

ABC's *Good Morning America*

12/18/25

7:00:15 a.m. [TEASE]

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking Overnight; Trump's Combative Primetime Address]

ROBIN ROBERTS: President Trump's combative address, the chilling rescue caught on camera and frigid waters, and miracle baby KJ steps into Christmas with a huge milestone. Overnight, President Trump delivering a combative and defensive primetime speech from the White House, defending his economic record while blaming Democrats for the economic challenges happening under his administration. This morning, our fact check on his claims about prices, mass deportations, and jobs.

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking Overnight; President Trump Delivers Combative Primetime Address]

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS: But we're going to begin in Washington with President Trump's primetime speech with polls showing Americans worried about the economy, unhappy with how Trump is handling it. The President delivered a combative defense of his first year in office, laying the blame for the economy's problems on President Biden and the Democrats.

MICHAEL STRAHAN: Well, we're going to hear from Jon Karl just ahead, but first, senior political correspondent Rachel Scott starts us off from the White House. Good morning, Rachel.

RACHEL SCOTT: Michael, good morning to you. And the President campaigned on the economy, on lowering prices for American families, but he spent much of his time during this primetime address deflecting, placing the blame on Democrats for the economic pain so many Americans say they are feeling at home and under his watch.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP: Good evening, America.

SCOTT: President Trump addressing the nation in a combative and defensive primetime speech, placing the blame on Democrats for the economic challenges happening under his administration.

TRUMP: I am bringing those high prices down and bringing them down very fast.

SCOTT: But polls show that's not the reality for most Americans. While some grocery items like eggs are down, economists say Americans have paid higher prices on everything from Lettuce to beef to coffee because of the President's tariffs. A new Quinnipiac poll reveals 65 percent of

voters say the state of the economy is poor or not so good, with 50 percent saying Trump's policies are just making things worse. The President, well aware the economy will be front and center in next year's midterms, suddenly promising a cash giveaway, announcing his administration is sending out checks for \$1,776 to military service members before Christmas.

TRUMP: 1,450,000 military service members will receive a special we call warrior dividend before Christmas — a warrior dividend — in honor of our nation's founding in 1776. We are sending every soldier \$1,776. Think of that, and the checks are already on the way.

SCOTT: The President says that money is coming from tariff revenue, but even Republicans have said he can't cut those checks without approval from Congress first. And while he claimed his mass deportation efforts are benefiting the U.S. economy, creating "more housing and more jobs for Americans," job numbers out this week paint a different picture. Unemployment rose in November to its highest level since 2021. And as more than 20 million Americans prepare for their health insurance premiums to skyrocket at the end of the year, the President once again teasing his healthcare plan, but offering no substantial details. Instead, he blamed Democrats for expiring subsidies.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking Overnight; Trump Defends Economic Policies, Lashes Out at Democrats]

TRUMP: And it's their fault. It is not the Republicans' fault. It's the Democrats' fault. It's the Unaffordable Care Act.

SCOTT: Republicans control both chambers of Congress and are set to leave town in just a few hours without sending a health care bill to the President's desk. So, the President told reporters in the room that his White House chief of staff Susie Wiles told him to deliver this speech. He promised that the economy would improve next year, that prices would come down. He also promised aggressive housing reform, but did not provide any details on what exactly he plans to do, George.

STEPHANOPOULOS: And Rachel, in keeping with the partisan tone of the speech last night, the President, the White House also revealed yesterday pretty big changes to this, these portraits of the President in the White House. colonnade.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Trump Installs New White House Plaques]

SCOTT: Yes, George, and first it was paving over the Rose Garden, then it was demolishing the East Wing to make room for that ballroom. Now the President making additional changes to the colonnade. He has now unveiled what he is calling the Presidential Walk of Fame. This includes portraits of every single President. He has now added plaques with descriptions underneath. He's using it as an opportunity to take a swipe at his predecessors, calling former President Joe Biden sleepy. And crooked, calling former President Barack Obama one of the most divisive figures in political history. I will tell you we saw this yesterday. Many of these read like the President's social media posts, and that is because the White House press secretary says the President wrote

many of these himself, George.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Rachel Scott, thanks very much. Let's bring in our chief Washington correspondent John Karl for more on this. And Jon, let's starting out with the speech last night, this is not the typical Presidential speech that merits primetime attention.

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JONATHAN KARL: Look, George, when the President of the United States asks for primetime network airtime to address the nation, it is usually either to make a statement about a national crisis, to announce a major new initiative, or to speak on an issue of war and peace. This was none of that. In fact, I cannot recall a primetime presidential address that was as defensive and hyperpartisan as this one. By my count, President Trump mentioned Joe Biden and the Democrats 15 times over the course of that 20-minute address, and as he made those partisan attacks, this speech was littered with false statements and exaggerations. He claimed prices were coming down from record highs when he took office. And, as you know, according to his own government's economic data, the inflation rate today is almost exactly what it was when Joe Biden left office in January.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Rachel also reported how the President was talking about these checks for \$1,776 to American service members. It's unclear that they're really on the way though.

KARL: You know, one of the fundamental facts of the way the government works, Congress controls the purse strings. Those — many Republicans have said previously, if the President's going to do some kind of rebate, Congress needs to authorize that.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Of course, the backdrop for all of this is the President's declining poll numbers on the economy and his overall approval.

KARL: Yeah, if the President was addressing a crisis last night, it seemed to be a crisis of confidence in his handling of the economy. Americans are overwhelmingly unhappy with the state of the economy, and a clear majority in many recent polls are blaming Donald Trump. Just take a look at a new poll out just yesterday. 57 percent say they disapprove of Trump's handling of the economy, and while the President recently gave the economy an A+, in this poll, only three percent of Americans say that they think the state of the economy is excellent. George, if there was one sliver of good news, if you want to call it that, in this poll for the White House, it was that by a narrow margin, people actually distrust Democrats even more than Republicans to deal with the economy.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Jon Karl, thanks very much.