

ABC News Special Report
04/28/26
3:37:40 p.m.
7 minutes and 55 seconds

DAVID MUIR: A rousing address to a Joint Session of Congress in Washington. King Charles, the first monarch since his mother, Queen Elizabeth II to address a Joint Session of Congress. He spoke before a bipartisan audience. There, a packed chamber. He said he had visited this country so many times, 19 times, in fact, before he came today as King to address the chamber of this country and the world, of course, watching and the British people and the people of the Commonwealth back home watching him as well, amid criticism from some that this was ill-timed. It had been scheduled long in advance of the 250th birthday of the United States, coming this July 4. But of course, events — in the meantime, the war in Iran and other world events, domestic politics here at home. Playing out and making this visit perhaps a bit more complicated. Rachel Scott, you're in the chamber. This is, as we know, a polarized country, divided times. But as you have observed, this was quite a moment of solidarity.

RACHEL SCOTT: Yes, David. And look, the King faced no easy task here, addressing a bitterly divided Congress. But there was a sense of unity in this chamber that I, quite frankly, have not seen in a very long time. I have sat in this seat for several State of the Union addresses, and this was a sense of unity that, quite frankly, was just rare. We don't see this often. I mean, even look at this image right now, Democrats and Republicans on both sides of the aisle, trying to get a chance with the King to thank him for coming here, to thank him, for sharing this message here today. I mean, laughter was filling the chamber multiple times when the King started off with multiple jokes here to members of Congress and members of both sides of the aisle, listening intently, intensely and intently, and then rising to their feet multiple times during this speech. So much so, the King himself had to stop and pause a few times at moments — I don't think he quite expected to — for either laughter or applause, as this chamber really took in his words. The tone was light. It was hopeful, even as we face so much uncertainty abroad, and the King did not shy away from those moments. He delivered this message of unity and appreciation for the shared alliance, a message that, quite frankly, members on both sides of the aisle feel like is welcomed here. And of course, that message from the King that I think that really hit home for a number of members when he talked about the weight of America's words that they carry, meaning the question now, as the King exits this chamber, can that message last? Can it sustain? And can this be a repair for what has become a fractured relationship?

MUIR: Rachel Scott in the chamber. The King did not shy away from some heavy issues. At one point in the speech, talking about how leadership of this country and back home leadership, not above the law, not should always be subject to questions referencing the Magna Carta, the foundation of law, and pointing out that the Supreme Court over many decades has pointed back to the early findings and words of Magna Carta, talking about how power should be held to account. He talked about the war in Ukraine and about NATO's influence in the world, and that just as NATO was there for the United States after 9/11, that we must be there to support Ukraine through this conflict with Russia. He talked about climate, the natural wonders of the United States as we approach this 250th birthday, saying they are not just the natural wonders, they are

also the foundation that allows us to have an economy and to have prosperity, and that they too must be protected. There were ten standing ovations for this 28-minute speech. Robert Jobson, ABC News royal contributor. Robert, you and I have been on the air so many times over the years at these pivotal moments for the royal family. You spoke of the criticism from some back home that he was coming at this moment, that perhaps it was ill timed, but I wonder if you took note as well that he did not shy away from some of the most challenging issues of the moment.

ROBERT JOBSON: He certainly didn't. David. I think what it was really came across in that speech was the sense of keep calm and carry on, the old expression that used to be around in the war times of the Second World War, that this is an enduring relationship, a relationship that matters not only between the two countries, but to the whole world, because this is the between us. Obviously, with America taking the lead, we champion the things that really matter in the world, which is freedom. And I think that really that speech and the fact that it was able, in a way to almost unify the House, but also, I think, silence a few critics back home in Great Britain who had said, why is he coming? He shouldn't be coming. Actually, it proved exactly why he should be coming, because he, with a deft touch and with a very powerful speech, he would have been. Although it would have been prepared by the government, he would have been overlooking, overseeing the whole of that speech, he knew the tone. He — in the shadow of the queen for so long, and he would have actually turned around and said, this speech matters. And he really delivered it. And I think he silenced any critics back home who said he shouldn't be here.

MUIR: Robert Jobson with us here today. Robert, thank you. The King saying that executive power is subject to checks and balances. He said he believes that these two nations, that the relationship is born a generosity of spirit and a duty to foster compassion, a deep mutual understanding, to value all people of all faiths and those of none. To applause inside the chamber, he talked about a new era, but that those values remain. He talked about this time being more dangerous than the world to which his late mother spoke in the very chamber that he spoke today, back in 1991, but that these nations together can meet that test. James Longman, watching from the Capital as well, again taking note there of the room, the bipartisan support for the King, the standing ovations, even with him addressing some of the some of the most challenging issues of these times.

JAMES LONGMAN: Yeah, David, I think it goes to show it's not what you say. It's often how you say it. And the message that Charles gave, it's been received there in the sort of sense of unity. But I mean, he did not shy away from some pretty pointed messages. I mean, talking about the importance of NATO, the fact that it was the United States that triggered Article V after 9/11. I recall Donald Trump denigrating allied veterans, joking about how they didn't perhaps fight as hard. That was a British veiled reference to that. On Ukraine, we know that this is a divisive issue in the United States. Support for Ukraine is falling away. He was clear Ukraine needs to be supported. He — he quoted the prime minister, Keir Starmer, the man that Donald Trump has spent months denigrating — he actually just used the same words. The British government put the prime minister's words in the King's mouth to repeat. To say that this is an indispensable partnership. We must not disregard everything that has sustained us for the last 80 years. The King showed today what monarchy can do, David.

MUIR: James, thank you. The King saying to Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, and to the bipartisan group of lawmakers in that chamber that “America’s words carry weight and meaning as they have since independence, but that the actions of this great nation matter even more.” He referenced President Lincoln back in the day and the Gettysburg Address, saying that people might not remember what this nation says, but it will certainly remember what it is we do. The King before a Joint Session of Congress there late today. An historic moment for sure.