



I still remember when Nancy Pelosi tore up the State of the Union speech behind President Trump. It was one of the most openly theatrical displays of political contempt I have ever seen inside the House chamber. That moment was not about policy. It was about signaling to millions of Americans that the words coming from the podium were not even worthy of listening to.

Now we have moved beyond tearing up speeches. We have lawmakers refusing to attend at all and encouraging Americans to disengage from the address entirely. This is not just a protest. This is psychological framing.

The State of the Union is one of the last remaining civic rituals where both parties sit in the same room, even in disagreement. When leaders publicly reject that ritual, they are sending a message that shared civic space no longer matters.

The psychology behind it is powerful. If you can convince your followers that even listening is betrayal, you eliminate the possibility of persuasion. This is how division hardens. You do not argue the content; you delegitimize the stage.

When political leaders model contempt instead of confrontation, it conditions their base to mirror that behavior. The result is not debate; it is emotional separation.

In my view, this is deliberate. It teaches citizens to reject exposure to opposing ideas before those ideas are even heard. Once people are trained to avoid listening, they are easier to mobilize and harder to persuade. A divided audience is more predictable than an informed one.

You do not have to agree with a president to sit and listen. Refusing to participate in a constitutional ritual sends a deeper message than any applause or silence ever could.

The real concern is not whether someone skips a speech. The concern is what happens to a republic when half the country is conditioned to believe the other half is not even worth hearing.