

Beat: Politics

TEXT -- Republican response to Obama's State of the Union

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USPA News - U.S. Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers on Tuesday delivered the official Republican response to President Barack Obama's annual 'State of the Union' address to a joint session of Congress. The following are her remarks, as prepared for delivery. -- Begins -- What an honor it is for me to be with you after the President's State of the Union.

Tonight we honor America ? a nation that has witnessed the greatest rise of freedom and opportunity our world has ever seen. A nation where we are not defined by our limits, but by our potential. And a nation where a girl who worked at the McDonald's Drive-Thru to help pay for college can be with you from the United States Capitol. But the most important moments right now aren't happening here. They're not in the Oval Office or in the House Chamber. They're in your homes. Kissing your kids goodnight... Figuring out how to pay the bills... Getting ready for tomorrow's doctor's visit... Waiting to hear from those you love serving in Afghanistan, or searching for that big job interview. After all, 'We the People' have been the foundation of America since her earliest days ? people from all walks of life, and from all corners of the world ? people who come to America because here, no challenge is too great and no dream too big. That's the genius of America. Tonight the President made more promises that sound good, but won't solve the problems actually facing Americans. We want you to have a better life. The President wants that too. But we part ways when it comes to how to make that happen. So tonight I'd like to share a more hopeful, Republican vision ? One that empowers you, not the government ? It's one that champions free markets ? and trusts people to make their own decisions, not a government that decides for you. It helps working families rise above the limits of poverty and protects our most vulnerable. And it's one where Washington plays by the same rules that you do. It's a vision that is fair and offers the promise of a better future for every American. If you had told me as a little girl that one-day I would put my hand on the Bible and be sworn in as the 200th woman to serve in the House of Representatives, I never would've thought it possible. I grew up working at my family's orchard and fruit stand in Kettle Falls, a small town in Eastern Washington - getting up before dawn with my brother to pick apples. My dad drove a school bus and my mom worked as a part-time bookkeeper. They taught me to work hard, help others, and always, always dream for more. So, when I showed my 4H animals at the county fair, my parents used to say to me, 'Cathy, you need to save this money so you can go to college one day!' So I did ? I saved, I worked hard, and I became the first in my family to graduate from college. The chance to go from my Washington to this one was unexpected. I came to Congress to help empower people, not politicians; To grow the working middle class, not the government; And to ensure that everyone in this country can find a job. Because a job is so much more than just a paycheck - It gives us purpose, dignity, and the foundation to build a future. I was single when I was elected ? but it wasn't long before I met Brian, a retired Navy commander, and now we have three beautiful children, one who was born just eight weeks ago. Like all parents, we have high hopes and dreams for our children, but we also know what it's like to face challenges. Three days after we gave birth to our son, Cole, we got news no parent expects. Cole was diagnosed with Down syndrome. The doctors told us he could have endless complications, heart defects, even early Alzheimer's. They told us all the problems. But when we looked at our son, we saw only possibilities. We saw a gift from God. Today we see a 6-year old boy who dances to Bruce Springsteen; who reads above grade level; and who is the best big brother in the world. We see all the things he can do, not those he can't. Cole, and his sisters, Grace and Brynn, have only made me more determined to see the potential in every human life ? that whether we are born with an extra twenty-first chromosome or without a dollar to our name ? we are not defined by our limits, but by our potential. Because our mission ? not only as Republicans, but as Americans, is to once again to ensure that we are not bound by where we come from, but empowered by what we can become. That is the gap Republicans are working to close. It's the gap we all face: between where you are and where you want to be. The President talks a lot about income inequality. But the real gap we face today is one of opportunity inequality ? And with this Administration's policies, that gap has become far too wide. We see this gap growing every single day. We see it in our neighbors who are struggling to find jobs ? A husband who's now working just part-time... A child who drops out of college because she can't afford tuition... Or parents who are outliving their life's savings. Last month, more Americans stopped looking for a job than found one. Too many people are falling further and further behind because right now, the President's policies are making people's lives harder. Republicans have plans to close the gap ? Plans that focus on jobs first without more spending, government bailouts, and red tape... Every day, we're working to expand our economy, one manufacturing job, nursing degree and small business at a time. We have plans to improve our education and training systems so you have the choice to determine where your kids go to school ? so college is affordable ? and skills training is modernized. And yes, it's time to honor our history of legal immigration. We're working on a step-by-step solution to immigration reform by first securing our borders and making sure America will always attract the best, brightest, and hardest working from around the world. And with too many Americans living paycheck to paycheck, we have solutions to help you take home more of your pay ? through lower taxes, cheaper energy costs, and affordable health care. Not long ago I got a

letter from Bette in Spokane, who hoped the President's health care law would save her money ? but found out instead that her premiums were going up nearly \$700 a month. No, we shouldn't go back to the way things were, but this law is not working. Republicans believe health care choices should be yours, not the government's. And that whether you're a boy with Down syndrome or a woman with breast cancer ... you can find coverage and a doctor who will treat you. So we hope the President will join us in a year of real action ? by empowering people ? not making their lives harder with unprecedented spending, higher taxes, and fewer jobs. As Republicans, we advance these plans every day because we believe in a government that trusts people and doesn't limit where you finish because of where you started. That is what we stand for ? for an America that is every bit as compassionate as it is exceptional. If we're successful... Years from now our children will say that we rebuilt the American Dream. We built a working middle class that could take in anyone, and a workforce that could take on the world. Whether you're a girl in Kettle Falls or a boy from Brooklyn, our children should be able to say that we closed the gap. Our plan is one that dreams big for everyone and turns its back on no one. The President said many things tonight. But now, we ask him to listen ? to you ? for the true state of the union lies in your heart and in your home. Tomorrow, I'll watch my son Cole get on the school bus; others will wait in the doctor's office or interview for that first job. Some of us will celebrate new beginnings... Others will face great challenges... But all of us will wake up and do what is uniquely American... We will look forward to the boundless potential that lies ahead. We will give thanks to the brave men and women who have answered America's call to freedom, like Sgt. Jacob Hess from Spokane, who recently gave his life to protect all of ours. So, tonight, I simply offer a prayer... A prayer for Sgt. Hess's family, your family, and for our larger American family. That, with the guidance of God, we may prove worthy of His blessings of life ... liberty ... and the pursuit of happiness. For when we embrace these gifts, we are each doing our part to form a more perfect union. May God guide you and our President, and may God continue to bless the United States of America. -- Ends --

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