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### Op-Ed

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# Trump can be the Greatest Loser



By [Jerry H. Goldfeder](#)

**D**uring Thanksgiving 20 years ago, many of us kept one eye on TV watching Florida canvassing boards inspect hanging chads. This year, Americans are celebrating without our larger families, but Zoom gatherings will invariably include the topic of whether President Trump will actually ever concede that he lost. Of course, it is not legally required for him to say so — thankfully, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris will be inaugurated on Jan. 20 no matter what. A concession, though, is traditional, and helps smooth the way for voters who supported him.

I hope, then, his friends encourage Trump to acknowledge defeat. After all, he is not the first incumbent president to lose re-election. He is the 11th. Believe it or not, a full 25% of our presidents running for a second term have been defeated. And they have all conceded, happily or not.

In fact, he should feel special: After all, it's losers that make America great. Historians say that when George Washington decided not to run for a third term, he created a pattern for the peaceful transition of power. This is true.

But the president who really demonstrated the uniqueness of our democracy was John Adams, our second president. When he lost re-election to Thomas Jefferson, he turned over the keys to the White House. In that moment, our nation's defining feature of peaceful succession was set. Subsequent losers followed suit, and Americans owe them all a great debt of gratitude. Trump's role in preserving democracy as a loser, therefore, is a badge he should wear proudly.

His friends might tell Trump to take solace in the fact that his place in the Loser Hall of Fame is not nearly as embarrassing as some of the others. He won 47% of the vote against Joe Biden. In 1976, Gerald Ford lost to Jimmy Carter with 48% of the vote. Four years later, Carter was ousted by Reagan, and got only 41%. Herbert Hoover garnered only 40% when turned out by FDR. By comparison, Trump appears to have done pretty well.

In fact, Trump's 232 Electoral College votes is also a measure of success. When George H.W. Bush was defeated by Bill Clinton, Bush got only 168 electoral votes. Carter received only a paltry 49 electoral votes against Reagan. And William Howard Taft's re-election bid got only eight — a mere 1.5% of the electoral votes cast in 1912. Now, *that's* embarrassing!

When all is said and done, then, Trump should feel pleased to be among the winningest losers of all presidents.

Of course, there is also the future. Some of our defeated presidents have accomplished a great deal after being denied re-election. Taft, after getting crushed by Woodrow Wilson, became chief justice of the Supreme Court. Hoover, although blamed for the Great Depression, was tapped by President Truman to coordinate the Food Supply for World Famine.

After being trounced by Reagan, Carter built houses with Habitat for Humanity and won the Nobel Peace Prize. And George H.W. Bush teamed up with the president who beat him, Clinton, to help victims of natural disasters. As one of our country's greatest losers, Trump will probably do all right for himself, maybe even reprise his popularity as a TV host!

I hope you've noticed that I haven't mentioned another one of our nation's prominent losers, Grover Cleveland, who got beat by Benjamin Harrison in 1888. Cleveland came back four years later to defeat Harrison and became the only president to serve two non-consecutive terms. Reports are surfacing that Trump is thinking of a do-over in four years. (God forbid!)

Before we think about his future, though, let's think about Biden's inauguration. Conventional wisdom is that Trump won't show up. After all, other presidents have boycotted their successor's swearing-in, including Andrew Johnson. But if Trump did that, he would invariably be labeled as the second impeached president to skip town. That wouldn't make him look so good.

So, though it's unlikely, maybe even he could be persuaded to acknowledge that one of our country's most important attributes is peaceful succession by showing up on Inauguration Day. It's hard to picture him sitting through this historic ceremony, but I have a suggestion. Assuming

it will be a cold day, he could wear one of his hats. Not MAGA; no, that would be un-newsworthy. His new one could say GLOAT, Greatest Loser of All Time.

It would make him stand out in a very Trumpian way — and isn't that all he really wants anyway?

Oy. Pass the stuffing.

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