

## STATE OF THE UNION ADDRESS TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE (EXCERPT)

By President Theodore Roosevelt

*On December 3, 1906, President Roosevelt addresses the nation about acquiring the Philippines, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the reasons U.S. Americans should support it.*

.....I most earnestly hope that the bill to provide a lower tariff (tax) for or else absolute free trade in Philippine products will become a law. No harm will come to any American industry; and while there will be some small but real material benefit to the Filipinos, the main benefit will come by the showing made as to our purpose to do all in our power for their welfare.

So far our action in the Philippines has been abundantly justified, not mainly and indeed not primarily because of the added dignity it has given us as a nation by proving that we are capable honorably and efficiently to bear the international burdens which a mighty people should bear, but even more because of the immense benefit that has come to the people of the Philippine Islands.

In these islands we are steadily introducing both liberty and order, to a greater degree than their people have ever before known. We have secured justice. We have provided an efficient police force, and have put down ladronism (thievery). Only in the islands of Leyte and Samar is the authority of our Government resisted and this by wild mountain tribes under the superstitious inspiration of fakers and pseudo—religions leaders.

We are constantly increasing the measure of liberty accorded the islanders, and next spring, if conditions warrant, we shall take a great stride forward in testing their capacity for self—government by summoning the first Filipino legislative assembly; and the way in which they stand this test will largely determine whether the self—government thus granted will be increased or decreased;

For if we have erred at all in the Philippines it has been in proceeding too rapidly in the direction of granting a large measure of self—government. We are building roads. We have, for the immeasurable good of the people, arranged for the building of railroads. Let us also see to it that they are given free access to our markets. This nation owes no more imperative duty to itself and mankind than the duty of managing the affairs of all the islands under the American flag—the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii—so as to make it evident that it is in every way to their advantage that the (American) flag should fly over them.

The needs of Hawaii are peculiar; every aid should be given the islands; and our efforts should be unceasing to develop them along the lines of a community of small freeholders, not of great planters with coolie—tilled estates.

This warrants our treating it (Hawaii) differently from the way in which we treat Territories contiguous to or surrounded by sister Territories or other States, and justifies the setting aside of a portion of our revenues to be expended for educational and internal improvements

Hawaii is now making an effort to secure immigration fit in the end to assume the duties and burdens of full American citizenship, and whenever the leaders in the various industries of those islands finally adopt our ideals and heartily join our administration in endeavoring to develop a

middle class of substantial citizens, a way will then be found to deal with the commercial and industrial problems which now appear to them so serious.

The best Americanism is that which aims for stability and permanency of prosperous citizenship, rather than immediate returns on large masses of capital.

It is a mistake, and it betrays a spirit of foolish cynicism, to maintain that all international governmental action is, and must ever be, based upon mere selfishness, and that to advance ethical reasons for such action is always a sign of hypocrisy.

Unquestionably no nation can afford to disregard proper considerations of self-interest, any more than a private individual can so do. But it is equally true that the average private individual in any really decent community does many actions with reference to other men in which he is guided, not by self-interest, but by public spirit, by regard for the rights of others....

*Source:*

Roosevelt, T. (1906). *Excerpts from the State of the Union Address. The Theodore Roosevelt Almanac.*

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/hawaii-petition/#documents>