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The Formal Way to Win

Introduction

A majority of people like to win. People are competitive in academics, sports, and various other activities like beating the opposing team by throwing a Norby toy into a cardboard box. This competitive behavior is even translated to the political stage. As politicians run their campaigns, they need to be prepared to give a victory or concession speech based on the results of the election. However, a winning candidate cannot just boast about their success and a losing candidate cannot just blame the other party. There is a specific method to these speeches and by analyzing the themes present, it is easy to see why they are receptive to multiple audiences. A recent victory speech from Arizona senator, Mark Kelly, showcases the elements needed for a successful speech. Through analyzing Ritter and Howell's components of victory and concession speeches, in addition to Willyard and Ritter's work about the influence of the speaker, it is evident that Kelly effectively presents a sound victory speech that supports and unites both parties.

Lens Description

Kurt Ritter and Buddy Howell discovered that after analyzing a multitude of victory and concession speeches, many of them followed a similar theme. From that evidence, they created a list of topics that candidates usually addressed when they are making these speeches. Ritter and Howell found that speakers will include a declaration of victory or defeat, a call for national unity, a tribute to American democracy, affirm the candidate's campaign, talk about the transformed role for the candidate, and thank supporters (Ritter & Howell, 2001, 2316). These listed elements don't necessarily need to be in the order dictated, but they usually fall in that

general pattern. A formal declaration that describes if the candidate won or lost is important because it outlines the speaker's intention for the speech. The candidate wants to be straightforward as possible and by stating the obvious helps notify both parties of the results. The call for national unity is the speaker's attempt to get people to come together. Often, after political elections people are very divided and by having the candidate try to unite people it helps "reconstitute common grounds" (Ritter & Howell, 2001, 2316). The candidate also wants to affirm their campaign and potentially their opponent's campaign. This step acknowledges the support of the voters and the people that worked to make the campaign successful. In addition to discussing the campaign, the candidate needs to acknowledge the transition they will take into their new role. The winner of the election might have different responsibilities and the losing candidate can state that they will keep pushing for change. To conclude their speech, candidates will thank their supporters, if they haven't done so already, for all their efforts to make the election happen. Some candidates may choose to omit some of Ritter and Howell's characteristics in their speeches, however, it is shown that those speeches are less receptive and less successful with audiences (Ritter & Howell, 2001, 2317).

Additionally, Ritter also conducted more analysis about this subject and wrote an article with Jennifer Willyard that looked at the influence of the speaker that also impacts these victory and concession speeches. These insights are going to apply to Kelly's speech because he was running for a Arizona Senate position and having a large influence in the state of Arizona is extremely vital. In Willyard and Ritter's analysis they described that former President George Bush's victory speech heavily relied on his Texan roots. The authors state that Bush's description of his home state was probably the most heartfelt and personable part of his speech (Willyard &

Ritter, 2005, 504). The elements of Kelly's speech also showcase how his influence helped him with the Arizona election.

Kelly's Speech Analysis

Declaration of Victory

Mark Kelly begins his victory speech with the statement, "Great night last night." His upbeat demeanor and acknowledgement of the "great night" is a telltale sign that his party has won. With a declaration of victory statement, the audience already is aware that the candidate has won, however, it is necessary to openly state that fact to outline the rest of the speech. Kelly receives applause and support from the crowd after he says those statements, and he pauses to let the crowd enjoy the victory as well. Kelly moves onto say, "it is clear that we have been successful in this mission." This declaration signals to the audience that Kelly is the clear winner and all their hard work has paid off. Kelly's use of the word "mission" is strategic because it has the connotation that voters and the campaign staff were working towards a specific goal that needed a lot of investment. Kelly then gives his most transparent declaration to the crowd by saying, "I'm so honored that Arizona has entrusted me to represent our state in the United States Senate for six more years." With this statement, Kelly is declaring to the audience that he will be Arizona's senator, and he showcases the relationship between himself and the people of the state by saying they have "entrusted" their support. Kelly begins his speech with multiple examples of a declaration of victory that notify the audience of his success in the election and also preview the overall theme of his speech.

Call for National Unity

After many elections, there is a divide between the parties because of who won and who lost. In victory and concession speeches is it necessary to call voters for national unity to try and alleviate this discord. Kelly acknowledges this and says to his audience, "Now after a long

election, it can be tempting to remain focused on the things that divide us, but we've seen the consequences that come with leaders refuse to accept the truth and focus more on conspiracies of the past than solving the challenges that we face today." Kelly wants to make sure that he is aware that his victory not only impacts his party but also the opposing party. His statement that, "it can be tempting to be focused on the things that divide us," is incredibly well spoken. If a voter's candidate loses, it can be a challenge to be supportive of the winning candidate. By acknowledging that it is difficult to come together, Kelly empathizes with the audience and moves forward with his own desires to unify the people of Arizona. Further along in his speech Kelly says, "No one party has a monopoly on good ideas or the support of voters, but I have seen that when we seek to represent everyone, not just the people who voted for us, we're capable of extraordinary things." In this quote, Kelly does a remarkable job of highlighting the fact that it is important to "represent everyone" regardless of party affiliation. This statement carries a lot of weight for voters who maybe did not vote for Kelly, but still feel included by his awareness of the divide and desire to come together.

Tribute to American Democracy

Kelly moves onto the next selection of his speech where he draws awareness to American democracy. This part of his speech ties into the previous element of creating unity among voters. When candidates reference the democratic process, it helps remind people why we are able to vote and the ability we have to create change. People might not always receive the outcome they want, but they still have the ability to vote. The part of Kelly's speech that showcases this element is when he says, "I also want to thank our state's election officials, honorable Republicans and Democrats, who are doing the important work of making sure that Arizonan votes and voices are heard, and their votes are counted as quickly and as transparently as

possible.” By encouraging people’s participation in this democratic process, it shows that Kelly values people’s input. Kelly also highlights that voting needs to be a “transparent” process and this shows that he values integrity and honesty.

Affirming Candidate’s Campaign

In this element, candidates want to acknowledge the success of their campaign or they can discuss the other party’s campaign if they would like to. It is considerate for candidates to give credit to the hardworking people of their campaign that maybe have gone unrecognized because they are doing a lot of behind the scenes work. The candidate running for election is the face of the campaign, but they would not be successful if it wasn’t for the rest of their team. Kelly thanked his team and voters by saying, “I’d like to thank the tens of thousands of people over the past few years who have made phone calls, who have knocked on doors, chipped in a few bucks, and who have worked late nights and early mornings. You are all the reason that we are successful.” Kelly mentions all these tasks of phone calls and knocking on doors because he wants the audience to know that even in these seemingly small actions, all of those efforts have added up into the achievement of an election win. Kelly makes this message personal to the audience by stating, “you are the reason we are successful.” This statement is a combination of affirming the candidate’s campaign and thanking supporters. These two elements complement each other well and it makes sense for Kelly to use them together.

Transformed Role of Candidate

With victory speeches, the elected official has a new role they will be assuming, and it is advantageous for the candidate to share with the audience what their new role entails. Out of all the elements of Kelly’s speech, this section is the weakest but Kelly still provides strong evidence of what he will do as the senator of Arizona. Kelly speaks of his policy changes by

stating, “We are lowering the cost of prescription drugs,” “we passed a Gun Safety and Mental Health law, and “we’re building facilities that will manufacture the most advanced microchips ever made.” Even though these claims are evidence of what Kelly has done in the past, it does show some evidence to the audience that in the future he will continue to show leadership to create these positive changes for Arizona.

Thanking Supporters

This component is usually addressed in the beginning of a candidate's victory speeches in addition to the end. Kelly follows that outline and thanks his supporters multiple times throughout his speech. Kelly starts his address by saying, “I’d like to thank my family, my friends, my campaign team...” This personable aspect also shows the audience that Kelly values these individuals and their importance in his life. Kelly also mentioned his supporters as he affirmed his political campaign which was discussed in the previous passage. Additionally, Kelly ends his speech by once again thanking everyone saying, “Thank you everyone for being here, what a great day today!” Kelly expresses this gratitude and the crowd responds positively to congratulate him.

Discussion

Kelly’s victory speech has all the components of Ritter and Howell’s elements of victory and concession speeches which makes it highly effective. The speech follows a straightforward outline and it is evident that the audience is very supportive of his claims. Kelly makes sure that he highlights the importance of coming together with Democrats and Republicans to continue moving Arizona forward. Kelly’s speech was also ethical as he acknowledged the differences that other parties might have but how they can come together to make decisions. In regards to Willyard and Ritter’s discussion of the influence of the speaker, Kelly had a large pull with his

influence. Kelly showcases that he values his family and has his wife on the stage with him when he gives his victory speech. By presenting an attitude that Kelly appreciates his family, the simple things, and an overall simplistic view to get things done, Kelly's influence has a greater pull. The audience can relate to him and see themselves as subordinates. Kelly further showcases his personal aspect by sharing a story about a single mom named Tarshi. Kelly uses this story to highlight the success Arizona has had to bring manufacturing back. These personal elements create a large presence of charisma for Kelly and have him relate better to the audience. Even after Kelly finishes his speech the crowd chants his wife's name, "Gab-by! Gab-by! Gab-by!" as Kelly hugs her. Kelly knows how important it is to not only hit on all the elements of a successful victory speech but also the impacts of being an approachable and relatable candidate for the audience.

Conclusion

Overall, Arizona senator, Mark Kelly, presents a thorough victory speech that addresses all of the elements that Ritter and Howell have found that victory and concession speeches have. Although Kelly did have a weaker section of his transformed role, it did not take away from the overall impression. He was also able to highlight his influence to relate better to the audience and bring in his family values and down to earth personality. Kelly's speech is a detailed example of a speech that is able to have a powerful impact on the voting audience because of its layout and organization. In the future, voters will continue to see Ritter and Howell's characteristics present in victory and concession speeches and it is important to recognize their effectiveness.

Works Cited

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