

**THE BLOG**

# Break Glass in Case of SOTU Speech

By Marty Kaplan

01/30/2006 10:14 am ET | Updated May 25, 2011

Mouthers of Mehlman's talking points are wondering whether he'll rise to the occasion this week. Consumers of Karl's Kool-Aid are nervous about its potency on Tuesday night. The legions of lickspittles and lapdogs training for State of the Union night media bookings are frantically thumbing their copies of Harry Potter in search of charms to convert sow's ears into silk purses.

With a president barely breaking 40 percent approval (in a *Fox* poll, ferchrissakes); with network anchors and cameramen no less secure in a worsening Iraq than enlisted men and women; with sleaze up to their eyeballs and Enron going on trial; with the neocons' democracy-dominoes tumbling toward extremism in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Palestine; with Katrina and the Medicare prescription drug program demonstrating the kind of competence that only a dazed and confused frat boy could envy; with Nixon's "*l'etat, c'est moi*" above-the-lawism the Preamble to Bush's Constitution 2.0 — no wonder the Administration's cheerleaders are wondering what the hell they can say with a straight face to Chris and Tim and Wolf and Brit.

Relax, you pundits and spinners. Be strong, you bloviators and gasbags. Big Brother won't let you down. Here, in a HuffPo exclusive, are a few simple phrases to commit to memory. *It doesn't matter what's in the speech.* It matters what's in your mouth, and how confidently you repeat it. Here you go:

The President had to hit a home run tonight, and that's exactly what he did.

He really hit it out of the park.

I don't envy the Democrats tonight.

He offered a bold vision for the future.

He set the agenda for the rest of his presidency.

He framed the debate for the midterm elections.

He went on the offensive. (Alt: He put his critics on the defensive.)

He's always been at his best in campaign mode, and that's what he was tonight.

He shrewdly offered an olive branch to his opponents.

He made terrorism and security the number one issue.

The Democrats have no \_\_\_\_\_ (alternative, leader, power, free 90-minute ads like tonight).

Swearing in Alito this afternoon so that he could sit with the other Justices tonight was truly a masterstroke. (Alt: Seating Mrs. Alito next to the First Lady in her box was a brilliant piece of stagecraft, and that's what statecraft really is after all.)

Call me old-fashioned, but that patriotic rhetoric still gives me goosebumps.

I don't care what they say, I thought Cheney looked good tonight.

If I had to sum up the President's message tonight, it would be this: Stay the course. Kill the terrorists. Cut taxes. Stop gay marriage.

When the President said \_\_\_\_\_, and the camera cut to (John Kerry, Hillary Clinton, Ted Kennedy), I know they put the best look on their face that they could, but let me tell you, I didn't envy them.

Will you please stop with the Abramoff pictures already? That's such a Beltway story.

[Feel free to add your own.]

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**Marty Kaplan** 

USC Annenberg professor and Norman Lear Center director