MEMORANDUM

To: Interested Parties

From: The Franklin Partnership

Date: February 5, 2019

RE: State of the Union Overview

On Tuesday, February 4, 2020, President Donald J. Trump delivered the 85th in person speech to the U.S. Congress formally known as the State of the Union (SOTU) address. From his entry to the well of the U.S. House of Representatives to his return to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, the toxicity of the 2020 election loomed large.

As he approached his place prior to delivering his third SOTU, U.S. House Speaker Pelosi abbreviated the formal introduction afforded to a President in previous years and President Trump appeared to respond in kind by not accepting the Speakers’ open hand to shake as he stepped to present his remarks. The typically formal proceedings concluded roughly one hour later with Speaker Pelosi visibly tearing up on national television the official written address presented by President Trump.

The third SOTU for each President is different than the previous two in that he (or someday she) who seeks re-election must make their case to the American voters as to why they should return to the White House. Reviewing their accomplishments since election is paramount and rarely does a President announce bold new initiatives lest they appear to have failed in accomplishing those priorities in the first few years.

The main themes for this President as he heads into reelection, include:
1) Trade enforcement (China/NAFTA)
2) Immigration
3) Energy
4) Rights of U.S. Overseas
5) Worker Rights – Paid Family Leave

President Trump sought to mobilize his base heading into 2020 as many of his predecessors have done as many increasingly see this election focused on turning out their voters while reducing enthusiasm for their opponent as occurred in President George W. Bush’s defeat of Democratic Senator John Kerry in 2004.

In his speech, the President sought to highlight his policies as promoting economic progress as he focused on minorities, employment rates, “job killing regulations,” and “reciprocal trade agreements.” He did call on Congress to pass legislation supporting the inclusion of technical and vocational classes in high schools, an initiative having long escaped national and local leaders on workforce training. Unfortunately, little indication remains as to how the government would pay for or support such a proposal.
The President did also address regulatory changes, particularly steps towards energy independence already taken. Also reflecting on previous regulatory actions, the President spoke to the number of utility plants he expects to come online in his tenure.

President Trump promoted the bipartisan Opportunity Zones along with landmark criminal justice reform he stated Washington could not accomplish without a rare bipartisan agreement he achieved.

Among the trade highlights President Trump sought to promote, the new NAFTA received a mention and as expected will see an additional focus from President Trump as he seeks to draw a contrast between himself and his predecessors.

The President stated that for decades China has taken advantage of the US, “now we have changed that and perhaps have the best relationship with China than we ever have.”

The President offered few indications of steps forward but did declare victory in his negotiations with China, stating that he believes the U.S. now has the strongest relationship with the world’s second largest economy of any nation since their rise to power. The President stated, “For decades, China has taken advantage of the United States. Now we have changed that, but, at the same time, we have perhaps the best relationship we've ever had with China, including with President Xi.”

As have many done before him, the President sought to focus on years past and projecting what he touts as his successes to the 2020 American voter. This speech afforded President Trump the opportunity to speak to the nation at a time when his opponents in the Democratic party slog through their election process.