

# News From The States

# EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

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Anybody watch anything good on TV last night?



## The Big Takeaway

President Joe Biden made a bold case for a second term in a barnstorming State of the Union address Thursday night, framing himself as a bipartisan dealmaker and defender of democracy while painting Donald Trump as a threat to freedom, individual rights and the fabric of the republic itself, [our D.C. bureau reported](#).



*Let's do this, folks.*  
(Photo by Shawn Thew/Getty Images)

**Referring to him only as “my predecessor,”** Biden lambasted Trump a total of 13 times, attacking his stance on abortion rights (“He’s the reason [Roe v. Wade] was overturned. And he brags about it. Look at the chaos that has resulted”), his weird penchant for authoritarians (he “tells Putin, quote, ‘Do whatever the hell you want’”) and his ongoing attempts to “bury the truth” about the Jan. 6 insurrection.

“I will not do that,” Biden said. “This is a moment to speak the truth and to bury the lies. Here’s the simple truth: You can’t love your country only when you win.”

For 68 minutes, Biden held court, touting his own legislative accomplishments and laying out plans to cut health care costs and raise taxes on the ultra-wealthy, with frequent pauses to trade barbs with congressional Republicans over immigration, the COVID-19 pandemic and the economy. The freewheeling back-and-forth was a stark contrast to the [traditional](#), stuffy State of the Union speech, in which presidents brag on their records and make a host of optimistic/[contrived](#) promises they probably [can’t deliver](#). It was an intentional shift, designed to assuage fears over Biden’s age, mental acuity and ability to best Trump in November. And for Democrats, at least, it seemed to work.

“We are exhilarated!” Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer shouted after the speech, pumping his fists up and down.



*“I am not.”*  
(Screenshot via C-SPAN)

**Republicans, not so much.** The official GOP response fell to U.S. Sen. Katie Britt, an Alabama Republican who delivered her extremely dramatic State of the Union talking points from an extremely beige kitchen, [our D.C. bureau reported](#).

Seated at her family table, Britt described an America ripped to shreds under a president who has “refused to take responsibility” for his own failures on immigration, geopolitics and the economy. She insisted that Republicans support in vitro fertilization just nine days after Senate Republicans [blocked a bill](#) that would have ensured access to in vitro fertilization. She sought to stoke fear over [nonexistent local crime waves](#), insisting that “life is getting more and more dangerous.” At times she whispered, in what appeared to be a poor attempt at imitating Biden; at other times she spoke as if on the verge of tears, in what appeared to be a poor attempt at imitating emotion. The unifying theme, if there was one, was overacting with a dash of political hyperbole. Biden, she concluded, is a “commander-in-chief” who is “not in command.”

We were, apparently, supposed to interpret this as folksy and relatable, according to talking points sent to conservative influencers hours before Biden

stepped foot inside the U.S. Capitol.

“She came off like America’s mom — she gets it,” suggested the document, disseminated by Britt’s team and later [obtained by the New York Times](#). “She’s one of us.”

But also, sort of Reagan-esque, the document continued. Ah, yes, everyone’s favorite duo — Reagan, and their mom.

“The conclusion of her border section was a real ‘Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall,’ moment,” the list said.

Yeah, so, we don’t have a wall, because Mexico [wouldn’t pay to build one](#) and also because a border wall is a [stupid non-solution](#) to the [complicated problem](#) of our broken [immigration system](#). (Turns out, [so is Congress!](#)) But if we *did* have a wall, I’m confident it would still be standing today.

### **Mr. Gorbachev, change that channel**

- [Alabama House approves bill criminalizing some absentee ballot assistance](#)
- [Judge rules Louisiana governor, former secretary of state must pay attorneys’ fees for failed election delay](#)
- [Dysfunction in Congress putting the brakes on Ohio lawmakers’ attempts at improving rail safety](#)
- [Amid white supremacist scandal, far-right billionaire powerbrokers see historic election gains in Texas](#)



### **Also Trending**

Minnesota lawmakers this week advanced a bill that would allow police officers to use prone restraints on public school students, a de facto repeal of a 2023 law that barred adults from restraining students in any way that could inhibit their ability to breathe or communicate distress. Police departments across the state pulled officers from schools last year over concerns that their continued use of prone, or face-down, restraints violated that law, but some have already returned. No one seems to know how many. And no one seems particularly concerned by that, [the Minnesota Reformer reported](#).



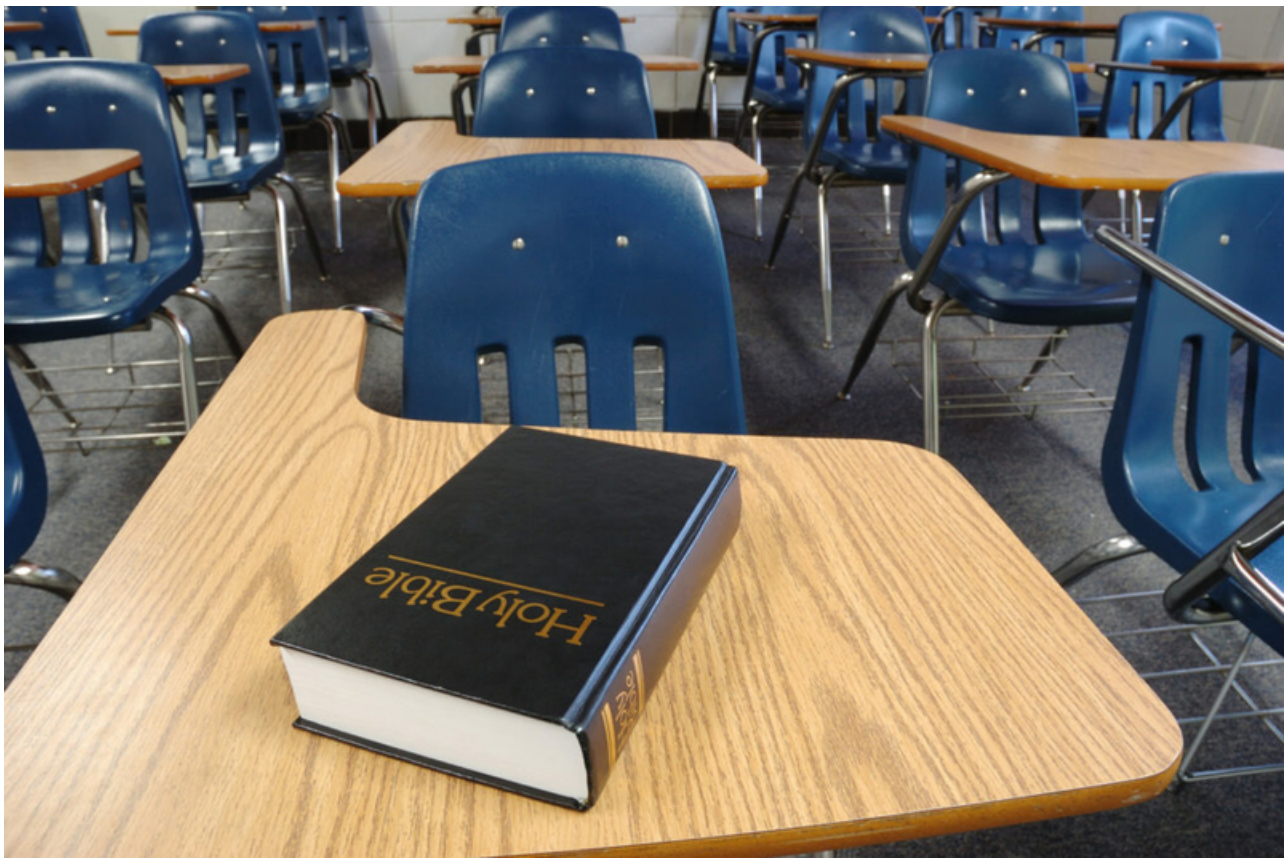
*No red alert for the data gap, apparently.  
(Photo via Getty Images)*

**The most common estimate is 40 schools**, a number that originated from the Minnesota Police Chiefs Association and has not been corroborated. (The group declined to provide a list of schools.) A review of media reports on police pulled from schools found stories from just 11 districts, five of which have since reinstated officers or reassigned them. That leaves just six school districts awaiting a legislative solution — a tiny pool for what lawmakers have deemed a high-priority issue just weeks into this year’s session.

But proponents of the measure said it goes beyond just prone restraints. The legislation, approved 124-8 by the House on Monday, would also codify the role of school resource officers and require the state licensing board to create a model training policy with input from stakeholders and outside groups.

**Question marks also abound in Florida**, where lawmakers on Thursday approved a bill to allow dubiously qualified volunteer chaplains to provide nonspecific “support and services” to public school students. The proposal, now awaiting a signature from Gov. Ron DeSantis, is one of at least a dozen similar bills introduced in red states across the country, [the Florida Phoenix reported](#).





*This is really heavy just gonna leave it right here thanks  
(Photo by Getty Images)*

The policy, if enacted, would allow school districts to decide whether to establish chaplain programs and the details of how they would work, including additional regulations and training requirements. As written, the bill requires only that prospective chaplains pass a background check, and that they meet only with students whose parents have given consent in writing.

Supporters of the bill said it obeys anti-discrimination laws by allowing volunteers from any — or no — religion to serve as chaplains, a more permissive policy than in state hospitals, prisons and other public facilities. That was little comfort to civil rights groups, who criticized the attempt to place schools and jails on the same playing field.

“Public school students have unfettered access to religious services in their communities and through their families,” the ACLU of Florida, Interfaith Alliance and dozens of other groups wrote in a letter to state legislators ahead of the bill’s passage. “They do not need chaplains, selected and imposed by the government, to practice their faith.”

“Allowing chaplains to provide counseling and other support services in public

schools would violate students' and families' religious-freedom rights by exposing all public school students to the risk of chaplains evangelizing them or imposing religion on them throughout their school day," Kara Gross, legislative director and senior policy counsel at the ACLU of Florida, added in a statement after the proposal cleared the legislature. "The First Amendment protects the right of all students to attend public schools without the risk of religious indoctrination by government-approved chaplains. We urge the governor to veto this bill immediately."

## Hit the books

- [Alabama House passes bill restricting DEI initiatives, stirs debate on free speech](#)
- [Catholic group, others advocate for tax credits to benefit Kansas private schools](#)
- [Missouri bill would establish 'Danny's Law' to protect 911 callers in hazing incidents](#)
- [At least seven Ohio universities are reviewing race-based scholarships after Supreme Court ruling](#)



## From The Newsrooms

### Criminal Justice

- [Arkansas Supreme Court won't fast-track case against Board of Corrections](#)
- [Tragic deaths inspire Kansas House to embrace bill criminalizing intentional incitement of suicide](#)
- [Use of force incidents high among New Jersey cops who attended controversial police training conference](#)
- [\(Wisconsin\) Milwaukee police chief on crime, guns, new technology and the RNC](#)

### Health Care

- [Hospital patients, staff plead for Yale New Haven Health sale in](#)
- [Health professionals push to reduce congenital syphilis infections killing](#)

[emails to Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont](#)

- [Idaho ban on public funds for gender-affirming care heads to House floor](#)

[Missouri babies](#)

- [Nevada county buys unused psych hospital to create behavioral health crisis stabilization center](#)

## Reproductive Rights

- [Two women needed to end their pregnancies. Only one got to do it on her terms.](#)
- [Iowa House passes bill raising penalties for fetal deaths, adding 'unborn person' language](#)
- [Senate panel hears testimony on bills to reshape Michigan surrogacy laws](#)
- [Wisconsin Democrats make another push to codify a right to birth control](#)



## One Last Thing

There is apparently a Stormy Daniels [documentary](#), which honestly seems like something I should have anticipated.

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