

# Obama Scores in State of the Union Finale: Analysis of His Communications Style

✘ *By Virgil Scudder, President, [Virgil Scudder & Associates](#)*

President Obama's final [State of the Union](#) message was arguably his finest. It should go into history as one of the best written and best delivered.



(Source: Twitter)

The president was relaxed, cordial, and persuasive. He backed up his points with facts and figures, many of them obviously intended to counter claims of leading Republican candidates [Donald Trump](#) and [Ted Cruz](#). An excellent example was his citing 10,000 U. S. air strikes against ISIS, accompanied by a statement that his policy was far better than calls to carpet bomb civilians. Presidential candidates' demands for more and indiscriminate bombing might "work as a TV sound bite," he said, "but doesn't pass muster on the world stage." "A smarter approach," he declared, "is a patient and disciplined strategy."

He also discretely did some score settling. With a stone-

faced Senate Majority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) looking on, Obama declared that solar energy employs more people at better average wages than coal. McConnell, from the coal-heavy state of Kentucky, has been instrumental in thwarting many of the president's environmental initiatives, especially those impacting the coal industry.

The president threw in a catchy sound bite or two, referring to "political hot air" and "peddling fiction," an obvious reference to statements by [Trump](#), Cruz, and other GOP presidential candidates on issues such as the economy and Obamacare. Then he backed up his characterization with some solid and impressive statistics.

One thing he didn't mention was the ten U.S. sailors being held by Iran. He was criticized by some, fairly in my view, for that omission.

Looking at delivery techniques, Obama has never been better. His gestures, timing, pauses, eye contact, and vocal variety were superb, giving the presentation a feeling of spontaneity. This speech was a model for students of the oratorical art.

Unlike last year, the Republicans provided an effective response to the president's talk. The 2015 performance by freshman Senator Jodi Ernst of Iowa was awful; she was clearly in over her head. This time, the GOP selected South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley, and the result was an intelligent, articulate presentation of the party's views.

Haley was warm, gracious, and thoughtful. She drew on her background as a minority growing in her state (her parents both emigrated here from India) in calling for tolerance of people who are different. She struck a blow for compassion, citing the response of South Carolinians to the Charleston church murders. And she gained credibility by humbly saying that Republicans share some responsibility with Democrats for

the state of the country today.

If the GOP feels it needs it needs a woman on its ticket as vice president, they should forget about the divisive and fact-challenged Carly Fiorina. Haley is a far better choice and, I believe, someone who would greatly strengthen the ticket no matter who gets the nomination. She's quite a performer.

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