



President Madison's State of the Union, 1811

All of the language in the annotated document below is from the original. However, the following edits have been made to allow for the document to be read aloud smoothly:

- Some spelling and punctuation has been standardized to avoid confusion.
- Words in italics are defined in the parentheses that follow. The words in parentheses can generally be substituted for the italicized words, when desired.
- Ellipses represent gaps in the text.

The complete text of President Madison's State of the Union Address of 1811 is available online on the EDSITEment resource **American Memory** at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(hj0084\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(hj0084))).

James Madison, November 5, 1811

A message, in writing, was received from the President of the United States, by Mr. Coles, his Secretary, who delivered in the same, and withdrew.

The said message was then read at the Clerk's table, and is as follows:

Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives:

In calling you together sooner than a separation from your homes would otherwise have been required I yielded to considerations drawn from the posture of our foreign affairs....

At the close of the last session of Congress it was hoped that the successive *confirmations of the extinction of the French decrees* (improvements in France's attitude toward American maritime rights), so far as they violated our neutral commerce, would have *induced* (influenced) the Government of Great Britain to...authorize a removal of the existing obstructions to ...commerce with the United States.

Instead of this reasonable step toward satisfaction and friendship between the two nations, the *orders* (the restrictions on American maritime rights) were...*put into more rigorous execution* (made even more strictly enforced)....

Among the occurrences produced by the conduct of British ships of war hovering on our coasts was an encounter between one of them and the American frigate commanded by Captain Rodgers....

The justice and fairness which have been evinced on the part of the United States toward France, both before and since the revocation of her decrees, authorized an expectation that her Government would have followed up that measure.... No proof, however, is yet given of an intention to repair the other wrongs done to the United States....

...the United States have much reason to be dissatisfied with the rigorous and unexpected restrictions to which their trade with the French dominions has been subjected, and which, if not discontinued, will require...corresponding restrictions on importations from France into the United States....

Under *the ominous indications* (these threatening conditions)...it became a duty to exert the means...*in* (for) providing for the general security. The works of defense on our maritime frontier have accordingly been prosecuted...and such a *disposition* (enlargement) has been made of our land forces.... In this disposition is included a force consisting of regulars and militia, embodied in the Indiana Territory and marched toward our northwestern frontier. This measure was made requisite by several murders...committed by Indians, but more especially by the menacing preparations and aspect of a combination of them on the Wabash, under the influence and direction of a fanatic of the Shawanese tribe. With these exceptions the Indian tribes retain their peaceable dispositions toward us, and their usual pursuits....

With this evidence of hostile inflexibility in trampling on rights which no *independent* (neutral) nation can *relinquish* (give up), Congress will feel the duty of putting the United States into an *armor and an attitude* (strong defensive posture) demanded by the crisis, and corresponding with the national spirit and expectations.

I recommend, accordingly, that adequate provisions be made for filling the ranks and prolonging the enlistments of the regular troops....

The receipts into the Treasury during the year ending on the 30th day of September last have exceeded \$13,500,000, and have enabled us to defray the current expenses, including the interest on the public debt, and to *reimburse* (pay back) more than \$5,000,000 of the principal without *recurring to* (resorting to) the loan authorized by the act of the last session. The temporary loan obtained in the latter end of the year 1810 has also been *reimbursed* (paid back), and is not included in that amount....

I can not close this communication without expressing my deep sense of...crisis...invoking at the same time the blessing of Heaven on our beloved country and on all the means that may be employed in vindicating its rights and advancing its welfare.

From the Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States, 1811-1813
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 1811