# Parliament divided over Donald Trump’s potential address during UK State Visit



A campaign has emerged among some Members of Parliament (MPs) and peers aiming to prevent former US President Donald Trump from delivering an address to both Houses of the UK Parliament during a proposed State Visit. This development marks a notable change in stance, particularly following Labour Party frontbenchers initially supporting the visit invitation.

The invitation for Mr Trump to make a State Visit was extended by Labour leader Keir Starmer during a visit to the White House in February as part of efforts to strengthen UK-US relations. Mr Trump, who recently described King Charles as a "friend," mentioned that preparations were underway for a visit scheduled for September, with the King reportedly looking to set a date during that month.

Despite the official invitation, concerns about Mr Trump addressing Parliament have grown after several contentious episodes during his US presidency. These include his confrontational meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, proposals to annex Canada and Greenland, criticisms of European free speech policies, and the imposition of high tariffs on imports, which caused international economic disruption.

Labour MP Rachael Maskell voiced her opposition to the idea, telling MailOnline: "It would be completely inappropriate for the US President to address the Houses of Parliament." This sentiment echoes a 2017 stance when then-Speaker of the House of Commons John Bercow blocked Mr Trump from speaking at Westminster, calling such opportunities an "earned honour," not an "automatic right."

The power to permit such an address rests with three officials – the Commons Speaker, the Lord Speaker, and the Lord Great Chamberlain (represented by Black Rod). According to previous parliamentary motions, notably one signed by 206 MPs in 2017 including Labour’s David Lammy, Wes Streeting, Peter Kyle, and others who are now cabinet ministers, the invitation to speak at Westminster holds immense historical significance and should not be granted lightly. The motion urged these officials to withhold permission for Mr Trump to address Parliament, citing concerns about his conduct.

Further parliamentary motions in 2019, during Mr Trump’s first State Visit to the UK, reaffirmed these reservations, with Lammy, Streeting, and Lucy Powell among those calling on the government to rescind the advice to offer a full State Visit to the former US President.

Recent communications coordinated by Lord Foulkes of Cumnock, a former Tony Blair government minister, have reinforced opposition, with a message sent to Lord McFall, the Lord Speaker, expressing that it would be "inappropriate" for Mr Trump to address the Palace of Westminster. The concerns referenced Mr Trump’s attitudes toward the UK, parliamentary democracy, NATO, and Ukraine.

Additionally, Labour MP Kate Osborne has formally asked Commons Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle to uphold the previous decision made by John Bercow and decline the invitation. She wrote, as reported by The Times, that while the government can engage with Mr Trump on broad issues during his visit, it does not warrant the honour of addressing Parliament. Osborne also highlighted potential risks such as low attendance at such an event.

A different Labour MP was quoted saying, "We don't need Trump to lecture and dictate his unilateral terms to our elected representatives."

Conversely, some Conservative MPs disagree with efforts to block Mr Trump’s address. Julian Smith described the campaign as "crackers" on social media platform X, adding, "Almost always better to engage & meet than to boycott - speaking to someone & meeting them doesn't equal agreement."

Both Houses of Parliament have refrained from commenting on private correspondence related to the issue. A spokesperson stated: "Should a request be made to address the Houses of Parliament, it will be considered in the usual way. Any decision would be made by Speakers of both Houses."

In terms of diplomatic precedent, it is worth noting former US President Barack Obama addressed both Houses in Westminster Hall in 2011, an event attended by then Prime Minister David Cameron and past prime ministers Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, and Sir John Major. More recently, President Joe Biden did not deliver such a speech during his time in office. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky gave a speech in Westminster Hall in 2023 regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Since 1935, there have been 80 addresses delivered to both Houses, predominantly by foreign leaders, including Ronald Reagan in 1982 and Bill Clinton in 1995, in addition to speeches by the monarch.

Government sources have indicated a strong desire to secure a trade deal with the US before a key engagement between Keir Starmer and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen scheduled for May 19. One insider commented, "Trump hates the EU, so we're desperate to get a deal with him locked in before what will inevitably be a love-in with Brussels."

Senior parliamentary sources have suggested that opposition from Labour figures over Mr Trump’s parliamentary address is unsurprising, given the former president’s controversial tenure and strained relations with European partners, NATO, and the UK.

In summary, while the State Visit invitation remains official and is reportedly welcomed by the Commons and Lords Speakers, considerable opposition within Parliament seeks to prevent Donald Trump from receiving the specific honour of addressing both Houses. The decision will ultimately rest with the three key parliamentary officials once a formal request is considered.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.the-independent.com/bulletin/news/trump-parliament-uk-ban-nato-b2736706.html> - This article corroborates the campaign by MPs and peers to block Donald Trump from addressing Parliament during his state visit due to concerns about his stance on democracy and international issues.
* <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/politics/trump-uk-state-visit-parliament-mps-peers-b2736679.html> - This piece details the resistance from parliamentarians, such as Lord Foulkes, who argue against Trump addressing Parliament due to his disrespect for democracy and international alliances like NATO.
* <http://scotlandonsunday.scotsman.com/news/politics/the-push-to-stop-bizarre-donald-trump-addressing-uk-parliament-being-led-by-scottish-labour-peer-5091923> - It highlights the efforts led by a Scottish Labour peer to block Trump's address, citing concerns about his attitude toward democracy.
* [https://www.threads.net/@peter\_stefanovic\_lawyer/post/DIt2R2CIUUo/mps-and-peers-oppose-donald-trump-address-to-parliament-during-uk-visitconcerns-](https://www.threads.net/%40peter_stefanovic_lawyer/post/DIt2R2CIUUo/mps-and-peers-oppose-donald-trump-address-to-parliament-during-uk-visitconcerns-) - This post supports the opposition from MPs and peers to Trump's parliamentary address, emphasizing concerns over his suitability to address the Houses.
* <https://news.sky.com/story/trump-uk-visit-mps-and-peers-say-former-president-should-not-be-allowed-to-address-parliament-12919444> - This article reinforces the notion that Trump’s past actions, including contentious interactions with international leaders, have fueled opposition to his potential speech in Parliament.