

Undaunted Democratic Governor

How to be presidential...plus how to be a gold medalist

JENNIFER RUBIN

FEB 27

[READ IN APP](#)

Raging narcissist Donald Trump insisted on monopolizing the legacy media for over 1 ¾ hours Tuesday night, pushing the official Democratic response into the 11 ET pm hour. That may have been the saving grace for Republicans (who will have to live down their non-stop cheering for his venomous blather). Had Trump bloviated less, more Americans would have been awake to see Virginia's Democratic Gov. Abigail Spanberger deliver the most presidential speech uttered since Trump took office. Trump's endless monologue surely suffered by comparison.

In under 13 minutes, Spanberger demonstrated that she is among the most skillful of a new generation of Democrats. In contrast to Trump and other MAGA Republicans, she was impassioned but not manic, sober but not scowling — and entirely *normal*. Ah yes, this is what a grown-up politician sounds like.

Spanberger set the table at the beginning of her remarks with three questions:

Is the president working to make life more affordable for you and your family?

Is the president working to keep Americans safe — both at home and abroad?

Is the President working for YOU?

Simple, direct language conveyed that she wanted to talk about voters' concerns without histrionics or absurd lies. In each section, she ticked off the evidence that Trump was not serving Americans.

On affordability, she explained that Trump's "reckless trade policies have forced American families to pay more than \$1,700 each in tariff costs." She continued that

even after his illegal scheme was struck down, “the President is planning for new tariffs, another massive tax hike on you and your family.” Speaking earnestly to red America, she noted:

Rural health clinics in Virginia are already closing their doors thanks to the so-called “One Big Beautiful Bill,” championed by the President and Republicans in Congress.

And tonight, the President celebrated this law — the one threatening rural hospitals, stripping healthcare from millions of Americans, and driving up costs in energy and housing. All while cutting food programs for hungry kids.

Citing her own national security credentials, she turned to dissect Trump’s vicious anti-immigrant campaign:

[He] has sent poorly trained federal agents into our cities, where they have arrested and detained American citizens and people who aspire to be Americans — and they have done it without a warrant.

They have ripped nursing mothers away from their babies, they have sent children — a little boy in a blue bunny hat — to far-off detention centers, and they have killed American citizens on our streets.

And they have done it all with their faces masked from accountability.

Every minute spent sowing fear is a minute not spent investigating murders, crimes against children, or the criminals defrauding seniors of their life savings.

Our President told us tonight that we are safer because these agents arrest mothers and detain children. Think about that.

Our broken immigration system is something to be fixed — not an excuse for unaccountable agents to terrorize our communities.

Spanberger also made the case that Trump has made us weaker internationally because “he continues to cede economic power and technological strength to China,

bow down to a Russian dictator, and make plans for war with Iran.” She slammed him for destroying America’s reputation as a force for good in the world “through DOGE, mass firings, and the appointment of deeply unserious people to our nation’s most serious positions.”

[Upgrade to paid](#)

In her third category, Spanberger made the compelling case that Trump, with MAGA Republicans’ consent, has been the most corrupt president in memory. Gaining momentum with skillful parallel phrasing (“he lied, he scapegoated, and he distracted”; he tries to “enrage us, divide us ... pit us against one another”), she drew in the audience:

Somebody must be benefitting.

He’s enriching himself, his family, his friends. The scale of the corruption is unprecedented.

There’s the cover-up of the Epstein files.

The crypto scams.

Cozying up to foreign princes for airplanes and billionaires for ballrooms.

Putting his name and face on buildings all over our nation’s capital.

As sharp as her attacks may have been, Spanberger did not merely criticize Trump. Situating Americans in the context of their history, she summoned us to use our agency: “The United States was founded on the idea that ordinary people could reject the unacceptable excesses of poor leadership, band together to demand better of their government, and create a nation that would be an example for the world.”

She bookended the speech with a call to rise up in defense of democracy:

George Washington warned us about the possibility of “cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men” rising to power.

But he also encouraged us — all Americans — to unite in “a common cause” to move this nation forward.

That is our charge once more. And that is what we are seeing across the country.

It is deeply American and patriotic to do so, and it is how we ensure that the State of our Union remains strong, not just this year but for the next 250 years as well.

If voters understand that every Republican on the November ballot has enabled Trumpian outrages, Democrats can rack up big wins and halt Trump’s agenda in its tracks.

“Those who are stepping up now to run will win in November because Americans ... know you can demand more, and that we are working to lower costs, we are working to keep our communities and country safe, and we are working for you!”

Democrats should study the speech. Spanberger — undaunted, succinct, steely, sensible, and decent — demonstrates that if they embrace good policy and good politics, their victories can spell the beginning of the end of the Trump era.