

# FULL REMARKS

## Virginia Governor Abigail Spanberger's Democratic Response to President Trump's State of the Union Address

*February 24, 2026*

"Good evening and welcome to historic Williamsburg.

We are gathered here in the chambers of the House of Burgesses. In 1705, the people of the Virginia colony gathered here to take on the extraordinary task of governing themselves.

Before there was a Declaration of Independence, a Constitution, or a Bill of Rights — there were people in this very room.

The people who served here ultimately dreamed of what a new nation — unlike anything the world had ever seen — could be.

The United States was founded on the idea that ordinary people could reject the unacceptable excesses of poor leadership, band together to demand better of their government, and create a nation that would be an example for the world.

And this year, as we celebrate 250 years since America declared our independence from tyranny, I can think of no better place to speak to you as we reflect on the current state of our union.

Tonight, as we watched our nation's lawmakers gather for a joint session of Congress, we did not hear the truth from our President.

So, let's speak plainly and honestly, and let me ask you three questions:

Is the President working to make life more affordable for you and your family?

Is the President working to keep Americans safe — both at home and abroad?

Is the President working for YOU?

As I campaigned for Governor last year, I traveled to every corner of Virginia, and I heard the same pressing concern everywhere: costs are too high. In housing,

healthcare, energy, and childcare. And I know these same conversations are being had all across this country.

Because since this President took office last year, his reckless trade policies have forced American families to pay more than \$1,700 each in tariff costs.

Small businesses have suffered. Farmers have suffered — some losing entire markets. Everyday Americans are paying the price.

And even though the Supreme Court struck these tariffs down four days ago, the damage to us, the American people, has already been done.

Meanwhile, the President is planning for new tariffs. Another massive tax hike on you and your family.

Republicans in Congress? They remain unwilling to assert their constitutional authority to stop him.

They're making your life harder. They're making your life more expensive. They're even making it more difficult to see a doctor.

Rural health clinics in Virginia are already closing their doors thanks to the so-called "One Big Beautiful Bill" championed by the President and Republicans in Congress. And tonight, the President celebrated this law — the one threatening rural hospitals, stripping healthcare from millions of Americans, and driving up costs in energy and housing. All while cutting food programs for hungry kids.

But here in Virginia, I am working with our state legislature to lower costs and make the Commonwealth more affordable.

And it's not just me. Democrats across the country are laser-focused on affordability — in our nation's capital and in state capitals and communities across America.

In the most innovative and exceptional nation in the history of the world, Americans deserve to know that their leaders are focused on addressing the problems that keep them up at night. Problems that dictate where you live, whether you can afford to start a business, or whether you have to skip a prescription in order to buy groceries.

So I'll ask again: Is the President working to make life more affordable for you and your family?

We all know the answer is no.

I grew up in a house of service. My mother was a nurse and my father was a career law enforcement officer. I began my career by following in my father's footsteps as a federal agent working money laundering and narcotics cases. I worked side by side

with local and state police to keep our communities safe and to uphold and enforce the law.

Law enforcement officers across the country know that it's a unique responsibility to do the serious work of investigating crimes, comforting victims, and making arrests. It's about building trust, and that requires an abiding sense of duty and commitment to community.

And yet, our President has sent poorly trained federal agents into our cities, where they have arrested and detained American citizens and people who aspire to be Americans — and they have done it without a warrant.

They have ripped nursing mothers away from their babies, they have sent children — a little boy in a blue bunny hat — to far-off detention centers, and they have killed American citizens on our streets.

And they have done it all with their faces masked from accountability.

Every minute spent sowing fear is a minute not spent investigating murders, crimes against children, or the criminals defrauding seniors of their life savings.

Our President told us tonight that we are safer because these agents arrest mothers and detain children. Think about that.

Our broken immigration system is something to be fixed — not an excuse for unaccountable agents to terrorize our communities.

After working in law enforcement, I continued my career of service as a CIA officer, working undercover to protect the United States and our allies from global threats: terrorism, nuclear weapons, and the aggression of adversarial nations around the globe.

But as the President spoke of his perceived successes tonight, he continues to cede economic power and technological strength to China, bow down to a Russian dictator, and make plans for war with Iran.

Here's the truth: over the last year, through DOGE, mass firings, and the appointment of deeply unserious people to our nation's most serious positions, our President has endangered the long and storied history of the United States of America being a force for good.

So, I'll ask again: Is the President working to keep Americans safe — both at home and abroad?

We all know the answer is no.

In his speech tonight, the President did what he always does: he lied, he scapegoated, and he distracted. He also offered no real solutions to our nation's pressing challenges — so many of which he is actively making worse.

He tries to enrage us, to divide us, to pit us against one another. Neighbor against neighbor. And sometimes, he succeeds.

And so you have to ask: Who benefits from his rhetoric, his policies, his actions, and the short list of laws he's pushed through this Republican Congress?

Somebody must be benefitting.

He's enriching himself, his family, his friends. The scale of the corruption is unprecedented.

There's the cover-up of the Epstein files

The crypto scams

Cozying up to foreign princes for airplanes and billionaires for ballrooms

Putting his name and face on buildings all over our nation's capital

This is not what our founders envisioned.

So, I'll ask again: Is the President working for you?

We all know the answer is no.

But here is the special thing about America: on our 250th anniversary, we know better than any nation what is possible when ordinary citizens — like those who once dreamed right here in this room — reject the unacceptable and demand more of their government.

We see it in the determination of students organizing school walk outs all across the country, whose voices are becoming so powerful that the Governor of Texas seeks to silence them.

We see it in the bravery of Americans in Minnesota standing up for their communities — from peacefully protesting in subzero temperatures to carpooling children to school so that their immigrant parents are not ripped away from them in the parking lot.

As a mother of three school-aged daughters, I am inspired by their bravery, but I am sickened that it is necessary.

And Americans across the country are taking action. They are going to the ballot box to reject this chaos.

With their votes, they are writing a new story. A more hopeful story.

In November, I won my election by 15 points, and we won 13 new seats in our state legislature. Because voters decided they wanted something different.

Our campaign earned votes from Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and everyone in-between; because they knew as citizens, they could demand more.

That they could vote for what they believe matters, and they didn't need to be constrained by a party or political affiliation.

This is happening across the country. New Jersey elected Mikie Sherrill as Governor in a double-digit victory.

Democrats flipped state legislative seats in places like Georgia, Iowa, Mississippi, and Texas. The list goes on and on.

Ordinary Americans are stepping up to run — in the spirit of our forefathers — they are running to demand more and do more for their neighbors and communities.

I know this story well.

I first ran for office in 2018 alongside dozens of other Democrats who did the seemingly impossible, flipping 41 seats in Congress. In my case, I was the first Democrat elected in 50 years, swinging our district 17 points.

Those who are stepping up now to run will win in November because Americans know you can demand more, and that we are working to lower costs, we are working to keep our communities and country safe, and we are working for you!

In his Farewell Address, George Washington warned us about the possibility of "cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men" rising to power.

But he also encouraged us — all Americans — to unite in "a common cause" to move this nation forward.

That is our charge once more. And that is what we are seeing across the country.

It is deeply American and patriotic to do so, and it is how we ensure that the State of our Union remains strong, not just this year but for the next 250 years as well.

Because "We the people" have the power to make change, the power to stand up for what is right, and the power to demand more of our nation.

May God bless the Commonwealth of Virginia, and may God bless the United States of America."