NOTE: This transcript was generated using an automated transcription service, and may contain typographical errors.

**Archival:** [00:00:00] Congratulations to Senator Kennedy for his fine race in this campaign and to all of. I [00:00:10] am, I am, I am sure I am sure his supporters are just as enthusiastic as you are for me.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:00:20] This [00:00:20] is Civics 101. I'm Hannah McCarthy.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:00:22] I'm Nick Capodice.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:00:22] And today we are talking about the hallmark of the peaceful transition of power in the United States.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:00:28] And that would be the concession [00:00:30] speech.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:00:30] Presidential elections end with a single winner and the other candidate eventually has to accept that fact.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:00:36] I just love the concession speech moment. It's one of those [00:00:40] few instances of graciousness and what can be a pretty rough race after all the work you've done to prove you're better than your opponent, to then have to say, well, the American [00:00:50] people and the Electoral College numbers have spoken. Good luck to my successful opponent.

[00:00:55] It must be pretty tough, but that's how we do it in this country.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:00:58] But to your point, [00:01:00] you never do hear the loser say I lost you barely ever hear the term concede. Actually, concession speeches are pretty much the same year after year. [00:01:10] They tend to follow a formula. Let's take Senator George McGovern. He was the Democratic nominee in 1972 and he lost to Richard Nixon. McGovern takes [00:01:20] the stage, looks out over a sea of media and supporters.

[00:01:25] And step one, he announces he has contacted and congratulated the winner of the [00:01:30] election.

**Senator George McGovern:** [00:01:30] And I have just sent the following telegram to President Nixon. Congratulations on your victory...

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:01:37] Step two, try to soothe those disappointed [00:01:40] supporters.

**Senator George McGovern:** [00:01:40] But we're not going to shed any tears tonight about the great joy that this campaign has brought to us.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:01:48] Step three. Thank [00:01:50] everyone who got you to this point.

[00:01:52] Supporters and staff alike.

**Senator George McGovern:** [00:01:54] The glory days devoted working for.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:01:58] Step four.

[00:01:59] And this one I truly [00:02:00] love, talk about the democratic process.

**Senator George McGovern:** [00:02:03] I ask you not to despair of the political process of this country.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:02:09] Step five, [00:02:10] remind everyone of the importance of a unified country.

**Senator George McGovern:** [00:02:13] The nation will be better because we never once gave up the long battle to renew [00:02:20] its oldest ideals and to redirect its current energies along more humane and hopeful path.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:02:27] Now, nothing says that the loser of an election [00:02:30] has to give a concession speech. But those last two steps you mentioned, Hanna, the reminder that this is how democracy works and that we have to stick together as a nation. Those have become essential [00:02:40] to tidying up post-election. The winner is the winner regardless of a concession speech. The point is for the loser to remind loyal supporters that [00:02:50] this is OK, that you all accept the results of these speeches do tend to come on election night itself. But when a race is really close, a candidate can hold out. [00:03:00] I remember this happening when George W. Bush and Al Gore brought a fight over the recount all the way to the Supreme Court in 2000. The court did order. The recount stopped and Gore finally [00:03:10] conceded five weeks after Election Day.

**Al Gore:** [00:03:12] And may God bless his stewardship of this country.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:03:18] Of course, there is a bitter sweetness to [00:03:20] it. As a supporter, you're watching with disappointment as your candidate bows out ideally gracefully and redirects the nation's eyes to their new or continued leader. Just [00:03:30] imagine what the candidate is feeling. All that money, energy, effort and time spent convincing people you were the one in what is considered one of [00:03:40] the lovelier concession speeches in American history. Democrat Adlai Stevenson summed it up as he conceded to Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower in the 1952 presidential [00:03:50] election.

**Adlai Stevenson:** [00:03:50] I was reminded of a story that a fellow townsman of ours used to tell Abraham Lincoln, and they asked him how he felt one after unsuccessful election. [00:04:00] He said he felt like a little boy who had stubbed his toe in the dark and he was too old to cry, but it hurt too much to laugh. [00:04:10]

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:04:12] That does it for concession speeches here on Civics 101 got a question about democracy, elections, power, government. [00:04:20] We will find the answer and get it to you posthaste. Click the link on our home page at civics101podcast.org.