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Patrick Martin and Andre Damon
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In midst of impeachment, Pelosi honors Trump with State of the Union invitation

Less than forty-eight hours after voting to impeach President Donald Trump, Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi invited him to give the annual State of the Union address to Congress.

It would be normal for a House speaker to withhold such an invitation to a President who, like Trump, is accused of “high crimes and misdemeanors,” and who theoretically might be removed from office within a matter of weeks.



President Donald Trump shakes hands with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi as he arrives in the House chamber before giving his State of the Union address [Credit: Doug Mills/*New York Times* via AP, Pool]

Last year, Pelosi withdrew her offer to have Trump deliver the State of the Union address until after the deal which ended an ongoing government shutdown. She even suggested that Trump forgo the speech altogether and just send a written message, as every president before Woodrow Wilson had done.

The move underscores the element of fecklessness and deceit that has characterized the impeachment. At every turn, the Democrats have avoided doing anything that would mobilize public opposition to Trump, who maintains the lowest approval rating of any president since World War II, and who is broadly despised for his human rights abuses against immigrants and ties to fascist groups.

Pelosi's invitation undermines the claims by Congressional Democrats that having allegedly "solicited the interference of a foreign government" Trump presents a "clear and present danger" to democracy so great that it was necessary to fast-track the impeachment proceedings.

What will Trump's State of the Union address look like?

If the Senate impeachment trial is ongoing, he could use the speech to make a public appeal against his accusers in a bid to influence the trial and mobilize support against it.

Alternatively, Trump's State of the Union speech could take place in the aftermath of an acquittal, allowing Trump to take a victory lap, strengthen his position, and denounce the Democrats for good measure.

The White House made a brief statement saying the President had "accepted the Speaker's invitation." But Trump's real response came the next day, when he gave what could easily be described as the most openly fascist and authoritarian speech of his presidency.

Speaking before the far-right Turning Point student organization, Trump bellowed in apocalyptic language, "The coming months will decide whether our country will be governed by a corrupt, failed, and far-left ruling class or whether we will govern our country."

When he was interrupted by chants of "four more years" after he referred to "extreme leftists," Trump declared, if you want to drive them crazy, go "16 more years." Amid general applause, members of the crowd responded by repeating the chant, "16 more years."

Inciting the crowd to name those who are “beyond socialists,” the audience roared, two separate times, “Communists!” Playing to his fascistic audience, Trump condemned the political “left” more than 20 times.

In other words, Trump’s response to what is increasingly viewed as a failed impeachment drive has been to intensify his fascistic demagoguery. He knows that the Democrats will oppose him on nothing, and the media will ignore his open incitements of violence and total contempt for constitutional limits on the presidency.

In fact, Pelosi’s congressional invitation caps a week that Trump’s allies called the “biggest week” of his presidency, full of “historic” victories for his agenda.

On Friday, Trump signed the National Defense Authorization Act, the largest military spending bill in American history, after Democrats effectively removed all limits on military deployments—including against Iraq and Yemen—as well as prohibitions on using Pentagon funds for his border wall.

In his speech the next day, Trump boasted, “When it comes to the military, there is no budget [deficit],” as the Democrats have given him an effective blank check to fund the military.

He further bragged about his Democratic opponents having totally abandoned opposition to his construction of concentration camps to detain immigrant families, his child separation policy, and his illegal misappropriation of money to build his border wall.

Trump gloated, “It’s funny. I got that one through, as part of the defense bill, because you know what? The Democrats don’t like the issue anymore... they sort of let that one sail through. They got tired of that wall fight.”

On Thursday, congressional Democrats voted to approve Trump’s USMCA trade agreement, which former strategist Steve Bannon described as creating a “geostrategic manufacturing base in North America” to counter China.

The stream of political victories showered upon Trump, capped off by his invitation by the Democrats to give the State of the Union address, underscores certain basic realities.

For all the rhetorical declarations that “our founders’ vision of a republic is under threat from actions from the White House,” as Pelosi put it, the differences between the two parties are not fundamental.

The conflict between Trump and the Democrats is, as former President Barack Obama put it, an “intramural scrimmage,” a term denoting a game between two sections of the same team.

The Democrats have centered their opposition to Trump on the accusation that he has been insufficiently aggressive against Russia, declaring in the articles of impeachment that he “abused the powers of the Presidency by ignoring and injuring national security” by delaying sending weapons to arm Ukraine.

In other words, their differences with Trump are of a purely tactical character, centering on disagreements over foreign policy. On the fundamental class questions facing the ruling elite—slashing taxes for corporations, funding the gestapo on the border, and swelling the coffers of the Pentagon—they are united.

All of this makes clear that a serious struggle against Trump can only come through a movement totally opposed to the Democratic Party. The fight to remove Trump requires the building of a mass socialist movement of the working class, fighting to break the power of the financial oligarchy that both Trump and the Democrats speak for.

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