

NBC's *Today*

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7:00:22 a.m. [TEASE]

38 seconds

HODA KOTB: Savannah is in DC after yesterday's State of the Union address. Hey, SG!

SAVANNAH GUTHRIE: Hi, Hoda. President Biden delivering his message to Congress and the American people. It's February 8th. This is *Today*.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: State of the Union]

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN: The people of this nation are strong. The State of the Union is strong.

GUTHRIE: President Biden addresses the nation and a divided Congress, urging the parties to come together to finish the job in a boisterous House chamber. [BOOS] We'll break it all down, the reaction, fallout and the potential impact on the 2024 race.

(...)

7:03:14 a.m.

7 minutes and 45 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Biden Delivers State of the Union]

GUTHRIE: But we're going to begin here in Washington where the President delivered what was a spirited State of the Union last night, defending his record and making an appeal for bipartisan unity. But also sparring with several Republicans in the chamber, vocal with their opposition to some of the President's words. We're going to break it down, the major takeaways. Let's get it started this morning with NBC's chief White House correspondent Peter Alexander. Hi, Peter, good morning.

PETER ALEXANDER: Hey, Savannah, good morning. White House aides here could not be happier about the way things went last night. In their eyes, capturing the contrast between a President who's energized, but serious and Republicans who, despite being warned by their leaders to behave, appeared at times unserious and angry. For more than 70 minutes, President Biden seemed to take joy in jousting with his loudest critics as he delivered a State of the Union address focused on finishing the job. Entering a House chamber now run by Republicans, President Biden extending his hand to the new Speaker Kevin McCarthy before confronting Republican heckling head on, tangling over the fate of Social Security and Medicaid. The President taking aim at an idea floated by a just few Republicans.

BIDEN: Instead of making the wealthy pay their fair share, some Republicans — some Republicans want medicare and social security to sun set. I'm not saying it's the majority. [BOOING]

ALEXANDER: The comment drawing outrage and boos, including from GOP firebrand. Marjorie Taylor Greene. [BOOS] But then with a smile, the President turning the table, appearing to get Republicans on board with his position to protect the popular program.

BIDEN: Stand up and show them we'll not cut Social Security. We will not cut Medicare. [SCREEN WIPE] So folks, as we all apparently agree, Social Security and Medicare is off the — off the books now, right? They're not to be —

ALEXANDER: At several points when things got spicy. McCarthy was seen trying to shush his boisterous members. Like this moment about the drug crisis when the President mourned 70,000 Americans killed by fentanyl each year.

REPUBLICAN CONGRESSMAN: It's your fault!

REPUBLICANS: The border!

ALEXANDER: President Biden, at times, feisty, ribbing Republicans who voted against the trillion-dollar infrastructure law but now want to reap its benefits.

BIDEN: We'll fund these projects and I'll see you at the ground breaking.

ALEXANDER: Still, the President's overarching theme? An appeal for bipartisanship.

BIDEN: The people sent us a clear message, fighting for the sake of fighting, power for the sake of power, conflict for the sake of conflict gets us nowhere.

ALEXANDER: President Biden urging Congress to act on unfinished business like police reform with the parents of Tyre Nichols, who was killed by officers in Memphis, in attendance getting a standing ovation. The President, including this observation about policing and race.

BIDEN: Most of us in here have never had to have the talk. The talk that brown and black parents have had to have with their children.

ALEXANDER: He would also denounce political violence with a nod to Nancy Pelosi's husband who survived a brutal home invasion. On foreign policy, the President making only a veiled reference to the Chinese spy balloon shot down last week.

BIDEN: If China threatens our sovereignty, we will act to protect our country and we did.

ALEXANDER: What was viewed as the unofficial kickoff to the President's re-election punctuated by this declaration.

BIDEN: The people of the union are strong, the State of the Union strong.

ALEXANDER: The Republican response from new Arkansas Republican Sarah

Huckabee-Sanders, portraying the President as the head of a failed administration hijacked by the radical left.

GOVERNOR SARAH HUCKABEE SANDERS (R-AR): President Biden and the Democrats have failed you and it's time for a change.

[ROMNEY vs. SANTOS]

GUTHRIE: Alright, Peter Alexander at the White House leading us off, thank you. Let's turn to our senior Washington correspondent Hallie Jackson. Well, it was a boisterous night.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: State of the Union Takeaways]

HALLIE JACKSON: And sure was.

GUTHRIE: It was, so lots to talk about. Let's do the politics.

JACKSON: Okay.

GUTHRIE: If this is the 2024 preview — if this is a test drive of the re-election message that President Biden might take on, what have we learned?

JACKSON: That it's going to be a lot about the economy. It's going to be a lot about domestic issues. You heard him leaning into that. When did we hear about junk fees in States of the Union, right? He talked about lowering the cost of insulin, look where he is headed now, Savannah. He's on the road to Wisconsin, to Florida. The vice President is going to Georgia. If those sound like a couple of key early states, you are right because we are rounding the corner into 2024 now.

GUTHRIE: It's so interesting because what is it — 75 percent domestic policy —

JACKSON: Yes.

GUTHRIE: — and as you mentioned, bread and butter issues, like, why do we have to pay the resort fees? It was like everything irritating in the world.

JACKSON: Right.

GUTHRIE: How about cable?

JACKSON: That bothers you.

GUTHRIE: Why's your cable bill so expensive?

JACKSON: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. And that, you know, listen. That's something that he is going to hope resonates with people as he starts to presumably, if he does announces the presidential

run as everybody anticipates, as he gets out and talks about jobs can you do without college degrees, that is also a message that will sit well with voters in some of these key states where there are not a constituency for Democrats who have those degrees.

GUTHRIE: It was interesting to see the dynamic on the House floor, we had some boisterous Republican voices.

JACKSON: You called it spicy and I loved it.

GUTHRIE: It It was spicy. I — it was a little Mystery Science Theatre where are now just, you know, heckling and making commentaries.

JACKSON: And he's engaging.

GUTHRIE: — during the speech and this has been happening. And now he's engaging. And so, we've got kind of House of Parliament in the U.K. situation. And I guess that's a debate for another day about whether that's a good development or a bad development. But the other thing is we saw Kevin McCarthy, the House Republican leader, doing the schoolteacher thing —

JACKSON: Yeah.

GUTHRIE: — a couple times shushing his members, like, cut it out.

JACKSON: Yes. All but the fingers to the lips, going shush, shush. You can see some of it there as he's pursing his lips.

JACKSON: He told his members earlier in the day, listen, cameras are on, mics are hot, like, kind of watch what you say. He set the tone. He tried to at least, for trying to be respectful. He was asked are you going to tear up any speeches — remember after former house speaker Nancy Pelosi did when former President Trump spoke — and he said no, like, this is going to be sort of a respectful moment but you heard a lot engagement and back and forth. Not everybody liked it. Senator Mitt Romney said he's sort of sad about the loss of decorum, that decorum is going downhill. But let me tell you who did like some of that. Some Democratic allies of the President. I heard from one Democratic member who said he liked that the President did not back down from the fight and got in there and mixed it up.

GUTHRIE: And, then, real quickly, we had Governor Sanders of Arkansas, laying out that contrast.

JACKSON: Yeah.

GUTHRIE: — in quite a different speech and, potentially, I guess a preview of what some Republican themes might be.

JACKSON: That's exactly right and two big ones for me that stood out from her speech. Leaning

into those so-called culture war issues, boy did she go after what she and conservatives see as sort of wokeism on the left, trying to draw the line between what she described as normal and crazy. And then there's something else, which is the generational piece of it. She was extremely explicit that she is literally half the age of the President of the United States. Look at somebody like Ron DeSantis. He's only 44 — right — the governor of Florida who is widely expected to be considering a presidential run. The — the idea of is it time for a new generation of leadership, maybe something we'll hear a lot about over the next couple years.

GUTHRIE: Alright, Hallie Jackson. Nice to be with you. Thank you so much.

(...)

8:00:24 a.m. [TEASE]

24 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Making His Case]

GUTHRIE: Coming up, making his case. President Biden delivers the State of the Union saying the economy is improving. And urging both parties to come together.

BIDEN: The people sent us a clear message, fighting for the sake of fighting, power for the sake of power, conflict for the sake of conflict gets us nowhere.

GUTHRIE: The President's first State of the Union to a divided Congress. This morning where it goes from here. We're live in Washington.

(...)

8:02:24 p.m.

2 minutes and 36 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Biden Delivers State of the Union]

GUTHRIE: The President hitting the road this morning set to deliver the post-State of the Union sales pitch. He'll start in Wisconsin touting his economic plan following a spirited address to Congress last night. NBC's chief White House correspondent, weekend Today co-anchor Peter Alexander has more now. Peter, good morning.

ALEXANDER: Hey, Savannah good morning, White House aides here are thrilled with the President's performance last night, in their eyes capturing the contrast between President Biden and House Republicans now in the majority who, despite being warned by their leaders, to behave repeatedly taunted and booed the President. President Biden extending his hand to the new Speaker, Kevin McCarthy before confronting Republican heckling head on, tangling over the fate of Social Security and Medicaid. The President taking aim at an idea floated by a few Republicans.

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SANDERS: President Biden and the Democrats have failed you and it's time for a change.

ALEXANDER: This morning, President Biden will hit the road to try to drive his message home first stop Wisconsin, of course, a key 2024 battleground. Then tomorrow, Florida, home to two potential presidential challengers: Governor Ron Desantis and former President Donald Trump Savannah.

GUTHRIE: Alright, Peter Alexander at the White House. Thank you, Peter.