

Preface

Speaking to Change

In a year of great political change, and political anxiety, political leaders, activists, and other public figures had many issues to address. The dramatic return of the Republican Party in the form of a second Trump presidency created anxieties and elation, at opposite sides of the political spectrum. Meanwhile, massive political and social changes loomed large over American life, from the climate crisis, to foreign wars, to the division of the American populace over the nation's commitment to Israel, and questions regarding the future of American activism.

A Year of Political and Social Turmoil

The Trump administration had a chaotic beginning, with Elon Musk's DOGE cutting funding from many different government programs and projects. With the administration cutting funding for fields gun violence research and anti-violence programs, climate change research and alternative energy, and assistance for families in need, activists and public figures in many different arenas of American life were moved to speak on the tremendous change in governmental direction, the movement away from issues and causes important to so many Americans.

In the field of domestic security, the Trump administration's aggressive immigration policy brought criticism and concern from celebrities, public figures, and human rights advocates. Detentions without due process, the creation of new detention facilities and the detention of American residents in foreign countries, all marked dramatic departures from the views and values of many Americans and raised questions about our commitment to fundamental constitutional rights and principles. At the same time, Republicans in congress and in political messaging continued to push through the idea that the crisis of unauthorized migration had reached a level that afforded justification for rethinking laws and principles about freedom from governmental abuse. The administration's hardline anti-immigration resulted in the controversial establishment of new detention centers for detainees and captives, including one called "Alligator Alcatraz" to be established in Florida.

The political nature of the Trump administration's was also revealed by the effort to deport legal residents. The most famous and controversial, was the detention and deport of Palestinian activist Mahmoud Khalil, who was arrested and detained without due process for allegedly supporting Palestinian terrorism in Israel. This high-profile detention was part of a major public debate between those who defended the nation of Israel's continued military activity in Gaza, and those who accuse, along with a majority of people in the international community, Israel of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Many public speeches were made in support of the Palestinian people and accusing the United States of

supporting war crimes, but few American politicians spoke directly in support of Palestine, which was criticized by many left-leaning activists and advocates.

The other major international war drawing attention during 2025 was Russia's ongoing invasion of the Ukraine. There were a number of prominent speeches on this issue over the course of the year, including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's April interview with 60 Minutes, and his February meeting with Donald Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance, during which Trump and Vance berated Zelenskyy for allegedly not being appreciative of U.S. aid to the country. The Trump administration withdrew and later returned to military aid for the Ukraine after a meeting with Putin failed to produce measurable success.

Likewise, the Trump administration's controversial and illegal actions in sending federal troops into cities, against the will of the population and elected officials, drew condemnation and concern across the nation. Mayors and governors in states where federal troops were dispatched. In California, Newsome called Trump an existential threat to American society and called on Americans across the country to resist Trump's violations of state autonomy. In Illinois and Washington, D.C., public leaders and police representatives called Trump's efforts to use the National Guard a waste of taxpayer revenues and a political theater, exaggerating the threat of local crime and claiming, against evidence, that local authorities are ill-equipped to handle existing crime.

Meanwhile, the Trump Economy was a source of confusion and concern around the world. Trump's high-profile battles with foreign leaders over tariffs were advertised to conservatives as a brilliant bargaining tactic that would allow Trump to make better trade deals, but the tariff battles meant, puzzlingly, destroying trade deals made by the Trump administration itself during the last iteration, deals that were advertised, by Trump at that time, as the best in the nation's history, only to be later criticized by Trump as "terrible" deals that were somehow the responsibility of the previous democratic administration. While the Trump administration continued to market the tariffs as a successful economic intervention to counter the alleged effects of national debt and domestic overspending, tariffs raised prices on consumers. There were many speeches discussing this issue during the year, from foreign leaders like Justin Trudeau and Mark Carney in Canada, to leaders in the United States concerned about consumer welfare amidst rising prices for basic commodities.

Also on the domestic front, the Trump administration was under fire from human welfare groups for economic policies that threatened to remove beneficiaries from Medicare, increased medical premium prices, and introduced skepticism about proven medical interventions. Trump's choice for the department of health, medical conspiracy theorist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was repeatedly under fire for making false and medically irresponsible comments about vaccination, autism, and other medical issues.

As the Trump administration courted controversy, criticism came from many areas. The Trump administration's handling of the investigation into Jeffrey Epstein, became a major issue after Elon Musk and others suggested that Trump,

Executive Orders to Lower Prescription Drug Prices

Donald Trump

Donald Trump: Well thank you very much everybody. Please. This promises to be a very big and very important meeting, so bear with me. Take a little while, but it has to do with a thing called drug pricing and as you know Congress has been working on this for decades and decades and we are now doing something that is going to be incredible for the American public. So today I'm taking a bold and historic, very dramatic action to reduce the price of prescription drugs for American patients and American seniors. Previous administrations did nothing, absolutely nothing, as drug lobbyists, special interests in foreign countries ripped off our citizens. Under the last administration alone, drug prices rose a staggering 55%. Thanks to my administration's aggressive actions since taking office, we have successfully lowered drug prices for the first time in 51 years, but this reduction is still not close to what I want, what I expect, and I'm looking for help for our great seniors especially in particular, that's what we're doing today. You'll hear something which will be very shocking, we're doing things that nobody thought could be done and it's going to have an incredible impact.

Unfortunately we've been waiting for Congress to take action for many decades to reduce drug prices for more than just a small handful of people, but even the small handful of people never got price reductions, and I'm unwilling to wait any longer. Therefore today I'm signing four sweeping executive orders that will lead to a massive reduction in drug costs, massive. We've already gotten them down a little bit, but that's not good enough, first time in 51 years as I said, but that's not good enough. They represent the most far-reaching prescription drug reforms ever issued by a president. Nothing even close.

Joining us for this important occasion are our Secretary of Health and Human Services, Alex, where's Alex? Alex, thank you, Alex Azar. CMS administrator, both doing a great job, Seema Verma. Seema, thank you Seema. FDA administrator Dr. Stephen Hahn, Stephen who is really speeding up the process of therapeutics and vaccines and I just heard from some of the big drug companies in there saying the FDA has really been moving the process along. Very important, Stephen. Can you move faster please? Okay. Thank you, great job. We appreciate it. And administrator of Health Resources and Service Administration Tom Engels. Tom, thank you. Thank you very much Tom for being here.

Delivered on July 24, 2025 at the White House, Washington, DC.

At Stake Are Not Just Our Voices, but the Fundamental Civil Liberties of All

Mahmoud Khalil

My name is Mahmoud Khalil and I am a political prisoner. I am writing to you from a detention facility in Louisiana where I wake to cold mornings and spend long days bearing witness to the quiet injustices underway against a great many people precluded from the protections of the law.

Who has the right to have rights? It is certainly not the humans crowded into the cells here. It isn't the Senegalese man I met who has been deprived of his liberty for a year, his legal situation in limbo and his family an ocean away. It isn't the 21-year-old detainee I met, who stepped foot in this country at age nine, only to be deported without so much as a hearing.

Justice escapes the contours of this nation's immigration facilities.

On March 8, I was taken by DHS agents who refused to provide a warrant, and accosted my wife and me as we returned from dinner. By now, the footage of that night has been made public. Before I knew what was happening, agents handcuffed and forced me into an unmarked car. At that moment, my only concern was for Noor's safety. I had no idea if she would be taken too, since the agents had threatened to arrest her for not leaving my side. DHS would not tell me anything for hours—I did not know the cause of my arrest or if I was facing immediate deportation. At 26 Federal Plaza, I slept on the cold floor. In the early morning hours, agents transported me to another facility in Elizabeth, New Jersey. There, I slept on the ground and was refused a blanket despite my request.

My arrest was a direct consequence of exercising my right to free speech as I advocated for a free Palestine and an end to the genocide in Gaza, which resumed in full force Monday night. With January's ceasefire now broken, parents in Gaza are once again cradling too-small shrouds, and families are forced to weigh starvation and displacement against bombs. It is our moral imperative to persist in the struggle for their complete freedom.

I was born in a Palestinian refugee camp in Syria to a family which has been displaced from their land since the 1948 Nakba. I spent my youth in proximity to yet distant from my homeland. But being Palestinian is an experience that transcends borders. I see in my circumstances similarities to Israel's use of administrative detention—imprisonment without trial or charge—to strip Palestinians of their rights. I think of our friend Omar Khatib, who was incarcerated without charge or trial by Israel as he returned home from travel. I think of Gaza hospital

Opening Monologue Upon ABC Return

Jimmy Kimmel

Anyway, as I was saying before I was interrupted, if you're just joining us, we're preempting your regularly scheduled encore episode of "Celebrity Family Feud" to bring you this special report. I'm happy to be here tonight with you. Please be seated. I'm not sure who had a weirder 48 hours: me or the CEO of Tylenol. It's been overwhelming. I've heard from a lot of people over the last six days. I've heard from all the people in the world over the last six days. Anyone I have ever met has reached out 10 or 11 times. Weird characters from my past, or the guy who fired me from my first radio job in Seattle, where we are not airing tonight by the way! Sorry, Seattle. His name is Larry.

In 1989, Larry tried to force me to do a bit called "Jokes for donuts" where people would call in with a joke and I would give them donuts. I refused to do it and then I made a lot of fun of Larry for suggesting it, and eventually Larry fired me and I had to move back in with my parents. But even he wrote in to cheer me up. Thank you, Larry.

And I want to thank everyone who checked in. It would take all week to list all of them, but some that I do especially want to mention are my fellow late night talk show hosts: my friend Stephen Colbert, who found himself in this predicament, my friends Jon Stewart, Seth Meyers, Jimmy Fallon, John Oliver, Conan O'Brien, James Corden, Arsenio, Kathy, Wanda, Chelsea. Even Jay reached out.

I heard from late night hosts in other countries, from Ireland and from Germany. The guy in Germany offered me a job. Can you imagine? This country has become so authoritarian the Germans are like, "Come here. Cut loose." My boyhood idols Howard Stern and David Letterman were very considerate and kind. And I feel honored to be part of a group of people that knows what goes into doing a show like this.

And I also want to thank all of you. Thanks to (all) who supported our show, cared enough to do something about it, to make your voices heard so that mine could be heard. I will never forget it. And maybe weirdly, maybe most of all, I want to thank the people who don't support my show and what I believe but support my right to share those beliefs anyway, people who I never would have imagined like Ben Shapiro, Clay Travis, Candace Owens, Mitch McConnell, Rand Paul, even my old pal Ted Cruz, who, believe it or not, said something very beautiful on my behalf.

Delivered on September 23, 2025, on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*

Opposing Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill"

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Thank you. And I thank the chairman.

You know, President Trump had issued some statements throughout this process saying and urging, insisting that this bill does not cut Medicaid. He's also said some things. You know, he says he doesn't think I'm too much of a smart person. And I'll tell you one thing, it doesn't take a smart person to know if you're being lied to.

President Trump, you're either being lied to or you are lying, because this bill represents, in the text of this bill, the largest and greatest loss of health care in American history.

17 million Americans will lose their health care on this bill, not undocumented people, not, quote unquote, the disgusting term "illegal," but 17 million Americans will have their health care cut from this bill.

On this point of tax on tips, as one of the only people in this body who has lived off of tips, I want to tell you a little bit about the scam of that text, a little bit of the fine print there. The cap on that is \$25,000.

While you're jacking up taxes on people who make less than \$50,000 across the United States while taking away their snap, while taking away their Medicaid, while kicking them off of the ACA and their health care extensions.

So if you're at home and you're living off tips, you do the math. Is that worth it to you? Losing all your health care, not able to feed your babies, not being able to put a diaper on their bottom, in exchange for what?

This bill is a deal with the devil. It explodes our national debt. It militarizes our entire economy, and it strips away health care and basic dignity of the American people.

For what? To give Elon Musk a tax break and billionaires the greedy taking of our nation.

We cannot stand for it and we will not support it.

You should be ashamed.

War on Waste: Stamping Out the Scourge of Improper Payments and Fraud

Marjorie Taylor Greene, Melanie Stansbury, James Comer, et al.

Marjorie Taylor Greene: Which grows bigger and bigger every year. In 2025, interest payments are projected to be \$952 billion, which is more than our entire military budget. In 2026, it will be \$1 trillion. And by 2035, \$1.8 trillion. Over the next decade, total interest payments are projected to be \$13.8 trillion. These interest payments don't serve a single American. They don't build a bridge, a road, provide disaster relief or fund a single part of the behemoth that is the federal government. These interest payments pay our masters who own our debt, and the American people are in debt slavery to everyone who owns our debt. Our crippling national debt and massively growing interest on our debt will destroy us, not destroy one political party or the other, it will destroy all of us together. It drives inflation, making life unaffordable for Americans struggling to financially survive. It is crippling small businesses struggling to be successful. Our massively growing debt and interest are the chains and shackles harnessed to every American and their children and every generation to come.

But first, let us be brutally honest about how this massive debt came to be in the first place. It came from Congress and from elected presidential administrations, and I believe enslaving our nation in debt is one of the biggest betrayals against the American people by its own elected government. The American people's anger over this betrayal is what gave birth to the concept of DOGE, the Department of Government Efficiency. In fact, DOGE became a major part of President Trump's campaign and led to his overwhelming victory in November. Every day Americans go to work, they run businesses, they have to earn their paycheck. No one guarantees it. And if they don't do a good job, they get fired. They also have to pay their bills, credit card debts, balance their checkbooks and scrap and save every penny they can in order to plan for that rainy day and hopefully retirement one day.

Private businesses only survive on hard-earned income by serving their customers so well that their customers pay them for the services and products they consume. If that business fails, its employees lose their jobs and paychecks and the owners lose their business and everything they risked along with it. Many go bankrupt in this process and lose everything. No one bails them out. They only survive by excellent customer service and smart financial management. This is

Delivered on February 12, 2025 at the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee Hearing on the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), Washington, DC.

Trump's 2026 Health Agenda

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Senator Crapo: ... and we all probably are going to want to have our opportunity. At the end of the five-minute timeframe, I will gently tap the gavel if it appears that things are starting to lapse over, and encourage my colleagues and our witness to conclude their remarks at the conclusion of this time.

President Trump and Secretary Kennedy have made a steadfast commitment to make America healthy again. Under this administration, HHS has placed patients at the center of the healthcare system.

We know that chronic diseases such as heart disease and cancer and diabetes are some of the leading causes of death in America. Now, the department has a renewed focus on tackling the root causes of chronic disease and promoting prevention first. I look forward to exploring ways that the federal government can further align payment incentives to support healthy living and fight chronic disease.

The administration has also prioritized efforts to end waste, fraud and abuse in our federal healthcare programs, including through eligibility and enrollment verification. This critical work is not just about saving taxpayer dollars, it's about restoring trust and ensuring vital programs, like Medicare and Medicaid, are sustainable for generations to come.

In July, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, CMS, announced that the agency identified 2.8 million Americans who were simultaneously enrolled in multiple Medicaid or Affordable Care Act exchange plans. Stopping this duplicate enrollment, while working with states to ensure that individuals do not inappropriately lose coverage, has the potential to save taxpayers \$14 billion annually.

CMS has also taken steps to provide states with additional immigration information to verify eligibility for federal healthcare programs. Preserving lifelines, like Medicaid, for those who are legally entitled under the law, will ensure long-term sustainability. Congress has bolstered these efforts by passing the One Big Beautiful Bill. This bill enacts common sense reforms to reduce improper payments and brings needed personal accountability to the Medicaid program. These reforms will protect Medicaid and refocus the program on the most vulnerable patients, those whom the program was intended to serve.

The OBBA also created the Rural Health Transformation Program, the single largest investment in rural healthcare in decades, to help stabilize and modernize

We Urgently Need Decisive Action: The Long-Established Rules of War Are Being Shredded, with Virtually No Accountability

Volker Türk

Human rights—all human rights—are the solid foundations of flourishing societies. Together, we need to safeguard eighty years of progress on freedom, equality, and justice.

Around the world, the long-established rules of war are being shredded—with virtually no accountability. Pro-war propaganda is everywhere, from military parades to ramped up rhetoric. Sadly, there are no Peace parades, or Ministries of Peace.

Russia's war in Ukraine has turned even more deadly. In July, more civilians were killed and injured than in any month since May 2022, as the Russian Federation intensified attacks along the frontline and on cities across the country.

The people of Myanmar are caught up in a harrowing human rights calamity, four years since the coup. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there is damning evidence of continued grave violations and abuses by all parties to the conflict.

Israel's mass killing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza; its infliction of indescribable suffering and wholesale destruction; its hindering of sufficient lifesaving aid; and the ensuing starvation of civilians are shocking the conscience of the world.

The international community is failing in its duty. We are failing the people of Gaza. I am horrified by the open use of genocidal rhetoric, and the disgraceful dehumanization of Palestinians by senior Israeli officials.

Civic Space Under Attack

Authorities have used excessive force against protestors in Indonesia, Kenya, Togo and beyond. Media freedom is declining, and human rights defenders are being criminalised from Egypt to the Russian Federation.

Recent laws in Ecuador could reduce the accountability of law enforcement, expand the powers of the intelligence services, and reduce civic space. The amnesty law adopted last month in Peru is a step backwards for justice and truth.

Delivered on September 8, 2025 at the 60th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

The Ongoing War Between Russia and Ukraine

Donald Trump and Volodymyr Zelenskyy

Donald Trump: Thank you very much. It's an honor to have the president of Ukraine with us. We've had a lot of good discussions, a lot of good talks, and I think progress is being made, very substantial progress in many ways. We had a good meeting, as you know, just a short while ago with the president of Russia, and I think there's a possibility that something could come out of it. And today's meeting is very important. We have, I guess, the seven very powerful leaders from Europe, and we're going to be meeting with them right after this meeting. And thank you very much for being here.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy: Thank you so much, Mr. President. If I can, first of all—

Donald Trump: Please.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy: ... thank you for the invitation. Thank you very much for your efforts, personal efforts to stop killings and stop this war. Thank you. And using this opportunity, many thanks to your wife, the first lady of the United States. She sent a letter to Putin about our children, abducted children. And my wife, first lady of Ukraine, she gave the letter.

Donald Trump: Oh, that's very nice.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy: It's not to you, to your wife.

Donald Trump: Oh, I want it. I want it.

Volodymyr Zelenskyy: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, we are saying this sensitive topic. Yes, please. And thanks to our partners and that you supported this format, that after our meeting, we can have leaders who are around us, UK and France, Germany, Finland, EU, NATO, I mean all partners around Ukraine supporting us. Thanks them, and thank you very much for the invitation.

Donald Trump: Thank you very much for being here.

Reporters: President Trump? Do you think it's fair—

Delivered on February 28, 2025 at the White House, Washington, DC.

Mayoral Victory Speech in New York City's Democratic Primary

Zohran Mamdani

Speaker 1: This is breaking news.

Zohran Mamdani: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, my friends. Tonight—

Speaker 2: Lower your phones.

Zohran Mamdani: ... we made history. In the words of Nelson Mandela, “It always seems impossible until it is done.” My friends, we have done it. I will be your Democratic nominee for the Mayor of New York City. An hour ago, I spoke with Andrew Cuomo about the need to bring this city together as he called me to concede the race. And I want to thank Brad Lander—

Supporters: Brad! Brad Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad! Brad!

Zohran Mamdani: ... who did exactly that. Together we have shown the power of the politics of the future. One of partnership and of sincerity.

Supporters: Let's go! Let's go! There we go.

Zohran Mamdani: Today, eight months after launching this campaign, with the vision of a city that every New Yorker could afford, we have won. We have won from Harlem to Bay Ridge. We have won from Jackson Heights to Port Richmond. We have won from Maspeth to Chinatown. We have won because New Yorkers have stood up for a city they can afford, a city where they can do more than just struggle. One where those who toil in the night can enjoy the fruits of their labor in the day, where hard work is repaid with a stable life, where eight hours on the factory floor or behind the wheel of a cab is enough to pay the mortgage. It is enough to keep the lights on. It is enough to send your kid to school. Where rent stabilized apartments are actually stabilized, where buses are fast and free, where childcare doesn't cost more than CUNY, and where public safety keeps us truly safe.

Delivered on June 25, 2025 in Long Island City, Queens, NY.

Discomfort Can Help You Develop an Inner Strength That Will Enable You to Face Life's Challenges

Sandra Oh

Good Morning!

It's an honor to be here with you on this momentous occasion.

Congratulations! You did it!

Welcome fellow students, faculty, friends and family. And Happy Father's Day to the proud fathers out there.

Thank you to President Beilock, the Board of Trustees, all the staff who have made this day possible and to all of you, for this invitation.

I never attended university myself. Only played characters who have. So thank you for helping fulfill my parents' dream of me actually getting a degree. And a Doctorate at that!

Honorary, I know.

Actually, it was Shonda Rhimes, one of your alums, and my former boss, who called me. And when she presented the offer to come speak to you all, I thought...

Huh- Well, that's nice to be asked. What a privilege, and what a great opportunity to come meet you all...

And then I thought —

ABSOLUTELY NOT!

Oh my God, What do I have to say—okay this was me thinking—What could I possibly say to you young graduates that could meet this moment we find ourselves in?

Omg, Federer's speech last year was so good.

I can't be as funny as Conan O'Brien.

Or Mindy Kaling. I look at everything she has accomplished and I just wanna go to bed.

And they all spoke in the Before Times.

You know what I mean. Like, forget being roasted on the internet—

Although I am terrified of that—What if I say the wrong thing? What if I were to talk about—Diversity? Equi—?

OK, what if I changed the words, like, Including Diverse Equalness—or Diverging Equitable Inclusivity?

Delivered on June 15, 2015 at Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH.

Stay Connected to Your Loved Ones, Stay Connected to Your Friends, and Most of All Stay Connected to Your Dreams: No Matter How Big

Kermit the Frog (Performed By Matt Vogel)

Hi, everybody. Hello. I mean, wow, look at this crowd! Look at all these graduation caps with their decorations. Wow, wow! What a thrill it is to be back here at the University of Maryland and celebrate the class of 2025! And, don't forget the summer class of 2024! And, the winter class of 2024! Yeah! Uh, did I leave anybody out? No? Great. Good.

You are all here you're all here to listen to a frog in a very tiny cap and gown give a commencement speech on, uh, well, what's actually turned out to be a pretty beautiful evening. Yeah, either way I can guarantee you the forecast calls for a 100% chance of frog, so, here I am. President Pines, Provost Rice, esteemed professors, proud parents, families, friends, fighting Terps and fellow amphibians, thank you for having me. Let's hear it again for the graduates!

Yeah, now as I look out at you, students, I can tell that you have all worked your tails off. And, as a former tadpole, believe me, losing your tail is a pretty big deal, so, go Terps! Now, I realize that today is one of the most important days of your lives, so, I am honored to share some words of wisdom about three things that are close to my heart: Finding your people, taking the leap, and making connections.

Yeah, now, you and I share someone very special, University of Maryland. And I am talking of course about my friend Jim Henson. Yeah, Jim in the early days, he had a hand in literally everything I did. Yeah, Jim and his wife Jane were proud students right here at UMD when the food at the Stamp was good. Back then, they even had mosquito sprinkles for your ice cream. I miss that. And, as I'm sure you know, there's a statue of Jim and me on campus and, uh, it is not far from another campus legend, Testudo the Turtle. Uh, I hear, by the way, that we are distant cousins. And, uh, although I know you rub his nose for good luck, please do not rub my nose, um, unless you're a fly, in which case, I'd say, "Lunch is served."

But, uh, but it was Jim who taught me about finding your people. And Jim was a collector. He loved collecting actors and artists and musicians—anyone with talent. You know, Jim shared with me that when he was first coming up with the

Delivered on May 22, 2025 at the University of Maryland, College Park, MD.

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