



# K-12 Civic Learning Opportunities State of the Union

## STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS

The address will be January 24, 2012 at 9:00 PM. It will be televised on major networks and news channels. The text is usually printed the next morning in the newspaper, and the video available online. GenerationNation will post the text and video on its Civic Learning Center, [www.kidsvotingcharlotte.org](http://www.kidsvotingcharlotte.org) (also accessible from the main website [www.generationnation.org](http://www.generationnation.org)).

### What is the State of the Union Address?

The State of the Union is an annual address presented before a joint session of Congress and held in the House of Representatives Chamber at the U.S. Capitol. The address reports on the nation, and allows the President to outline his legislative agenda and national priorities to Congress and the American public.

### Objective and Activity

In this activity, students will watch or read the State of the Union address and think critically about the speech, its content, how it is communicated and how it is reported.

A variety of activities are available. Modify based on your grade level or subject area. For example, you can focus students on the community, North Carolina, the United States or another country. Connect this to history, literature or in a global community.

Students may watch the State of the Union live, watch it in class or read the text. There are many opportunities for writing, reading, small group discussion and oral presentation. The activity aligns with several core standards. Skills include:

- Persuasion
- Critical thinking and analysis
- Reading and writing
- Active listening
- Civic literacy
- Media literacy
- Collaboration
- Civic leadership
- Local and State Government
- Federal Government
- Effective communication
- Family dialogue and group discussion
- Connecting historic events, personal knowledge, current events or global life



## Getting ready

### **What is the purpose of the State of the Union Address?**

The State of the Union is an annual address presented before a joint session of Congress and held in the House of Representatives Chamber at the U.S. Capitol. The address reports on the condition of the country, and allows the President to outline his legislative agenda and national priorities to Congress (and the American public).

### **When and where is the State of the Union Address?**

The address is January 24, 2012 at 9:00 PM. It is televised on major networks and news channels. The text is usually printed the next morning in the newspaper, and the video available online. GenerationNation will post links to the text and video on its Civic Learning Center [www.kidsvotingcharlotte.org](http://www.kidsvotingcharlotte.org) , also accessible from the main webpage [www.generationnation.org](http://www.generationnation.org) .

The address is held at the US Capitol, in Washington, DC. It happens each January, after each year of the President's 4-year term begins on January 20.

### **Who attends?**

Three branches of the federal government: Executive (President and Cabinet), Legislative (Congress) and Judicial (Supreme Court). *At least one important official is selected to not attend. This is so that someone is available in the event something bad happens to the many important leaders who will be meeting in one location.*

First Lady and Special Guests: often, the President will invite guests who have been newsworthy or who represent a topic he will address. For example, if he plans to talk about education he may invite a teacher. The guests sit in the balcony with the First Lady.

### **What is the ceremony?**

The State of the Union Address not only provides important information about the President's goals, it is a ceremonial event that has taken place (in some form) since 1790. The location and method of delivering the speech has changed over the years.

- Usually, the members of the House enter and are seated at 8:30PM.
- Then the Vice-President and Senate are announced and take their seats.
- The Supreme Court Justices and President Cabinet members enter, go to their seats.
- At 9, the President is announced. He enters the meeting room, and usually takes some time to shake hands and greet a few people as he makes his way to the podium. People clap and cheer.
- Then he delivers the address for about an hour.

## Politics and news coverage

The Vice President and Speaker of the House sit behind the President. It is sometimes interesting to watch their expressions as he speaks. They will also stand up and/or clap and cheer (or stay seated) when the President makes a point they like or don't like.



During the address, the different political parties will stand up and clap and cheer about parts of the speech they agree or disagree with. Often, when one party claps, the other party makes a big deal out of *not* clapping or standing up – almost as if they were sitting on their hands to symbolize that they do not agree!

In 2011, it was proposed that the attendees *not* sit by political party or stand and clap during key points in the speech, to symbolize their bipartisanship.

Watch how the media covers the State of the Union address, including before the speech, the discussions afterward, and the news reporting the next day.

After the State of the Union address, the opposing party (this year the Republicans, because the President is a Democrat) will issue their response. This is usually televised immediately after the State of the Union, and made available by text and video online.

## Topics in the State of the Union Address

**The President may cover a variety of topics such as:**

- Afterschool Programs
- Children/ Youth
- Cities
- College
- Economy
- Environment
- Global issues
- Government
- Graduation rate
- Health
- Housing
- Jobs
- Justice
- K-12 Education
- Leadership
- Military
- NASA
- Politics
- Research
- Safety
- Taxes
- Technology
- Terrorism
- Working together

## Learning Activities

### Watch, read and discuss

Watch or read the address, either the night it is delivered, the next day, or later in the week.

Write an outline of the important topics covered.

Discuss the speech in small groups.

Write your own State of the Union Address, and share it with your class.



### **Pick and predict**

Before you watch or read the address, decide which 1-3 topics are most important to you. Then decide which 1-3 topics you predict the President will talk about. Are they the same or different? Why?

Watch or read the address. Were your topics covered? How many times? Did you correctly predict what the President would talk about?

### **What's for kids?**

What does the President talk about that is of interest to or affects kids? How many times does he talk about those topics? Why do you think that is?

### **Connecting to schools, cities, states, country and the world**

If you are studying any form of government in school, keep track of the number of times the President mentions something that could impact one of these levels of government:

- Student Council
- School Board
- City or town
- County
- State
- United States
- Global
- Other?

### **Write the headline**

If you were reporting on the State of the Union address, what would your headline say?

The next day, read news headlines. Were you close? Were they right? Why or why not?

Read headlines about the address from different news sources. What do they say? How are they similar or different? Why?

Charlotte Observer <http://www.charlotteobserver.com>

CNN <http://www.cnn.com>

Fox News <http://www.foxnews.com>

Wall Street Journal <http://online.wsj.com/home-page>

BBC <http://www.bbc.com/>

NPR <http://www.npr.org/>

CSPAN <http://www.c-span.org/>



## Scorecard or Bingo

Use or create a score or bingo card with words and topics you think the President will cover.

## What's your Response?

Write and/or deliver your opposition response to the State of the Union address.

You can play the role of the opposite political party or a global leader. Take it back in history and write a response to an address delivered in the past.

## Communication skills

### How does the President communicate the information?

- Does he read from a piece of paper?
- Does he raise or lower his voice or move his hands to illustrate a specific point?
- What emotions and expressions does the President show?
- Does he look confident?
- How is he dressed? Does this matter?
- Do people pay attention?
- Is he persuasive? How?
- What do you think is the most effective thing he does to communicate the information? Least effective?

## Web resources

**Wikipedia** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State\\_of\\_the\\_Union\\_address](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_of_the_Union_address)

**2011 State of the Union** <http://www.whitehouse.gov/state-of-the-union-2011>

**2010 State of the Union** <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-state-union-address>

**The American Presidency Project** <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/> *History of State of the Union Address, copies of speeches, lists of guests, opposition responses and more*

**Factcheck.org** <http://www.factcheck.org/> *Check out the facts from the State of the Union address and the Opposition Response*

**CSPAN** <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/>

**News media (variety of sources)**



## Communication skills

Watch the State of the Union Address live or on video. Watch the President carefully, and answer these questions. Write your answers or share in groups or with your class.

### How does the President communicate the information?

1. Does he read from a piece of paper?
2. Does he raise or lower his voice or move his hands to illustrate a specific point?
3. Does the President show emotions and expressions? How? Why? When?
4. Does he look confident? How?
5. How is he dressed? Does this matter?
6. Do people pay attention? How?
7. Is he persuasive? How?
8. What do you think is the most effective thing he does to communicate the information? Least effective?
9. What else did you notice?



## Write the headline

Watch or read the State of the Union Address live or on video. Pay attention, and answer these questions. Write your answers or share in groups or with your class.

If you were reporting on the State of the Union address, what would your headline be?

The next day, read actual headlines. Were you close? Were they right? Why or why not?

Read headlines from different news sources. What do they say? How are they similar or different? Why?

Charlotte Observer <http://www.charlotteobserver.com>

Headline:

CNN <http://www.cnn.com>

Headline:

Fox News <http://www.foxnews.com>

Headline:

Wall Street Journal <http://online.wsj.com/home-page>

Headline:

BBC <http://www.bbc.com/>

Headline:

NPR <http://www.npr.org/>

Headline:

CSPAN <http://www.cspan.org/>

Headline:



## Is the President talking to me?

Watch or read the State of the Union Address live or on video. Pay attention, and answer these questions. Write your answers or share in groups or with your class.

### Possible topics in the State of the Union Address

- Afterschool Programs
- Children/ Youth
- Cities
- Economy
- Environment
- Global issues
- Government
- Graduation rate
- Health
- Housing
- Jobs
- Justice
- K-12
- Education
- Leadership
- Military
- NASA
- Politics
- Pre-K Education
- Research
- Safety
- Taxes
- Technology
- Terrorism
- Working together

### Pick and predict

Before you watch or read the address, decide which 1-3 topics are most important to you. Then decide which 1-3 topics you predict the President will talk about. Are they the same or different? Why?

Watch or read the address. Were your topics covered? How many times? Did you correctly predict what the President would talk about?

My topics: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of times the President mentioned my topics: \_\_\_\_\_

President's important topics: \_\_\_\_\_

Were the President's topics the same things I thought were important? Why or why not?

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### **What's for kids?**

What does the President talk about that is of interest to or affects kids?

How many times does he talk about kids or things important to kids?

Why do you think that is?

### **Connecting to schools, cities, states, country and the world**

If you are studying any form of government in school, keep track of the number of times the President mentions something that could impact one of these levels of government:

- Student Council
- School Board
- City or town
- County
- State
- United States
- Global
- Other?

### **What's your Response?**

Write and/or deliver your opposition response to the State of the Union address.

You can play the role of the opposite political party or a global leader. Take it back in history and write a response to an address delivered in the past. (Hint: you can find videos from prior years at [www.cspan.org](http://www.cspan.org))



# Generation Nation

## State of the Union Scorecard or Bingo Card

Watch or read the State of the Union Address. Mark the topics discussed.

Bi-partisan	Military /Defense	Civility	My fellow Americans	Global issues
Environment	Education	Hear Ye Hear Ye	Competitive	Vision
Work together as Americans	Jobs	Healthcare	Graduation	The First Lady waves or smiles
Immigration	Schools	War on Terror	Children and youth	Speaker of the House stands
Leadership	A Supreme Court Justice sits	Dropout	Uninsured	Economy



# Generation Nation

Create your own!




### **Suggested correlations to North Carolina Standard Course of Study**

Teachers are encouraged to align as appropriate to the grade and subject area.

The activities are intentionally adaptable to various uses, ages and objectives.

#### **Grade 2**

##### Language Arts

Goal 4 The learner will apply strategies and skills to create oral, written, and visual texts.

4.04 Use oral communication to identify, organize, and analyze information.

4.09 Use media and technology to enhance the presentation of information to an audience for a specific purpose.

(Review a portion of the speech to observe communication skills.)

#### **Grade 3**

##### Language Arts

Goal 2 The learner will apply strategies and skills to comprehend text that is read, heard, and viewed.

2.02 Interact with the text before, during, and after reading, listening, or viewing.

2.05 Draw conclusions, make generalizations, gather support by referencing the text.

2.06 Summarize main idea(s) from written or spoken texts using succinct language.

2.08 Listen actively.

Goal 3 The learner will make connections through the use of oral language, written language, and media and technology.

3.01 Respond to fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama using interpretive, critical, and evaluative processes.

3.03 Use text and own experiences to verify facts, concepts, and ideas.

3.04 Make informed judgments about television productions.

Goal 4 The learner will apply strategies and skills to create oral, written, and visual texts.

4.09 Produce work that follows the conventions of particular genres (e.g., personal narrative, short report, friendly letter, directions and instructions).

##### Social Studies

Goal 1 The learner will characterize qualities of good citizenship by identifying people who made a difference in the community and other social environments.

1.02 Recognize diverse local, state, and national leaders, past and present, who demonstrate responsible citizenship.

Goal 7 The learner will analyze the role of real heroes in shaping the culture of communities.

7.01 Identify the deeds of local and global leaders.

#### **Grade 4**

##### Language Arts

Goal 2 The learner will apply strategies and skills to comprehend text that is read, heard, and viewed.

2.02 Interact with the text before, during, and after reading, listening, and viewing by: setting a purpose using prior knowledge and text information, making predictions, formulating questions, locating relevant information, making connections with previous experiences, information, and ideas.

2.05 Make inferences, draw conclusions, make generalizations, support by referencing text.

2.06 Summarize major points from fiction and nonfiction text(s) to clarify and retain information and ideas.

2.07 Determine usefulness of information and ideas consistent with purpose.

2.08 Verify the meaning or accuracy of the author's statement(s) by referencing the text or other resources.

2.09 Listen actively.

Goal 3 The learner will make connections through the use of oral language, written language, and



media and technology.

3.03 Consider the ways language and visuals bring characters to life, enhance plot development, and produce a response.

3.04 Make informed judgments about television and film/video productions.

3.05 Analyze and integrate information from one or more sources to expand understanding of text including graphs, charts, and/or maps.

Goal 4 The learner will apply strategies and skills to create oral, written, and visual texts.

4.02 Use oral and written language to: present info and ideas in a clear, concise manner.

#### Social Studies

Goal 4 The learner will analyze social and political institutions in North Carolina such as government, education, religion, and family and how they structure society, influence behavior, and respond to human needs.

4.03 Explain the importance of responsible citizenship and identify ways North Carolinians can participate in civic affairs.

Goal 6 The learner will evaluate how North Carolinians apply basic economic principles within the community, state, and nation.

6.06 Analyze the relationship between government services and taxes.

6.08 Cite examples of interdependence in North Carolina's economy and evaluate the significance of economic relationships with other states and nations.

#### Grade 5

##### Language Arts

Goal 2 The learner will apply strategies and skills to comprehend text that is read, heard, and viewed.

2.02 Interact with the text before, during, and after reading, listening, and viewing by: making predictions, formulating questions, supporting answers from textual information, previous experience, and/or other sources, drawing on personal, literary, and cultural understandings, seeking additional information, making connections with previous experiences, information, and ideas.

2.05 Evaluate inferences, conclusions, and generalizations and provide evidence by referencing the text(s).

2.07 Evaluate the usefulness and quality of information and ideas based on purpose, experiences, text(s), and graphics.

2.08 Explain and evaluate relationships that are: problem-solution

2.09 Listen actively and critically.

Goal 3 The learner will make connections through the use of oral language, written language, and media and technology.

3.02 Make connections within and between texts by recognizing similarities and differences based on a common lesson, theme, or message.

3.04 Make informed judgments about television, radio, video/film productions, other electronic mediums and/or print formats.

3.05 Integrate main idea and supporting details from multiple sources to expand understanding of texts.

3.07 Make informed judgments about: bias, propaganda, stereotyping, media techniques.

Goal 4 The learner will apply strategies and skills to create oral, written, and visual texts.

4.03 Make oral and written presentations to inform or persuade selecting vocab for impact.

#### Social Studies

Goal 2 The learner will analyze political and social institutions in North America and examine how these institutions respond to human needs, structure society, and influence behavior.

2.02 Describe the similarities and differences among the local, state, and national levels of government in the United States and explain their legislative, executive, and judicial functions.

2.03 Recognize how the United States government has changed over time.



2.04 Compare and contrast the government of the United States with the governments of Canada, Mexico, and selected countries of Central America.

2.05 Assess the role of political parties in society.

Goal 5 The learner will evaluate ways the United States and other countries of North America make decisions about the allocation and use of economic resources.

5.03 Assess economic institutions in terms of how well they enable people to meet needs.

5.08 Cite examples of surplus/scarcity in the American market, explain the economic effects.

## Grade 6

### Language Arts

Goal 2 The learner will explore and analyze information from a variety of sources.

2.01 Explore informational materials that are read, heard, and/or viewed.

Goal 3 The learner will examine the foundation of argument.

3.01 Explore argumentative works that are read, heard, and/or viewed.

monitoring comprehension for understanding what is read, heard, and/or viewed.

analyzing the characteristics of argumentative works.

determining the importance of author's word choice and focus.

summarizing the author's purpose and stance.

making connections between works, self and related topics.

drawing inferences.

responding to public documents (such as but not limited to editorials and school and community policies).

distinguishing between fact and opinion.

Goal 4 The learner will use critical thinking skills, create criteria to evaluate print/non-print material.

4.01 Determine the purpose of the author or creator by: exploring any bias, apparent or hidden messages, emotional factors, and/or propaganda techniques.

4.03 Recognize and develop a stance of a critic.

### Social Studies - *Use to make knowledge connections, compare and contrast*

Goal 5 The learner will evaluate the ways people of South America and Europe make decisions about the allocation and use of economic resources.

5.03 Explain how the allocation of scarce resources requires economic systems to make basic decisions regarding the production and distribution of goods and services, and evaluate the impact on the standard of living in selected societies and regions of S. America and Europe.

Goal 6 The learner will recognize the relationship between economic activity and the quality of life in South America and Europe.

6.01 Describe different levels of economic development and assess their connections to standard of living indicators such as purchasing power, literacy rate, and life expectancy.

Goal 9 The learner will analyze the different forms of gov't developed in South America and Europe.

9.02 Describe how different types of governments such as democracies, dictatorships, monarchies, and oligarchies in selected areas of South America and Europe carry out legislative, executive, and judicial functions, and evaluate the effectiveness of each.

9.04 Describe how different governments in South America and Europe select leaders and establish laws in comparison to the United States and analyze the strengths and weaknesses.

Goal 10 The learner will compare the rights and civic responsibilities of individuals in political structures in South America and Europe.

10.01 Trace the development of relationships between individuals and their governments in selected cultures of South America and Europe, and evaluate the changes that have evolved.

## Grade 7

### Language Arts

Goal 1 The learner will use language to express individual perspectives in response to personal, social, cultural, and historical issues.

All objectives



- Goal 2 The learner will synthesize and use information from a variety of sources.  
2.01 Respond to informational materials that are read, heard, and/or viewed.
- Goal 3 The learner will refine the understanding and use of argument.  
3.01 Explore and analyze argumentative works that are read, heard and/or viewed.
- Goal 4 The learner will refine critical thinking skills, create criteria to evaluate print/non-print material.  
All objectives

*Social Studies - Use to make knowledge connections, compare and contrast*

- Goal 5 The learner will evaluate the varied ways people of Africa, Asia, and Australia make decisions about the allocation and use of economic resources.  
5.03 Explain how the allocation of scarce resources requires economic systems to make basic decisions regarding the production and distribution of goods and services, and evaluate the impact on the standard of living in selected societies and regions of Africa, Asia, and Australia.
- Goal 6 The learner will recognize the relationship between economic activity and the quality of life in Africa, Asia, and Australia.  
6.01 Describe different levels of economic development and assess their connections to standard of living indicators such as purchasing power, literacy rate, and life expectancy.
- Goal 9 The learner will analyze the different forms of government developed in Africa, Asia, Australia.  
9.02 Describe how different types of governments such as democracies, dictatorships, monarchies, and oligarchies in Africa, Asia, and Australia carry out legislative, executive, and judicial functions and evaluate the effectiveness of each.  
9.04 Describe how different governments in Africa, Asia, and Australia select leaders and establish laws in comparison to the United States and analyze the strengths and weaknesses.
- Goal 10 The learner will compare the rights and civic responsibilities of individuals in political structures in Africa, Asia, and Australia.  
10.01 Trace the development of relationships between individuals and their governments in selected cultures of Africa, Asia, Australia, and evaluate changes that have evolved over time.

**Grade 8**

Language Arts

- Goal 1 The learner will use language to express individual perspectives through analysis of personal, social, cultural, and historical issues.  
All objectives
- Goal 2 The learner will use and evaluate information from a variety of resources.  
2.01 Analyze and evaluate informational materials that are read, heard, and/or viewed by:  
2.02 Use multiple sources of print and non-print information to explore and create research products in both written and presentational forms by:
- Goal 3 The learner will continue to refine the understanding and use of argument.  
3.01 Explore and evaluate argumentative works that are read, heard and/or viewed by:  
All points, especially public documents  
3.03 Evaluate and create arguments that persuade by:
- Goal 4 The learner will continue to refine critical thinking skills and create criteria to evaluate print and non-print materials.  
All objectives

Social Studies

- Goal 8 The learner will evaluate the impact of demographic, economic, technological, social, and political developments in North Carolina since the 1970's.  
8.03 Describe the impact of state and national issues on the political climate of North Carolina.
- Goal 9 The learner will explore examples of and opportunities for active citizenship, past and present, at the local and state levels.  
9.01 Describe contemporary political, economic, and social issues at the state and local levels and evaluate their impact on the community.



## **World History**

*Relate current issues and speeches to historic periods, leaders and events*

Goal 1 Historical Tools and Practices - The learner will identify, evaluate, and use the methods and tools valued by historians, compare the views of historians, and trace the themes of history.

- 1.02 Analyze and interpret sources to compare views, trace themes, and detect bias.
- 1.03 Relate archaeology, geography, anthropology, political science, sociology, and economics to the study of history.
- 1.04 Define the themes of society, technology, economics, politics, and culture and relate them to the study of history.

Goal 6 Patterns of Social Order - The learner will investigate social and economic organization in various societies throughout time in order to understand the shifts in power and status.

- 6.04 Relate the dynamics of state economies to the well being of their members and to changes in the role of government.

## **Civics & Economics**

Goal 1 The learner will investigate the foundations of the American political system and explore basic values and principles of American democracy.

- 1.08 Compare the American system of government to other forms of government.

Goal 2 The learner will analyze how the government established by the United States Constitution embodies the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy.

- 2.02 Explain how the United States Constitution defines the framework, organization and structure of the three branches of government at the national level.
- 2.09 Describe the services provided by selected gov't agencies, how funding is provided.

Goal 4 The learner will explore active roles as a citizen at the local, state, national levels of gov't.

- 4.04 Demonstrate active methods of promoting and inhibiting change through political action.
- 4.08 Participate in civic life, politics, and /or government.

Goal 5 The learner will explain how the political and legal systems provide a means to balance competing interests and resolve conflicts.

- 5.01 Evaluate the role of debate, consensus, compromise, negotiation in resolving conflicts.
- 5.06 Analyze roles of individual citizens, political parties, the media, and other interest groups in public policy decisions, dispute resolution, and government action.

Goal 6 The learner will explain why laws are needed and how they are enacted, implemented, and enforced at the national, state, and local levels.

- 6.05 Investigate the role and responsibility of government to inform the citizenry.

Goal 9 The learner will analyze factors influencing the United States economy.

- 9.02 Describe the impact of government regulation on specific economic activities.
- 9.07 Analyze the short- and long-term effects of fiscal and monetary policy on US economy.

Goal 10 The learner will develop, defend, and evaluate positions on issues regarding the personal responsibilities of citizens in the American constitutional democracy.

- 10.01 Explain the distinction between personal and civic responsibilities and the tensions that may arise between them.
- 10.05 Describe examples of recurring public problems and issues.

## **US History**

*Relate current issues and speeches to historic periods, leaders and events*

Goal 12 The United States since the Vietnam War (1973-present) - The learner will identify and analyze trends in domestic and foreign affairs of the United States during this time period.

- 12.01 Summarize significant events in foreign policy since the Vietnam War.
- 12.02 Evaluate the impact of recent constitutional amendments, court rulings, and federal legislation on United States' citizens.



- 12.03 Identify/assess the impact of economic, technological, environmental changes in US.
- 12.04 Identify and assess the impact of social, political, and cultural changes in the US.
- 12.05 Assess the impact of growing racial and ethnic diversity in American society.
- 12.06 Assess the impact of twenty-first century terrorist activity on American society.