployment for Black and Hispanic workers.

Assertive

54. We've already created 800,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs, the fastest growth in 40 years.

Assertive

55. Where is it written that America can't lead the world in manufacturing again?

Directive, *ask*

56. For too many decades, we imported products and exported jobs.

Assertive

57. Now, thanks to all we've done, we're exporting American products and creating American jobs.

Assertive

58. Inflation has been a global problem because of the pandemic that disrupted supply chains and Putin's war that disrupted energy and food supplies.

Assertive

59. But we're better positioned than any country on Earth.

Assertive

60. We have more to do, but here at home, inflation is coming down.

Assertive

61. Here at home, gas prices are down \$1.50 a gallon since their peak.

Assertive

62. Food inflation is coming down.

Assertive

63. Inflation has fallen every month for the last six months while take home pay has gone up.

Assertive

64. Additionally, over the last two years, a record 10 million Americans applied to start a new small business.

Assertive

65. Every time somebody starts a small business, it's an act of hope.

Assertive

66. And the Vice President will continue her work to ensure more small businesses can access capital and the historic laws we enacted.

Assertive

67. Standing here last year, I shared with you a story of American genius and possibility.

Assertive

68. Semiconductors, the small computer chips the size of your fingertip that power everything from cellphones to automobiles, and so much more.

Assertive

69. These chips were invented right here in America.

Assertive

70. America used to make nearly 40% of the world's chips.

Assertive

71. But in the last few decades, we lost our edge and we're down to producing only 10%.

Assertive

72. We all saw what happened during the pandemic when chip factories overseas shut down.

Assertive

73. Today's automobiles need up to 3,000 chips each, but American automakers couldn't make enough cars because there weren't enough chips.

Assertive

74. Car prices went up.

Assertive

75. So did everything from refrigerators to cellphones.

Assertive

- 76.** We can never let that happen again.
Assertive
- 77.** That's why we came together to pass the bipartisan CHIPS and Science Act.
Assertive
- 78.** We're making sure the supply chain for America begins in America.
Assertive
- 79.** We've already created 800,000 manufacturing jobs even without this law.
Assertive
- 80.** With this new law, we will create hundreds of thousands of new jobs across the country.
Assertive
- 81.** That's going to come from companies that have announced more than \$300 billion in investments in American manufacturing in the last two years.
Assertive
- 82.** Outside of Columbus, Ohio, Intel is building semiconductor factories on a thousand acres – a literal field of dreams.
Assertive
- 83.** That'll create 10,000 jobs. 7,000 construction jobs. 3,000 jobs once the factories are finished.
Assertive
- 84.** Jobs paying \$130,000 a year, and many don't require a college degree.
Assertive
- 85.** Jobs where people don't have to leave home in search of opportunity.
Assertive
- 86.** And it's just getting started.
Assertive
- 87.** Think about the new homes, new small businesses, and so much more that will come to life.
Directive, *direct*
- 88.** Talk to mayors and Governors, Democrats and Republicans, and they'll tell you what this means to their communities.
Assertive
- 89.** We're seeing these fields of dreams transform the heartland.
Assertive
- 90.** But to maintain the strongest economy in the world, we also need the best infrastructure in the world.
Assertive
- 91.** We used to be #1 in the world in infrastructure, then we fell to #13th.
Assertive
- 92.** Now we're coming back because we came together to pass the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the largest investment in infrastructure since President Eisenhower's Interstate Highway System.
Assertive
- 93.** Already, we've funded over 20,000 projects, including at major airports from Boston to Atlanta to Portland.
Assertive

- 94.** These projects will put hundreds of thousands of people to work rebuilding our highways, bridges, railroads, tunnels, ports and airports, clean water, and high-speed internet across America.
Assertive
- 95.** Urban. Suburban. Rural. Tribal.
Assertive
- 96.** And we're just getting started.
Assertive
- 97.** I sincerely thank my Republican friends who voted for the law.
Expressive, *thank*
- 98.** And to my Republican friends who voted against it but still ask to fund projects in their districts, don't worry.
Directive, *tell*
- 99.** I promised to be the president for all Americans.
Assertive
- 100.** We'll fund your projects.
Commissive, *promise*
- 101.** And I'll see you at the ground-breaking.
Commissive, *promise*
- 102.** This law will help further unite all of America.
Assertive
- 103.** Major projects like the Brent Spence bridge between Kentucky and Ohio over the Ohio River.
Assertive
- 104.** Built 60 years ago.
Assertive
- 105.** Badly in need of repairs.
Assertive
- 106.** One of the nation's most congested freight routes carrying \$2 billion worth of freight every day.
Assertive
- 107.** Folks have been talking about fixing it for decades, but we're finally going to get it done.
Assertive
- 108.** I went there last month with Democrats and Republicans from both states to deliver \$1.6 billion for this project.
Assertive
- 109.** While I was there, I met an ironworker named Sara, who is here tonight.
Assertive
- 110.** For 30 years, she's been a proud member of Ironworkers Local 44, known as the "cowboys of the sky" who built the Cincinnati skyline.
Assertive
- 111.** Sara said she can't wait to be ten stories above the Ohio River building that new bridge.
Assertive
- 112.** That's pride.
Assertive
- 113.** That's what we're also building – Pride.
Assertive

114. We're also replacing poisonous lead pipes that go into 10 million homes and 400,000 schools and childcare centers, so every child in America can drink clean water.

Assertive

115. We're making sure that every community has access to affordable, high-speed internet.

Assertive

116. No parent should have to drive to a McDonald's parking lot so their kid can do their homework online.

Assertive

117. And when we do these projects, we're going to Buy American.

Assertive

118. Buy American has been the law of the land since 1933.

Assertive

119. But for too long, past administrations have found ways to get around it.

Assertive

120. Not anymore.

Assertive

121. Tonight, I'm also announcing new standards to require all construction materials used in federal infrastructure projects to be made in America.

Assertive

122. American-made lumber, glass, drywall, fiber optic cables.

Assertive

123. And on my watch, American roads, American bridges, and American highways will be made with American products.

Assertive

124. My economic plan is about investing in places and people that have been forgotten.

Assertive

125. Amid the economic upheaval of the past four decades, too many people have been left behind or treated like they're invisible.

Assertive

126. Maybe that's you, watching at home.

Assertive

127. You remember the jobs that went away.

Assertive

128. And you wonder whether a path even exists anymore for you and your children to get ahead without moving away.

Assertive

129. I get it.

Assertive

130. That's why we're building an economy where no one is left behind.

Assertive

131. Jobs are coming back, pride is coming back, because of the choices we made in the last two years.

Assertive

132. This is a blue-collar blueprint to rebuild America and make a real difference in your lives.

Assertive

133. For example, too many of you lay in bed at night staring at the ceiling, wondering what will happen if your spouse gets cancer, your child gets sick, or if something happens to you.

Assertive

134. Will you have the money to pay your medical bills?

Directive, *ask*

135. Will you have to sell the house?

Directive, *ask*

136. I get it.

Assertive

137. With the Inflation Reduction Act that I signed into law, we're taking on powerful interests to bring your health care costs down so you can sleep better at night.

Assertive

138. You know, we pay more for prescription drugs than any major country on Earth.

Assertive

139. For example, one in ten Americans has diabetes.

Assertive

140. Every day, millions need insulin to control their diabetes so they can stay alive. Insulin has been around for 100 years.

Assertive

141. It costs drug companies just \$10 a vial to make.

Assertive

142. But, Big Pharma has been unfairly charging people hundreds of dollars – and making record profits.

Assertive

143. Not anymore.

Assertive

144. We capped the cost of insulin at \$35 a month for seniors on Medicare.

Assertive

145. But there are millions of other Americans who are not on Medicare, including 200,000 young people with Type I diabetes who need insulin to save their lives.

Assertive

146. Let's finish the job this time.

Directive, *request*

147. Let's cap the cost of insulin at \$35 a month for every American who needs it.

Directive, *request*

148. This law also caps out-of-pocket drug costs for seniors on Medicare at a maximum \$2,000 per year when there are in fact many drugs, like expensive cancer drugs, that can cost up to \$10,000, \$12,000, and \$14,000 a year.

Assertive

149. If drug prices rise faster than inflation, drug companies will have to pay Medicare back the difference.

Assertive

150. And we're finally giving Medicare the power to negotiate drug prices.

Assertive

151. Bringing down prescription drug costs doesn't just save seniors money.

Assertive

152. It will cut the federal deficit, saving tax payers hundreds of billions of dollars on the prescription drugs the government buys for Medicare.

Assertive

153. Why wouldn't we want to do that?

Directive, *ask*

154. Now, some members here are threatening to repeal the Inflation Reduction Act.

Assertive

155. Make no mistake, if you try to do anything to raise the cost of prescription drugs, I will veto it.

Commissive, *threaten*

156. I'm pleased to say that more Americans have health insurance now than ever in history.

Assertive

157. A record 16 million people are enrolled under the Affordable Care Act.

Assertive

158. Thanks to the law I signed last year, millions are saving \$800 a year on their premiums.

Assertive

159. But the way that law was written, that benefit expires after 2025.

Assertive

160. Let's finish the job, make those savings permanent, and expand coverage to those left off Medicaid.

Directive, *request*

161. Look, the Inflation Reduction Act is also the most significant investment ever to tackle the climate crisis.

Assertive

162. Lowering utility bills, creating American jobs, and leading the world to a clean energy future.

Assertive

163. I've visited the devastating aftermaths of record floods and droughts, storms and wildfires.

Assertive

164. In addition to emergency recovery from Puerto Rico to Florida to Idaho, we are rebuilding for the long term.

Assertive

165. New electric grids able to weather the next major storm.

Assertive

166. Roads and water systems to withstand the next big flood.

Assertive

- 167.** Clean energy to cut pollution and create jobs in communities too often left behind.
Assertive
- 168.** We're building 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations installed across the country by tens of thousands of IBEW workers.
Assertive
- 169.** And helping families save more than \$1,000 a year with tax credits for the purchase of electric vehicles and energy-efficient appliances.
Assertive
- 170.** Historic conservation efforts to be responsible stewards of our lands.
Assertive
- 171.** Let's face reality.
Directive, *request*
- 172.** The climate crisis doesn't care if your state is red or blue. It is an existential threat.
Assertive
- 173.** We have an obligation to our children and grandchildren to confront it. I'm proud of how America is at last stepping up to the challenge.
Assertive
- 174.** But there's so much more to do.
Assertive
- 175.** We will finish the job. x
Commissive, *promise*
- 176.** And we pay for these investments in our future by finally making the wealthiest and the biggest corporations begin to pay their fair share.
Assertive
- 177.** I'm a capitalist.
Declarative, *calling*
- 178.** But just pay your fair share.
Directive, *tell*
- 179.** And I think a lot of you at home agree with me that our present tax system is simply unfair.
Assertive
- 180.** The idea that in 2020, 55 of the biggest companies in America made \$40 billion in profits and paid zero in federal income taxes?
Assertive
- 181.** That's simply not fair.
Assertive
- 182.** But now, because of the law I signed, billion-dollar companies have to pay a minimum of 15%.
Assertive
- 183.** Just 15%.
Assertive
- 184.** That's less than a nurse pays.
Assertive
- 185.** Let me be clear.
Assertive

- 186.** Under my plan, nobody earning less than \$400,000 a year will pay an additional penny in taxes.
Assertive
- 187.** Nobody. Not one penny.
Assertive
- 188.** But there's more to do.
Assertive
- 189.** Let's finish the job.
Directive, *request*
- 190.** Reward work, not just wealth.
Assertive
- 191.** Pass my proposal for a billionaire minimum tax.
Directive, *tell*
- 192.** Because no billionaire should pay a lower tax rate than a school teacher or a firefighter.
Assertive
- 193.** You may have noticed that Big Oil just reported record profits.
Assertive
- 194.** Last year, they made \$200 billion in the midst of a global energy crisis.
Assertive
- 195.** It's outrageous.
Assertive
- 196.** They invested too little of that profit to increase domestic production and keep gas prices down.
Assertive
- 197.** Instead, they used those record profits to buy back their own stock, rewarding their CEOs and shareholders.
Assertive
- 198.** Corporations ought to do the right thing.
Assertive
- 199.** That's why I propose that we quadruple the tax on corporate stock buybacks to encourage long term investments instead.
Directive, *recommend*
- 200.** They will still make a considerable profit.
Assertive
- 201.** Let's finish the job and close the loopholes that allow the very wealthy to avoid paying their taxes.
Directive, *request*
- 202.** Instead of cutting the number of audits of wealthy tax payers,
Assertive
- 203.** I signed a law that will reduce the deficit by \$114 billion by cracking down on wealthy tax cheats.
Assertive
- 204.** That's being fiscally responsible.
Assertive
- 205.** In the last two years, my administration cut the deficit by more than \$1.7 trillion – the largest deficit reduction in American history.
Assertive

206. Under the previous administration, America's deficit went up four years in a row.

Assertive

207. Because of those record deficits, no president added more to the national debt in any four years than my predecessor.

Assertive

208. Nearly 25% of the entire national debt, a debt that took 200 years to accumulate, was added by that administration alone.

Assertive

209. How did Congress respond to all that debt?

Directive, *ask*

210. They lifted the debt ceiling three times without preconditions or crisis.

Assertive

211. They paid America's bills to prevent economic disaster for our country.

Assertive

212. Tonight, I'm asking this Congress to follow suit.

Directive, *ask*

213. Let us commit here tonight that the full faith and credit of the United States of America will never, ever be questioned.

Directive, *request*

214. Some of my Republican friends want to take the economy hostage unless I agree to their economic plans.

Assertive

215. All of you at home should know what their plans are.

Assertive

216. Instead of making the wealthy pay their fair share, some Republicans want Medicare and Social Security to sunset every five years.

Assertive

217. That means if Congress doesn't vote to keep them, those programs will go away.

Assertive

218. Other Republicans say if we don't cut Social Security and Medicare, they'll let America default on its debt for the first time in our history.

Assertive

219. I won't let that happen.

Commissive, *promise*

220. Social Security and Medicare are a lifeline for millions of seniors.

Assertive

221. Americans have been paying into them with every single paycheck since they started working.

Assertive

222. So tonight, let's all agree to stand up for seniors.

Directive, *request*

223. Stand up and show them we will not cut Social Security.

Directive, *tell*

224. We will not cut Medicare.
Commissive, *promise*

225. Those benefits belong to the American people.
Assertive

226. They earned them.
Assertive

227. If anyone tries to cut Social Security, I will stop them.
Commissive, *promise*

228. And if anyone tries to cut Medicare, I will stop them.
Commissive, *promise*

229. I will not allow them to be taken away.
Commissive, *promise*

230. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not ever.
Assertive

231. Next month when I offer my fiscal plan, I ask my Republican friends to offer their plan.
Directive, *ask*

232. We can sit down together and discuss both plans together.
Assertive

233. My plan will lower the deficit by \$2 trillion.
Commissive, *promise*

234. I won't cut a single Social Security or Medicare benefit.
Commissive, *promise*

235. In fact, I will extend the Medicare Trust Fund by at least two decades.
Commissive, *promise*

236. I will not raise taxes on anyone making under \$400,000 a year.
Commissive, *promise*

237. And I will pay for the ideas I've talked about tonight by making the wealthy and big corporations begin to pay their fair share.
Commissive, *promise*

238. Look, here's the deal.
Directive, *direct*

239. Big corporations aren't just taking advantage of the tax code.
Assertive

240. They're taking advantage of you, the American consumer.
Assertive

241. Here's my message to all of you out there
Assertive

242. I have your back.
Assertive

243. We're already preventing insurance companies from sending surprise medical bills, stopping 1 million surprise bills a month.
Assertive

244. We're protecting seniors' lives and life savings by cracking down on nursing homes that commit fraud, endanger patient safety, or prescribe drugs they don't need.

Assertive

245. Millions of Americans can now save thousands of dollars because they can finally get hearing aids over-the-counter without a prescription.

Assertive

246. Capitalism without competition is not capitalism.

Assertive

247. It is exploitation.

Assertive

248. Last year I cracked down on foreign shipping companies that were making you pay higher prices for everyday goods coming into our country.

Assertive

249. I signed a bipartisan bill that cut shipping costs by 90%, helping American farmers, businesses, and consumers.

Assertive

250. Let's finish the job.

Directive, *request*

251. Pass bipartisan legislation to strengthen antitrust enforcement and prevent big online platforms from giving their own products an unfair advantage.

Directive, *tell*

252. My administration is also taking on "junk" fees, those hidden surcharges too many businesses use to make you pay more.

Assertive

253. For example, we're making airlines show you the full ticket price upfront and refund your money if your flight is cancelled or delayed.

Assertive

254. We've reduced exorbitant bank overdraft fees, saving consumers more than \$1 billion a year.

Assertive

255. We're cutting credit card late fees by 75%, from \$30 to \$8.

Assertive

256. Junk fees may not matter to the very wealthy, but they matter to most folks in homes like the one I grew up in.

Assertive

257. They add up to hundreds of dollars a month.

Assertive

258. They make it harder for you to pay the bills or afford that family trip.

Assertive

259. I know how unfair it feels when a company overcharges you and gets away with it.

Assertive

260. Not anymore.

Assertive

261. We've written a bill to stop all that.

Assertive

262. It's called the Junk Fee Prevention Act.

Declarative, *naming*

263. We'll ban surprise "resort fees" that hotels tack on to your bill.

Assertive

264. These fees can cost you up to \$90 a night at hotels that aren't even resorts.

Assertive

265. We'll make cable internet and cellphone companies stop charging you up to \$200 or more when you decide to switch to another provider.

Assertive

266. We'll cap service fees on tickets to concerts and sporting events and make companies disclose all fees upfront.

Assertive

267. And we'll prohibit airlines from charging up to \$50 roundtrip for families just to sit together.

Assertive

268. Baggage fees are bad enough.

Assertive

269. they can't just treat your child like a piece of luggage.

Assertive

270. Americans are tired of being played for suckers.

Assertive

271. Pass the Junk Fee Prevention Act so companies stop ripping us off.

Directive, *tell*

272. For too long, workers have been getting stiffed.

Assertive

273. Not anymore.

Assertive

274. We're beginning to restore the dignity of work.

Assertive

275. For example, 30 million workers had to sign non-compete agreements when they took a job.

Assertive

276. So a cashier at a burger place can't cross the street to take the same job at another burger place to make a couple bucks more.

Assertive

277. Not anymore.

Assertive

278. We're banning those agreements so companies have to compete for workers and pay them what they're worth.

Assertive

279. I'm so sick and tired of companies breaking the law by preventing workers from organizing.

Assertive

280. Pass the PRO Act because workers have a right to form a union.

Directive, *tell*

281. And let's guarantee all workers a living wage.

Directive, *request*

282. Let's also make sure working parents can afford to raise a family with sick days, paid family and medical leave, and affordable child care that will enable millions more people to go to work.

Directive, *request*

283. Let's also restore the full Child Tax Credit,

Directive, *request*

284. which gave tens of millions of parents some breathing room and cut child poverty in half, to the lowest level in history.

Assertive

285. And by the way, when we do all of these things, we increase productivity.

Assertive

286. We increase economic growth.

Assertive

287. Let's also finish the job and get more families access to affordable and quality housing.

Directive, *request*

288. Let's get seniors who want to stay in their homes the care they need to do so.

Directive, *request*

289. And give a little more breathing room to millions of family caregivers looking after their loved ones.

Directive, *request*

290. Pass my plan so we get seniors and people with disabilities the home care services they need and support the workers who are doing God's work.

Directive, *tell*

291. These plans are fully paid for and we can afford to do them.

Assertive

292. Restoring the dignity of work also means making education an affordable ticket to the middle class.

Assertive

293. When we made 12 years of public education universal in the last century, it made us the best-educated, best-prepared nation in the world.

Assertive

294. But the world has caught up.

Assertive

295. Jill, who teaches full-time, has an expression: "Any nation that out-educates us will out-compete us."

Assertive

296. Folks, you all know 12 years is not enough to win the economic competition for the 21st Century.

Assertive

297. If you want America to have the best-educated workforce, let's finish the job by providing access to pre-school for 3- and 4-year-olds.

Assertive

298. Studies show that children who go to pre-school are nearly 50% more likely to finish high school and go on to earn a 2- or 4-year degree, no matter their background.

Assertive

299. Let's give public school teachers a raise.

Directive, *request*

300. And we're making progress by reducing student debt and increasing Pell Grants for working- and middle-class families.

Assertive

301. Let's finish the job, connect students to career opportunities starting in high school and provide two years of community college, some of the best career training in America, in addition to being a pathway to a four-year degree.

Directive, *request*

302. Let's offer every American the path to a good career whether they go to college or not.

Directive, *request*

303. And folks, in the midst of the COVID crisis when schools were closed, let's also recognize how far we've come in the fight against the pandemic itself.

Directive, *request*

304. While the virus is not gone, thanks to the resilience of the American people, we have broken COVID's grip on us.

Assertive

305. COVID deaths are down nearly 90%.

Assertive

306. We've saved millions of lives and opened our country back up.

Assertive

307. And soon we'll end the public health emergency.

Assertive

308. But we will remember the toll and pain that will never go away for so many.

Assertive

309. More than 1 million Americans have lost their lives to COVID.

Assertive

310. Families grieving. Children orphaned. Empty chairs at the dining room table.

Assertive

311. We remember them, and we remain vigilant.

Assertive

312. We still need to monitor dozens of variants and support new vaccines and treatments.

Assertive

313. So Congress needs to fund these efforts and keep America safe.

Assertive

314. And as we emerge from this crisis stronger, I'm also doubling down on prosecuting criminals who stole relief money meant to keep workers and small businesses afloat during the pandemic.

Assertive

315. Before I came to office many inspector generals who protect taxpayer dollars were sidelined. Fraud was rampant.

Assertive

316. Last year, I told you the watchdogs are back.

Assertive

317. Since then, we've recovered billions of taxpayer dollars.

Assertive

318. Now, let's triple our anti-fraud strike forces going after these criminals, double the statute of limitations on these crimes, and crack down on identity fraud by criminal syndicates stealing billions of dollars from the American people.

Assertive

319. For every dollar we put into fighting fraud, taxpayers get back at least ten times as much.

Assertive

320. COVID left other scars, like the spike in violent crime in 2020, the first year of the pandemic.

Assertive

321. We have an obligation to make sure all our people are safe.

Assertive

322. Public safety depends on public trust.

Assertive

323. But too often that trust is violated.

Assertive

324. Joining us tonight are the parents of Tyre Nichols, who had to bury him just last week.

Assertive

325. There are no words to describe the heartbreak and grief of losing a child.

Assertive

326. But imagine what it's like to lose a child at the hands of the law.

Directive, *direct*

327. Imagine having to worry whether your son or daughter will come home from walking down the street or playing in the park or just driving their car.

Directive, *direct*

328. I've never had to have the talk with my children – Beau, Hunter, and Ashley – that so many Black and Brown families have had with their children.

Assertive

329. If a police officer pulls you over, turn on your interior lights.

Assertive

- 330.** Don't reach for your license.
Assertive
- 331.** Keep your hands on the steering wheel.
Assertive
- 332.** Imagine having to worry like that every day in America.
Directive, *direct*
- 333.** Here's what Tyre's mom shared with me when I asked her how she finds the courage to carry on and speak out.
Assertive
- 334.** With faith in God, she said her son "was a beautiful soul and something good will come from this."
Assertive
- 335.** Imagine how much courage and character that takes.
Directive, *direct*
- 336.** It's up to us.
Assertive
- 337.** It's up to all of us.
Assertive
- 338.** We all want the same thing.
Assertive
- 339.** Neighborhoods free of violence.
Assertive
- 340.** Law enforcement who earn the community's trust.
Assertive
- 341.** Our children to come home safely.
Assertive
- 342.** Equal protection under the law; that's the covenant we have with each other in America.
Assertive
- 343.** And we know police officers put their lives on the line every day, and we ask them to do too much.
Assertive
- 344.** To be counselors, social workers, psychologists; responding to drug overdoses, mental health crises, and more.
Assertive
- 345.** We ask too much of them.
Assertive
- 346.** I know most cops are good, decent people.
Assertive
- 347.** They risk their lives every time they put on that shield.
Assertive
- 348.** But what happened to Tyre in Memphis happens too often.
Assertive
- 349.** We have to do better.
Assertive
- 350.** Give law enforcement the training they need, hold them to higher standards, and help them succeed in keeping everyone safe.
Assertive

351. We also need more first responders and other professionals to address growing mental health and substance abuse challenges.

Assertive

352. More resources to reduce violent crime and gun crime; more community intervention programs; more investments in housing, education, and job training.

Assertive

353. All this can help prevent violence in the first place.

Assertive

354. And when police officers or departments violate the public's trust, we must hold them accountable.

Assertive

355. With the support of families of victims, civil rights groups, and law enforcement, I signed an executive order for all federal officers banning chokeholds, restricting no-knock warrants, and other key elements of the George Floyd Act.

Assertive

356. Let's commit ourselves to make the words of Tyre's mother come true, something good must come from this.

Directive, *request*

357. All of us in this chamber, we need to rise to this moment.

Assertive

358. We can't turn away.

Assertive

359. Let's do what we know in our hearts we need to do.

Directive, *request*

360. Let's come together and finish the job on police reform.

Directive, *request*

361. Do something.

Directive, *tell*

362. That was the same plea of parents who lost their children in Uvalde: Do something on gun violence.

Assertive

363. Thank God we did, passing the most sweeping gun safety law in three decades.

Assertive

364. That includes things that the majority of responsible gun owners support, like enhanced background checks for 18 to 21-year-olds and red flag laws keeping guns out of the hands of people who are a danger to themselves and others.

Assertive

365. But we know our work is not done.

Assertive

366. Joining us tonight is Brandon Tsay, a 26-year-old hero.

Assertive

367. Brandon put off his college dreams to stay by his mom's side as she was dying from cancer. He now works at a dance studio started by his grandparents.

Assertive

- 368.** Two weeks ago, during Lunar New Year celebrations, he heard the studio's front door close and saw a man pointing a gun at him.
Assertive
- 369.** He thought he was going to die,
Assertive
- 370.** but then he thought about the people inside.
Assertive
- 371.** In that instant, he found the courage to act and wrestled the semi-automatic pistol away from a gunman who had already killed 11 people at another dance studio.
Assertive
- 372.** He saved lives.
Assertive
- 373.** It's time we do the same as well.
Assertive
- 374.** Ban assault weapons once and for all.
Directive, *tell*
- 375.** We did it before.
Assertive
- 376.** I led the fight to ban them in 1994.
Assertive
- 377.** In the 10 years the ban was law, mass shootings went down.
Assertive
- 378.** After Republicans let it expire, mass shootings tripled.
Assertive
- 379.** Let's finish the job and ban assault weapons again.
Directive, *request*
- 380.** And let's also come together on immigration and make it a bipartisan issue like it was before.
Directive, *request*
- 381.** We now have a record number of personnel working to secure the border, arresting 8,000 human smugglers and seizing over 23,000 pounds of fentanyl in just the last several months.
Assertive
- 382.** Since we launched our new border plan last month, unlawful migration from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Venezuela has come down 97%.
Assertive
- 383.** But America's border problems won't be fixed until Congress acts.
Assertive
- 384.** If you won't pass my comprehensive immigration reform, at least pass my plan to provide the equipment and officers to secure the border.
Directive, *beg*
- 385.** And a pathway to citizenship for Dreamers, those on temporary status, farm workers, and essential workers.
Directive, *request*

386. Here in the people's House, it's our duty to protect all the people's rights and freedoms.

Assertive

387. Congress must restore the right the Supreme Court took away last year and codify Roe v. Wade to protect every woman's constitutional right to choose.

Assertive

388. The Vice President and I are doing everything we can to protect access to reproductive health care and safeguard patient privacy.

Assertive

389. But already, more than a dozen states are enforcing extreme abortion bans.

Assertive

390. Make no mistake; if Congress passes a national abortion ban, I will veto it.

Commissive, *threaten*

391. Let's also pass the bipartisan Equality Act to ensure LGBTQ Americans, especially transgender young people, can live with safety and dignity.

Directive, *request*

392. Our strength is not just the example of our power, but the power of our example.

Assertive

393. Let's remember the world is watching.

Directive, *request*

394. I spoke from this chamber one year ago, just days after Vladimir Putin unleashed his brutal war against Ukraine.

Assertive

395. A murderous assault, evoking images of the death and destruction Europe suffered in World War II.

Assertive

396. Putin's invasion has been a test for the ages. A test for America. A test for the world.

Assertive

397. Would we stand for the most basic of principles?

Directive, *ask*

398. Would we stand for sovereignty?

Directive, *ask*

399. Would we stand for the right of people to live free from tyranny?

Directive, *ask*

400. Would we stand for the defense of democracy?

Directive, *ask*

401. For such a defense matters to us because it keeps the peace and prevents open season for would-be aggressors to threaten our security and prosperity.

Assertive

402. One year later, we know the answer.

Assertive

- 403.** Yes, we would.
Assertive
- 404.** And yes, we did.
Assertive
- 405.** Together, we did what America always does at our best.
Assertive
- 406.** We led.
Assertive
- 407.** We united NATO and built a global coalition.
Assertive
- 408.** We stood against Putin's aggression.
Assertive
- 409.** We stood with the Ukrainian people.
Assertive
- 410.** Tonight, we are once again joined by Ukraine's Ambassador to the United States.
Assertive
- 411.** She represents not just her nation, but the courage of her people.
Assertive
- 412.** Ambassador, America is united in our support for your country.
Assertive
- 413.** We will stand with you as long as it takes.
Assertive
- 414.** Our nation is working for more freedom, more dignity, and more peace, not just in Europe, but everywhere.
Assertive
- 415.** Before I came to office, the story was about how the People's Republic of China was increasing its power and America was falling in the world.
Assertive
- 416.** Not anymore.
Assertive
- 417.** I've made clear with President Xi that we seek competition, not conflict.
Assertive
- 418.** I will make no apologies that we are investing to make America strong.
Commissive, *promise*
- 419.** Investing in American innovation, in industries that will define the future, and that China's government is intent on dominating.
Assertive
- 420.** Investing in our alliances and working with our allies to protect our advanced technologies so they're not used against us.
Assertive
- 421.** Modernizing our military to safeguard stability and deter aggression.
Assertive

422. Today, we're in the strongest position in decades to compete with China or anyone else in the world.

Assertive

423. I am committed to work with China where it can advance American interests and benefit the world.

Assertive

424. But make no mistake: as we made clear last week, if China's threatens our sovereignty, we will act to protect our country.

Commissive, *promise*

425. And we did.

Assertive

426. And let's be clear: winning the competition with China should unite all of us.

Assertive

427. We face serious challenges across the world.

Assertive

428. But in the past two years, democracies have become stronger, not weaker.

Assertive

429. Autocracies have grown weaker, not stronger.

Assertive

430. America is rallying the world again to meet those challenges, from climate and global health, to food insecurity, to terrorism and territorial aggression.

Assertive

431. Allies are stepping up, spending more and doing more.

Assertive

432. And bridges are forming between partners in the Pacific and those in the Atlantic.

Assertive

433. And those who bet against America are learning just how wrong they are.

Assertive

434. It's never a good bet to bet against America.

Assertive

435. When I came to office, most everyone assumed bipartisanship was impossible.

Assertive

436. But I never believed it.

Assertive

437. That's why a year ago, I offered a Unity Agenda for the nation.

Assertive

438. We've made real progress.

Assertive

439. Together, we passed a law making it easier for doctors to prescribe effective treatments for opioid addiction.

Assertive

440. Passed a gun safety law making historic investments in mental health.

Assertive

- 441.** Launched ARPA-H to drive breakthroughs in the fight against cancer, Alzheimer's, diabetes, and so much more.
Assertive
- 442.** We passed the Heath Robinson PACT Act, named for the late Iraq war veteran whose story about exposure to toxic burn pits I shared here last year.
Assertive
- 443.** But there is so much more to do. And we can do it together.
Assertive
- 444.** Joining us tonight is a father named Doug from Newton, New Hampshire.
Assertive
- 445.** He wrote Jill and me a letter about his daughter Courtney. Contagious laugh. Her sister's best friend.
Assertive
- 446.** He shared a story all too familiar to millions of Americans.
Assertive
- 447.** Courtney discovered pills in high school.
Assertive
- 448.** It spiraled into addiction and eventually her death from a fentanyl overdose.
Assertive
- 449.** She was 20 years old.
Assertive
- 450.** Describing the last eight years without her, Doug said, "There is no worse pain."
Assertive
- 451.** Yet their family has turned pain into purpose, working to end stigma and change laws.
Assertive
- 452.** He told us he wants to "start the journey towards America's recovery."
Assertive
- 453.** Doug, we're with you.
Assertive
- 454.** Fentanyl is killing more than 70,000 Americans a year.
Assertive
- 455.** Let's launch a major surge to stop fentanyl production, sale, and trafficking, with more drug detection machines to inspect cargo and stop pills and powder at the border.
Directive, *request*
- 456.** Working with couriers like Fed Ex to inspect more packages for drugs.
Assertive
- 457.** Strong penalties to crack down on fentanyl trafficking.
Assertive
- 458.** Second, let's do more on mental health, especially for our children.
Directive, *request*

459. When millions of young people are struggling with bullying, violence, trauma, we owe them greater access to mental health care at school.

Assertive

460. We must finally hold social media companies accountable for the experiment they are running on our children for profit.

Assertive

461. And it's time to pass bipartisan legislation to stop Big Tech from collecting personal data on kids and teenagers online, ban targeted advertising to children, and impose stricter limits on the personal data these companies collect on all of us.

Assertive

462. Third, let's do more to keep our nation's one truly sacred obligation: to equip those we send into harm's way and care for them and their families when they come home.

Directive, *request*

463. Job training and job placement for veterans and their spouses as they return to civilian life.

Assertive

464. Helping veterans afford their rent because no one should be homeless in this country, especially not those who served it.

Assertive

465. And we cannot go on losing 17 veterans a day to the silent scourge of suicide.

Assertive

466. The VA is doing everything it can, including expanding mental health screenings and a proven program that recruits veterans to help other veterans understand what they're going through and get the help they need.

Assertive

467. And fourth, last year Jill and I re-ignited the Cancer Moonshot that President Obama asked me to lead in our Administration.

Assertive

468. Our goal is to cut the cancer death rate by at least 50% over the next 25 years.

Assertive

469. Turn more cancers from death sentences into treatable diseases. And provide more support for patients and families.

Assertive

470. It's personal for so many of us.

Assertive

471. Joining us are Maurice and Kandice, an Irishman and a daughter of immigrants from Panama.

Assertive

472. They met and fell in love in New York City and got married in the same chapel as Jill and I did.

Assertive

473. Kindred spirits.

Declarative, *calling*

- 474.** He wrote us a letter about their little daughter Ava.
Assertive
- 475.** She was just a year old when she was diagnosed with a rare kidney cancer.
Assertive
- 476.** 26 blood transfusions. 11 rounds of radiation. 8 rounds of chemo. 1 kidney removed.
Assertive
- 477.** A 5% survival rate.
Assertive
- 478.** He wrote how in the darkest moments he thought, “if she goes, I can’t stay.”
Assertive
- 479.** Jill and I understand, like so many of you.
Assertive
- 480.** They read how Jill described our family’s cancer journey and how we tried to steal moments of joy where you can.
Assertive
- 481.** For them, that glimmer of joy was a half-smile from their baby girl. It meant everything.
Assertive
- 482.** They never gave up hope.
Assertive
- 483.** Ava never gave up hope. She turns four next month.
Assertive
- 484.** They just found out that Ava beat the odds and is on her way to being cancer free, and she’s watching from the White House tonight.
Assertive
- 485.** For the lives we can save and for the lives we have lost, let this be a truly American moment that rallies the country and the world together and proves that we can do big things.
Assertive
- 486.** Twenty years ago, under the leadership of President Bush and countless advocates and champions, we undertook a bipartisan effort through PEPFAR to transform the global fight against HIV/AIDS.
Assertive
- 487.** It’s been a huge success.
Assertive
- 488.** I believe we can do the same with cancer.
Assertive
- 489.** Let’s end cancer as we know it and cure some cancers once and for all.
Directive, *request*
- 490.** There’s one reason why we’re able to do all of these things: our democracy itself.
Assertive
- 491.** It’s the most fundamental thing of all.
Assertive

- 492.** With democracy, everything is possible.
Assertive
- 493.** Without it, nothing is.
Assertive
- 494.** For the last few years our democracy has been threatened, attacked, and put at risk.
Assertive
- 495.** Put to the test here, in this very room, on January 6th.
Assertive
- 496.** And then, just a few months ago, unhinged by the Big Lie, an assailant unleashed political violence in the home of the then-Speaker of this House of Representatives.
Assertive
- 497.** Using the very same language that insurrectionists who stalked these halls chanted on January 6th.
Assertive
- 498.** Here tonight in this chamber is the man who bears the scars of that brutal attack, but is as tough and strong and as resilient as they get.
Assertive
- 499.** My friend, Paul Pelosi.
Assertive
- 500.** But such a heinous act never should have happened.
Assertive
- 501.** We must all speak out.
Directive, *tell*
- 502.** There is no place for political violence in America.
Assertive
- 503.** In America, we must protect the right to vote, not suppress that fundamental right.
Assertive
- 504.** We honor the results of our elections, not subvert the will of the people.
Assertive
- 505.** We must uphold the rule of the law and restore trust in our institutions of democracy.
Directive, *tell*
- 506.** And we must give hate and extremism in any form no safe harbor.
Directive, *tell*
- 507.** Democracy must not be a partisan issue.
Assertive
- 508.** It must be an American issue.
Assertive
- 509.** Every generation of Americans has faced a moment where they have been called on to protect our democracy, to defend it, to stand up for it.
Assertive
- 510.** And this is our moment.
Assertive
- 511.** My fellow Americans, we meet tonight at an inflection point.
Assertive

512. One of those moments that only a few generations ever face, where the decisions we make now will decide the course of this nation and of the world for decades to come.

Assertive

513. We are not bystanders to history.

Assertive

514. We are not powerless before the forces that confront us.

Assertive

515. It is within our power, of We the People.

Assertive

516. We are facing the test of our time and the time for choosing is at hand.

Assertive

517. We must be the nation we have always been at our best. Optimistic. Hopeful. Forward-looking.

Assertive

518. A nation that embraces, light over darkness, hope over fear, unity over division. Stability over chaos.

Assertive

519. We must see each other not as enemies, but as fellow Americans.

Assertive

520. We are a good people, the only nation in the world built on an idea.

Assertive

521. That all of us, every one of us, is created equal in the image of God.

Assertive

522. A nation that stands as a beacon to the world.

Assertive

523. A nation in a new age of possibilities.

Assertive

524. So I have come here to fulfil my constitutional duty to report on the state of the union.

Assertive

525. And here is my report.

Assertive

526. Because the soul of this nation is strong, because the backbone of this nation is strong, because the people of this nation are strong, the State of the Union is strong.

Assertive

527. As I stand here tonight, I have never been more optimistic about the future of America.

Assertive

528. We just have to remember who we are.

Assertive

529. We are the United States of America and there is nothing, nothing beyond our capacity if we do it together.

Assertive

530. May God bless you all.
Assertive

531. May God protect our troops.
Assertive