



# State of the Union Bingo 2008

**Author:**  
**Eli J. Lesser**  
**Director of Education**

## **About this Lesson**

State of the Union Bingo is a tool designed to engage students in the President's annual address to Congress. The lesson begins during the class prior to the address with the teacher providing background information about the State of the Union Address and examining the Constitutional requirement of the annual address. As a homework assignment, students are then each given a State of the Union Bingo card to use while watching the speech. The next class session, the cards are used as a discussion starter as well as a tool to analyze the President's agenda for the coming year.

## Grade(s) Level

7-12

## Classroom Time

20 minutes prior to address

45 minutes class period following address

## Materials

- Copies of the United State Constitution: Available at: <http://www.constitutioncenter.org/constitution/constitution.pdf>
- State of the Union Bingo Card- 1 for each student

## Constitution Connections

### Articles

II Section 3

### Amendments

## Background

Though today it is an annual fixture of American politics, the State of the Union Address has evolved substantially over the last two hundred years. Article II, Section 3 of the Constitution tasks the president only to “from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union,” without mention of method, comprehensiveness or frequency. In January 1790, George Washington established an early tradition of delivering what was called the “annual message” to a joint session of Congress. This tradition was soon broken by Thomas Jefferson who began a practice of sending a written message to Congress. It was President Woodrow Wilson who became the first president to once more deliver his message in person to Congress in 1913.

Presidents’ State of the Union Addresses have varied greatly in their content, ranging from the general to the specific and covering a vast array of both domestic and foreign policy topics. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, presidents have used the State of the Union to lay out a vision for the nation in the coming year. President Roosevelt used the speech to present his now famous “Four Freedoms” and Lyndon Johnson used the speech to present his domestic reform plan known as the “Great Society.”

Presidents have also changed the way the speech is presented to the American people. President Coolidge was the first President to have his speech broadcast live on the radio, and President Truman’s 1947 address was the first broadcast on television. President Reagan began a tradition that continues to this day. He was the first to invite guests that sit in the gallery and are mentioned specifically during the address to provide a human face to past accomplishments and future plans.

The annual State of the Union address provides a rare opportunity for all Americans to see the complete federal government in one place. Representatives from all three branches gather in the House chamber to listen to the address.

## Objectives

Students will:

- Understand the Constitutional requirement for the State of the Union address
- Examine the choices the President makes in the State of the Union Speech
- Describe the events and topics addressed in the State of the Union speech.
- Analyze the President’s legislative plan for 2008

# Activity

## Class Prior to the Address

1. Ask students to read Article II, Section 3 of the United States Constitution. Highlight the section by displaying it in the front of the class for all to see:

*He shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union, and recommend to their Consideration such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient...*

2. Ask students to explain the following:
  - What does this section require of the President?
  - What specific requirements does it include? If the requirements are not in this section of the Constitution, where would they come from?
3. Share with students the history of the State of the Union address:
  - George Washington was the first President who delivered a State of the Union Address.
  - Thomas Jefferson, third President of the United States, modified the address when he did not present it in person, but instead sent a written message to Congress. The message was read aloud to the joint session of Congress. This then became the standard for fulfilling the Constitutional requirement of the State of the Union message.
  - In 1913 Woodrow Wilson resumed the tradition of giving the address in person.
  - Calvin Coolidge was first President to have his address broadcast over the radio.
  - Harry Truman was the first President to have his address broadcast over television.
  - In 2002, George W. Bush's State of the Union was the first webcast from the White Houses' website.
4. Give each student a *State of the Union Bingo Card*. Instruct the students that they will be watching the President's annual message to Congress.
5. Provide students with information on when and where the address will be broadcast.
  - **2008 Information**
    - January 28, 2008 9:00PM EST
    - All major TV stations and cable news stations will carry the address.

### Class Following the Address

1. Prior to class, print out a copy of the address from the White House website: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/stateoftheunion> .This can be used by the classroom teacher as a reference for classroom discussion.
2. On a separate sheet of paper, ask students to spend 5 minutes completing a quick-write about their thoughts on the speech.
3. Going around the classroom, ask students to share what they have written.
4. Have students share the results of their Bingo Cards. Encourage students to compare terms they have checked off. Refer back to the printed transcript to clarify disagreements.
5. Divide the class into mixed ability pairs. Instruct students in their pairs to create a list of President Bush's top five priorities for 2008. Students should use their quick write and completed cards as reference. Give students 5-10 minutes to complete the lists.
6. Going around the classroom, each pair should share their list. Compile the results in the front of the class for all to see.
7. The class as a whole should examine the complete list and then, working collaboratively, create a list of President Bush's top 5 priorities in 2008. Encourage students to support their opinions with examples from the address and information gather in their pair discussion.
8. Once the students have come to a consensus on the list, have students note it on a large sheet of paper and hang it in the classroom for the remainder of the school year.

### Alternative Procedures

*If you do not want to assign students to watch the address at home, you can watch it in class or have students complete the activity by reading the transcript.*

### Assessment-Options

- Students can write a newspaper article covering the State of the Union address. Encourage analysis of the effectiveness of the President in his ability to deliver his message.
- Give each student a copy of the transcript of the State of the Union address and, in groups, have students re-write the speech so that it lasts no more than five minutes.

## 2008 State of the Union Bingo

**Directions:**

1. Watch the State of the Union Address
2. Listen carefully to President Bush's speech
3. When the President says one of the key words or one of the actions is carried out, mark your card.

Bi-Partisan	Election	Iraq	Immigration	Global War on Terror
Healthcare	State of the Union	Oil	Secretary Rice	Supreme Court Justice Applauds
Vice President Stands Up	Iran	<b><i>FREE Space</i></b>	No Child Left Behind	Climate Change
Mortgage	Burma	Washington	Earmarks	Pakistan
Economy	Standing Ovation	High School	Constitution	Tax Credit