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**Civics 101**

**Episode: Campaigning**

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:00:00] Nick, you ready?

**Nick Capodice:** [00:00:01] Yeah.

[00:00:05] (ad archival)

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:00:41] Relentless.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:00:41] Yeah this is some of the most depressing audio I've ever heard.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:00:44] Yeah it's it's a bummer. Now listen to this.

[00:00:51] (ad archival)

**Nick Capodice:** [00:01:08] Hope and action. Anger.

[00:01:11] Yeah.

[00:01:12] We have to do something better for.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:01:14] Things are going to change.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:01:16] It's like a montage in a movie it's like when things turn around.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:01:20] That's my favorite part of every movie. Yes the rocky montage.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:01:24] So you better right?

**Nick Capodice:** [00:01:25] Yeah I do feel a lot better.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:01:25] That's how you're supposed to feel.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:01:28] So what's up with this emotional rollercoaster.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:01:31] Well Nick that is the sound of someone trying to convince you to vote for them in 2018. A campaign ad that doubles as a heart wrenching autobiography The story of a youth who pulled themselves up by their bootstraps and grew into a grateful and nurturing adult but remains frustrated by the way the world works and wants to do something about it.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:01:53] Heavy stuff.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:01:55] It is heavier than you can imagine. These ads which look pretty expensive by the way are just one teeny tiny piece of the campaign puzzle and that puzzle is even more puzzling in a midterm election.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:02:10] Did you solve the puzzle.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:02:11] Absolutely not. But I did talk to a lot of smart people who have because that is how we do it because this is civics 101. The podcast refresher course on how our democracy works. I'm Hannah McCarthy.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:02:26] And I'm Nick Capodice.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:02:28] And today we are talking money shoe leather and grass roots. Today we are talking campaigns. The sound of campaigning is in constant flux. In the 1960s there was a lot of just repeating candidate names over and over.

[00:02:51] Nixon. Nixon. Nixon Nixon.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:02:52] In the 80s you had a lot of stare at the camera and keep it serious going on.

[00:02:57] Kansas agriculture needs our support. I'm asking for yours on November 6th.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:03:03] And the Hollywood ish melancholy of today will probably be replaced by a whole new sound four years from now numbers shift tactics shift campaign finance laws shift but the principles of campaigning, the bare necessities those are locked in your state constitution.

**Maile Foster:** [00:03:22] My name is Maile Foster. I'm a small business owner and single mom and I'm running for State House District 18 as an independent. And that's the central Colorado Springs area.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:03:38] A while back Miley was approached by an organization called Unite America.

[00:03:43] Imagine a government that unites rather than divides us one that takes action on issues.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:03:48] They identify independents in various states and then try to get them to run for office.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:03:53] You know people love saying I'm not a politician in their campaign ads?

[00:03:57] I'm a businessman not a politician. Kip's not a politician. He's not a politician of convenience. Here my politician endorsements. None.

[00:04:07] Maile is very much not a politician. She's a financial adviser and before that she worked for IBM. So I wanted to know where someone like her begins after agreeing to something like this. You know you wake up the next day what do you do first.

**Maile Foster:** [00:04:25] Well it's this big thick three ring binder to do list. That's what it is.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:04:31] A binder. You mean like a literal binder there's an instruction manual on how to run campaigns?

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:04:37] Yeah. The people from Unite America just shipped her this hulking how to manual.

**Maile Foster:** [00:04:41] Well I will just start on this to do list.

**Maile Foster:** [00:04:47] Oh we have to file paperwork with the secretary of state each have to form a committee and get a tax ID number. I mean basically start from scratch starting the business almost. And but there's additional financial and regulatory reporting requirements because I have that all spelled out for me is not too hard to just start going down the list. What you gotta do to kick off the campaign.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:05:17] So you just file some paperwork with the secretary of state. It's just that easy?

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:05:21] Actually there is one major step that had to come first.

**Maile Foster:** [00:05:25] And so right from day one it was like May 17 was the first day I can go get signatures. And so that very first day I was out talking to people to get signatures to get on the ballot.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:05:39] So signatures so people have to go out and vote for her before they vote for her.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:05:43] Yeah this is called Nomination by Petition and just for the record ballot access laws vary from state to state. So if you're planning to run you should give your election officials a call. But in Miley's case since she was going independent she needed at least 400 signatures to get on the ballot. State Senate requires 600U.S. House requires 800. It's a cool thousand for U.S. Senate. The rules are different for major and minor parties as well.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:06:11] So Maile got her 400?

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:06:12] Actually. She scored 637 signatures.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:06:16] I mean that seems like an awful lot of work just to get started campaigning. But once you do that what's the next step?

**Maile Foster:** [00:06:22] Well you need someone to help you manage finances. You need a Treasurer you need someone to help you with volunteers and help recruiting volunteers. You need someone to build a Web site.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:06:34] So people so for even for a small statehouse seat you need a whole team?

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:06:37] Yeah it's kind of amazing to think of how many operations like this are going on around the country during an election year. And you know even with volunteers this stuff costs money which means on top of her day job Maile has to put in hours every day making calls and hoofing it from one door to the next. Introducing herself and asking for money.

**Maile Foster:** [00:06:59] The first priority of course was raising money because I made a choice of. Obviously I'm not going to get money from a political party because I don't want to be beholden to a political party.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:07:11] I should point out here that the group that recruited Maile does help to fund campaigns. It's a super PAC registered with the FEC specifically designed to be nonpartisan but they don't cover all expenses and Miley has to do a lot of legwork on her own. She actually told me that she outraised all of her opponents.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:07:30] So that's not bad for someone who's never campaigned before. I'm still trying to figure out what a campaign actually looks like for a candidate who's not in office. Fundraising, courting voters, creating a platform. How does that work?

**Maile Foster:** [00:07:42] Well a typical day is I'm up at 530. I'm working my day job at maybe by 7 or 730 which didn't I didn't quite used to be up that early. I'm just having the extended day a little bit.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:08:01] So Miley is up. She does her financial advising thing and then.

**Maile Foster:** [00:08:05] I try to go into campaign mode about 3:00.

**Maile Foster:** [00:08:13] At least probably an hour a day raising money and then either phone calls or coordinating Fund-Raising events and things like that. Now I'm really trying to meet people especially people in my district to understand what I need to do to earn their vote. I learned something about myself is that it was hard for me to do more than two hours of walking when it was 90 degrees.

[00:08:44] Even with all these advances and changes that have morphed the political landscape since say, the "I like Ike" era.

[00:08:51] U. Like Ike, I like Ike everybody likes Ike!

**Nick Capodice:** [00:08:53] It sounds like campaigning is pretty analog.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:08:58] Well voters need to see you right. They need to know your face. They need to hear your voice especially if they have no idea who you are. That means thousands of candidates around the country flooding the Internet television radio your mailbox your doorway with their face and their message.

**Leah Askarinam:** [00:09:25] So a lot of the kind of work that goes into a midterm campaign on the challengers end is just making sure that voters know who they are.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:09:36] This is Leah.

**Leah Askarinam:** [00:09:37] I'm Leah Askarinam. I'm a reporter and analyst for Inside Elections with Nathan Gonzales. We provide nonpartisan analysis of gubernatorial and federal races.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:09:48] Leah makes clear that even step 1, making sure voters know who you are cannot happen without a lot of cash.

**Leah Askarinam:** [00:09:57] Without money nothing else really matters.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:10:00] And that once you've got that money it's a matter of appealing to voters and in a midterm election that often means appealing to a country that wants to punish its president.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:10:11] This comes back to the referendum on the president idea.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:10:14] Exactly and we get into that a bit more in our episode on Why Midterms Matter so make sure to check that out. Anyway let's say there's a Democrat in the Oval Office.

**Leah Askarinam:** [00:10:23] So you'll see candidates try to say listen I don't like the Democratic Party either.

[00:10:27] I'm Not a Democrat for the powerful. I'll be a governor who empowers you.

**Leah Askarinam:** [00:10:31] I don't like Nancy Pelosi either.

[00:10:33] But I've said from day one that I won't vote for Nancy Pelosi.

**Leah Askarinam:** [00:10:36] I like the old Democratic Party and I want to help you the workers.

[00:10:41] It's time we acknowledge that not all Democrats are the same.

**Leah Askarinam:** [00:10:45] And I want to make sure that you have health care and that you have a good paying job.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:10:49] So it's like when we think about the rules of politicking about sticking to your party's message, Midterms are like this alternate universe in which a party loyalist might end up campaigning against the tenets of their party. And the same goes for voters. With this referendum in the air, some become swayable.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:11:10] So people who are registered Democrats because they are Democrats in the 1980s who have since voted pretty much exclusively for Republicans, to get them to kind of come back to their party. And that's also includes some independents people who maybe formerly were Democrats felt that the Democratic Party abandoned them but felt that the Republican Party wasn't the best fit either.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:11:35] This may sound cynical but it sounds like the midterms are a perfect opportunity to cash in on disillusionment to say like, I hear you, this party is a real mess. It's been a real bummer. But you can vote for me because I'm not one of those Democrats right? I'm a kinda Democrat you wish still exist. I'm your I'm your grandfather's Democrat.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:11:56] Or you go the route of Maile Foster and run independent right, which means you can campaign on fiscal responsibility and education like Maile is without those commitments carrying the weight of political affiliation. And Maile by the way is an example of one of these kind of soul searching voters. She was a Republican for most of her life and then registered Democrat for a little while before she finally became an independent.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:12:21] Is there a certain demographic of the population who's more or less likely to be swayed by this independent campaign?

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:12:27] I think it varies from year to year along with the political climate. But for example in this year's midterm there has been a lot of attention on suburban white educated women.

**Leah Askarinam:** [00:12:40] And so you'll see Democrats in other districts try to get those voters. So they are trying to make Republican suburban Republicans feel comfortable not voting for the Republican Party.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:12:53] You might see this with an independent or a moderate Democrat candidate who can sway voters with lets say conservative ideas combined with a strong sense of checks and balances.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:13:04] But I've seen a lot of these ads and it seems like the strategy is a little less nuanced, like a Democrat who appeals to gun rights activists by shooting a gun the entire time that they're on camera.

[00:13:14] And I approve this message. (bang bang bang)

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:13:21] I've seen a lot of those ads.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:13:22] So many guns in ads!

[00:13:22] And I'll take dead aim at the cap and trade bill.

[00:13:26] I'm a straight shooter.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:13:31] The tactic that you take all depends on where you're running and what pollsters have dug up on your community's demographics and ideas. It's a pretty delicate balance.

**Bakari Sellers:** [00:13:42] Well I'll just tell you that all elections are tough but a midterm election is a little bit more difficult depending on which party you are part of.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:13:53] This is Bakari Sellers, former state rep from South Carolina currently a lawyer and a CNN commentator.

**Bakari Sellers:** [00:13:59] If you are a party of the individual in the White House usually you have to run against Washington D.C. as we say and sometimes that gets kind of difficult. You want to stay away from the national politics and just run your own race if you're in the opposition party or if you're a Democrat in 2018. What you want to do is run against the White House and your opponent. If you're running during the mid-term election in 2010 what you saw was many Democrats some Democrats even ran against the Affordable Care Act. Many Democrats didn't want Barack Obama campaigning in their district. You're starting to see a lot of that. Or you're seeing a lot of that in 2018 with Donald Trump.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:14:35] Seriously so some Democrats in 2010 called up Obama and they were like would you mind just staying away from Nebraska this time of year.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:14:43] Well if the midterm is almost always a referendum on the president right then distancing yourself from the president might be the safer bet in some states. I talked to a political science professor at the University of Wisconsin Madison who got a little deeper into this idea of you know running your own race. This is Barry Burden.

**Barry Burden:** [00:15:03] So members of the president's party tend to want to make elections about local issues and about them as people so they want to emphasize what political scientists call the personal vote reminding constituents in the district who they are as an individual often kind of identifying with constituents reminding them that hey I grew up here or I share values with you or I've been working for you in Washington where I share the same goals as you so I'm not really part of that Washington establishment. Lots of members of Congress and challengers actually run for Congress by running against it. They criticize the institution and try to convince voters that they will be the ones to go to Washington and help clean up the mess.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:15:45] So in a midterm election we're seeing personal vote versus the national vote?

**Barry Burden:** [00:15:51] Democrats say in 2018 would very much like this to be a national referendum and to bring in lots of members of their party so to create a kind of wave or tide or whatever metaphor you like whereas members of the president's party Republicans this year want to insulate themselves from the tide and build a kind of levee or life preserver or something so they can weather the storm.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:16:11] In these uncertain waters. You can think of the president as either your buouy, or the cement shoes dragging you to the bottom. The party not affiliated with the president swims toward what's going on nationally while the party represented by the president might do better staying far away from the shore where it's safe.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:16:34] So what is the president's job during a midterm in terms of campaigning? Because he's got some people who are trying to steer clear of his messaging and policies and there's others who are on the attack against it.

**Barry Burden:** [00:16:45] It's a delicate dance for a president in a midterm they want obviously to help their party keep their party's seat share in the legislature if not grow it or minimize the losses. They will do a lot of fundraising and some of that is out of public view. So they're doing private fundraisers gathering millions of dollars and then trying to distribute that to members of their party who could use the funds who are really in some close races and would benefit from some additional campaign money.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:17:14] OK so the president is using his position of power to generate some cash flow even if he isn't straight up campaigning for candidates in his party.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:17:22] Right. And there are areas of the country where it's totally helpful for the president to campaign but he's got to be strategic.

**Barry Burden:** [00:17:31] In terms of going out on the campaign trail and giving stump speeches. They're going to be careful about that. They don't want to go into places where they're unpopular and they might create kind of a backlash and remind voters that the candidate in that state or district who's from their party is also linked to the president and that might kind of amplify the penalty that that party faces. So you know they will often deploy to safe districts where they can raise a lot of money and help somebody who's on their side.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:17:59] So here's the deal. There are plenty of places in the country that are solidly overwhelmingly for the president and those districts matter. But to me they're kind of the whitebread of the midterm elections. They're predictable they're the safe bet. If you want to understand what makes midterms unique, what gives them a personality all their own, look to the districts where things are up in the air. A midterm election takes a swing state a swing town and truly tests the mettle of candidates in that area.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:18:34] How is this different from every other election year. We're always looking at swing states to see how things are going to shake out.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:18:39] The big difference here is turnout. It's lower in a midterm year than it is in a presidential election year and fewer voters mean higher stakes when it comes to campaign messaging especially because the people turning out to vote tend to be driven to the polls by strong conviction. If you can swing the electorate in your direction in a midterm, especially if that direction is away from their typical status quo, then you've accomplished something huge. The candidate who manages to pull that off has played the midterm campaign game to a tee. And if enough candidates do just that it can change everything like a peaceful revolution coordinated and precise campaigning in a midterm election can shake state sometimes even Federal Congress and flip control. This doesn't happen often by the way.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:19:32] It takes some crazy political will and circumstance but it is possible in the past three decades we saw this in 1994.

[00:19:41] Democrats lost the house they've controlled for all but four years since 1932 they lost the Senate they controlled for all but six of the previous 40 years.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:19:51] 2006.

[00:19:52] Good evening. Call it a revolution or a repeal. Democrats are now in charge in the house they needed 15 seats to retake the majority.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:20:01] And 2010.

[00:20:03] Republicans will take control of the House of Representatives.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:20:13] It is really hard to pull off a total switch of power changing who holds the reins at the very top. But with the right political climate and some intense campaigning midterm elections can change everything.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:20:37] Before we go I want to take you inside of one of those crazy landscape changing elections of the past. It's considered a full blown political revolution and Brady Carlson host and reporter at Wisconsin Public Radio is here to break it down which midterm are we talking Brady

**Brady Carlson:** [00:20:55] This is the midterm of nineteen ninety four and if modern Americans know about any midterm in particular, 1994 is often the one that they know about. Well the first player is Bill Clinton. He was in the middle of his first term as president the first Democrat to win the White House in 12 years.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:21:16] The man from Hope.

**Bill Clinton:** [00:21:17] Now I was born in a little town called Hope Arkansas. Three months after my father died.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:21:23] And everybody talks today about how charismatic he was and how popular he was and that wasn't necessarily the case when he first got started. He ended his term as a relatively popular president. But in the early going he ran into lots of roadblocks.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:21:45] Remember the first few issues that he made policy moves on. Like the expansive health care proposal.

[00:21:52] Our health care is too uncertain and too expensive.

[00:21:55] The Brady bill so he's adding waiting periods and background checks on guns.

[00:21:59] The Brady bill is not just symbolism.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:22:02] From lifting the ban on gay service members.

**Bill Clinton:** [00:22:05] The debate over whether to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military has to put it mildly sparked a great deal of interest over the last few days.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:22:13] These were all big pushback items at the time and even the things that he did manage to get through like he got approval for the North American Free Trade Agreement NAFTA that wasn't massively popular with the Democratic base. And this is all at a time when there's also talk about like the Whitewater real estate scandal, continued rumors of womanizing,.

[00:22:39] What she calls a 12 year affair you... That allegation is false.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:22:46] So these are all things that are working not in Clinton's favor classic ingredients in that midterm losses stew. And at the same time you have Republicans launching this very well organized well funded and national campaign to win seats in Congress. This is where they launched what was known as the contract with America. It was a set of bills. They said if you choose us in the midterms here's what we'll do in office.

[00:23:14] We are going to get to the final recorded votes in the first 100 days on every item.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:23:24] And a lot of opposition parties will just campaign against whoever's in power. And this is a case where the opposition party was also offering an agenda.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:23:35] The Democrats had majorities in both houses they had had a majority in the house for decades the Senate had gone back and forth a few times but there were pretty substantial majorities for the Democrats in both chambers at that point. 1994 was the biggest loss by the party in power in a generation.

[00:23:58] That Capital is a very different building this morning it is in Republican hands solidly in Republican hands.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:24:07] Democrats lost 52 House seats eight Senate seats and so was the first time Republicans had majorities in both chambers of Congress since 1950. For the Speaker of the house was one of the Democrats who lost his seat. And at the state level it was big for Republicans too. So their candidates were beating prominent national Democrats like the then governor of New York Mario Cuomo. People know his son Andrew Cuomo as governor today or the then governor of Texas Ann Richards who lost her position to the Republican challenger who was a then baseball executive named George W. Bush.

[00:24:48] I like to go to ball games and I try to you know lend a sense of the kind of fans owner.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:24:53] And so what happened was the Republicans led by the new speaker of the House Newt Gingrich of Georgia started talking about this election in terms of a Republican revolution. That people weren't just repudiating a first term president. This was a case where the American people had chosen a new majority party and they wanted a new course for American politics. Things were going to be different from then on. And for a while it actually sounded a little bit like that was what was going to happen. I remember a couple of months after that midterm there was a press conference from President Clinton and he responded to one of the reporters questions by basically saying yes everybody is paying attention to Speaker Gingrich and the Republicans. But I'm still relevant. I'm the president. I still have something to add to this.

**Bill Clinton:** [00:25:46] The president is relevant here especially an activist president and the fact that I am willing to work with the Republicans.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:25:52] What an extraordinary thing to happen that the president of the United States has to remind you that he's relevant.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:26:00] Well this was the catch that Republicans had become convinced that they had won midterms because of the Contract With America that voters had chosen them and that because of that voters were choosing their policy agenda. And some voters were of course but not all of them. I mean a midterm is still a midterm. Even if Republicans offered policy agenda and offered a contract with America offered legislation there were still a lot of people who may have voted for that party's candidates who are really just mad at the new president and wanted to balance out his power.

**Brady Carlson:** [00:26:42] And so the Republican majorities as they were starting to put some of this legislation out there, the bills to change welfare programs the bill change taxes, they started to see pushback to those policy plans just like the Clinton administration had seen pushed back against its plans. And at the same time that you're seeing that opposition President Clinton who is still relevant as he said found his political footing again he had tack to the left when he started and that didn't work. So he tacked back toward the center. He basically coopted some of the more popular parts of the Contract with America and very vocally criticized and campaigned against the less popular ones. So he had rebranded himself at the same time that the Republicans had tried to write him off. TheU.S. economy had started to improve. And so you have this rapidly changing political climate again. And so two years after Bill Clinton had basically been written off by a lot of people he was winning re-election.

**Bill Clinton:** [00:27:54] Tonight we celebrate the miracle of America. Tomorrow. We agreed on and began our work anew.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:28:06] Thanks for listening to Civics 101. There is a whole lot more where that came from in our series on the midterms. Make sure to become obsessed with it as we are.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:28:15] Today's episode was produced by me Hannah McCarthy with Nick Capodice and Jacqui Helbert. Erika Janik is our executive producer.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:28:22] Maureen McMurray is a straight shooter all the way.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:28:24] If you want more Civics 101 or you've got a burning question about how this whole crazy democratic experiment actually works we have got a Web site for that civics101podcast.org. You Can also follow us on Facebook or Twitter @civics101pod.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:28:40] Music in this episode is by Diamond Ortiz Poddington Bear Jahzaar Dan Liebowitz and our old friends Blue Dot sessions.

[00:28:48] Civics 101 is a production of new Hampshire Public Radio.