

NPR features State of Union research by political scientist

Research by Dominican University of California political scientist Alison Howard and colleague Donna Hoffman from the University of Northern Iowa shows that since 1965, 39.4 percent of all State of the Union policy requests have been successful in some way. Over the course of seven addresses, President Obama has seen a success rate of around 31 percent.

Howard, assistant professor and chair of the Division of [Political Science and International Studies](#), History, and Economics at Dominican, and Hoffman have spent the past decade studying how presidents use the State of the Union Address to communicate with the public and request legislation of Congress. In their book *Addressing the State of the Union*, they explored how and why the State of the Union address came to be a key tool in the exercise of presidential power.

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Each year they track presidents' requests to Congress and examine how many of the legislative requests made by modern presidents (since 1965) were either fully or partially adopted by Congress.

Modern presidents have used the address to set the tone for their presidency by including specific calls for Congressional action in their address, with a median of 31 requests per address since 1965. This ranges from President Carter's 1979 low of nine to President Clinton's high of 87 requests in 2000.

President Obama has made a total of 237 requests in his seven addresses. Of those, 31.2 percent were fully or partially successful. In comparison, President Bush (43) made 280 requests and had a 32.5 percent success rate; President Clinton made a total of 455 requests and had a 44.4 percent success rate; President Bush (41) made 131 requests and had a 39.7 percent success rate; President Reagan made 191 requests and had a 39.8 percent success rate; and President Carter made only 47 requests and had a 40.4 percent success rate.

President Obama's success rate has declined since the Republicans took control of the House in 2011. In 2012, his full and partial success rate was 21.4 percent. Of his 2013 legislative requests, only two were enacted by Congress for a success rate of 4.9 percent. In 2014 and 2015 President Obama's full and partial success rates were 17.2 percent and 35.7 percent respectively. However, President Obama has taken executive action on a number of his requests.

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