

Optimism sets tone for State of the Union Address

By Chassidy Crump
STAFF WRITER

With two years in office under his belt, President Barack Obama stepped up to the podium to deliver his State of the Union Address. He focused on recent triumphs and tragedies as well as future plans for the United States.

The President began by highlighting some of the more recent difficulties the U.S. has faced.

"Each of us is a part of something greater — something more consequential than party or political preference," said Obama, in reference to the Giffords shooting.

However, these preferences are still in place and still contribute to hostility, though many from opposing parties intermingled in the audience during the Address. Obama was hopeful that this would extend beyond seating arrangements and could translate into cooperation between parties in the future.

Obama also announced the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

"Our troops come from every corner of this country — they're black, white, Latino, Asian, Native American," said Obama. "They are Christian and Hindu, Jewish and Muslim. And, yes, we know that some of them are gay."

No longer will anyone be prohibited from serving because of their sexuality, which prompted Obama to ask college campuses to lift their ban against the military and ROTC.

"Everyone should have the right in America to be able to love each other," said junior and Resident Advisor Sarah-Jaana Nodell in an e-mail interview. "I believe that it is a really good push in the right direction."

Of the economic recession, Obama seemed to believe the tides were changing and we are entering a period of economic growth. His take on the economy was optimistic and rooted in

the belief that the economic crisis was ending, according to The New York Times.

As far as the future of the country, the President has goals to improve technology, education, infrastructure, the deficit, and government organization.

"(The speech was) long on vision, (but) short on specifics," said Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science Robert Duncan.

The President's plans for innovation included research in medicine, information, and green-energy, with a specific focus on energy.

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Sarah-Jaana Nodell, junior and resident advisor

"Instead of subsidizing yesterday's energy, let's invest in tomorrow's," said Obama.

However, there were no specific plans outlined to make these changes, said The New York Times.

Obama also said that improvements in education are crucial to the country's success. He emphasized that education is not only in the school system, but also at home.

"We need to teach our kids that it's not just the winner of the Super Bowl who deserves to be celebrated, but the winner of

the science fair," said the President.

Obama touched on Race to the Top, a way to encourage school systems and teachers to improve their tactics as well as the end of tax subsidies, which allows college costs to be more manageable, both tangible improvements in education.

Another goal set was to change the infrastructure of America, through repair, railway, and the Internet.

"Now that the worst of the recession is over, we have to confront the fact that our government spends more than it takes in," said President Obama, addressing the deficit. "That is not sustainable."

"The President also explained his plans to do this, proposing a freeze on domestic spending for the next five years. He also had limitations on how far he would be willing to go, refusing to cut funds where they were needed.

The final goal was the Federal government's reorganization, alluding to a future proposal in this vein from the Obama administration.

This proposal promises to reorganize the federal government so it functions more efficiently.

"Overall, the speech was a lot like the Obama presidency: phony bipartisanship, too much spending, unconvincing rhetoric on fiscal restraint, and not enough attention to foreign policy and national security," said The Weekly Standard blogger Stephen F. Hayes to U.S. News.

As far as foreign policy and national security go, Obama mentioned the New START treaty, revitalizing NATO, and future plans for relationships with many countries.

"The idea of America endures," said Obama. "Our destiny remains our choice. And tonight, more than two centuries later, it's because of our people that our future is hopeful, our journey goes forward, and the state of our union is strong."

MEDICAL

Medical advances improve quality of life

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

— things she was not able to do for 11 years.

As with any surgery, there are risks.

CNN reports that the biggest risk involves the immune-suppressing drugs that cause Jensen to be more susceptible to illness.

"I can imagine that your quality of life is much worse without a larynx, but you do have to remember the risks," said Diego Lorenzetti, visiting instructor of biology. "You are more susceptible to cancer after a transplant, because your immune system is repressed."

Despite the risks, Jensen declares the surgery worthwhile.

"It was frustrating that I had to live with it," said Jensen to CNN. "When this opportunity came up, I wanted to talk again, and I'm doing it. It was very much worth it."

Larynx transplants are not the only medical leaps making headlines.

Dr. Madhav Thambisetty, a scientist with the National Institute of Aging, conducted a study that could diagnose Alzheimer's earlier, according to Voice of America News. Thambisetty was able to detect beta-amyloid — a protein associated with Alzheimer's — in blood tests of those with Alzheimer's.

"We don't know if this protein is the cause of Alzheimer's," said Lorenzetti. "We know it's a marker of Alzheimer's. Like, having a fever. A fever is the symptom of some sort of underlying condition. The same can be said for beta-amyloid and Alzheimer's."

Currently, MRI and PET scans are what are used to detect Alzheimer's, reports Voice of America. There is also an alternative test; taking spinal fluid. These tests are either expensive, painful, invasive, or all of the above. A blood test would be none of these.

"Our hope is we will be able to identify the

earliest changes that occur in the brain, how these changes progress over time, so that we'll be able to target those for drug intervention, and again, eventually we'll be able to slow the progression and, hopefully, stop the disease in its tracks," said Dr. Neil Buckholtz, chief of the dementias of aging branch of the National Institute of Aging, in an interview with Voice of America.

With all these medical advancements, it is hard to predict the sheer expanse of options we could be presented with in the future.



In 1999, **Brenda Charett Jensen** lost her ability to speak during a botched surgery. 11 years later, thanks to an 18-hour transplant operation, she has her voice back.

David Lindsay-Abaire's
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