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Highlights from President Biden's First State of the Union

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During the first State of the Union address of his presidency, President Joe Biden spoke to the hardships the two-year pandemic and rising prices have posed for families nationwide. He also acknowledged their anxieties as the world witnesses Russian President Vladimir Putin's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, the President reminded the country of the enormous progress made since his last joint address to Congress, when much of the country remained unvaccinated and the full benefits of the American Rescue Plan were not yet felt.

The President also pointed to major accomplishments from his first year in office, including the bold, progressive policies in the American Rescue Plan that saved families from economic catastrophe. In the midst of the pandemic, this historic relief package brought child poverty to an all-time low, extended health coverage to millions, and pulled the economy from the brink of collapse. According to [Moody's Analytics](#), the law was responsible for four million additional jobs.

Finally, President Biden used the speech to highlight progressive policy goals for the year ahead. The President urged Congress to craft legislation on many of these priorities and send them to his desk. Congress should act quickly to do so. Importantly, the President should also exercise the power of the executive office to ensure that these goals become reality. Below are just a few of those highlights.

- **Taking on corporate greed and cut costs for families.** President Biden said, “my top priority is getting prices under control.” He talked about tackling corporate price gouging and bringing down the costs families face at the grocery store, on their energy bills, and at the pharmacy counter. The President also asked Congress to extend the Child Tax Credit.
- **Lowering care costs.** President Biden highlighted that the American Rescue Plan is “helping millions of families on Affordable Care Act plans save \$2,400 a year on their health care premiums” and called on Congress to “close the coverage gap and make those savings permanent.” He also emphasized lowering child care, home care, and long-term care costs, and expanding access to mental health care.
- **Protecting workers and raising wages.** The President called on Congress to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, end pay discrimination, and [protect workers'](#)

[right to organize](#) and bargain collectively. He also asked Congress to approve a comprehensive paid family and medical leave program.

- **Making the mega-rich and corporations [pay their fair share in taxes](#).** The President proposed “closing loopholes” used by the ultra-wealthy to evade taxes and called for a 15% minimum tax rate for corporations.
- **Building green infrastructure.** The President underscored plans to “build a national network of 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations” and “replace poisonous lead pipes—so every child—and every American—has clean water to drink at home and at school.”
- **Tackling the pandemic worldwide.** The President touted the progress made to turn the corner on COVID-19 and said, “we achieved this because we provided free vaccines, treatments, tests, and masks.” He previewed a funding request he will soon send Congress to continue those efforts. President Biden also noted [the risk future variants might pose](#) and said, “we will continue vaccinating the world.”
- **Caring for veterans.** President Biden announced expanded benefit eligibility for veterans exposed to toxic smoke from burn pits.
- **Preserving voting rights.** President Biden asked the Senate to pass the [Freedom to Vote Act](#), the John Lewis Voting Rights Act, and the Disclose Act to shine a light on dark money political spending.
- **Restoring access to reproductive health care.** President Biden acknowledged existential [threats to Roe v. Wade](#) and said, “we must protect access to health care.”
- **Preserving the rights of LGBTQ+ people.** President Biden asked Congress to pass the Equality Act to protect LGBTQ+ people from discrimination and condemned recent state-level attacks on trans Americans and their families.