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11-9-2016

A Post-Election Message from President Dunn

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WMU ScholarWorks Citation

Dunn, John M., "A Post-Election Message from President Dunn" (2016). *WMU President John Dunn*. 49.
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November 1, 2016

An Election Message from President Dunn

The 2016 U.S. presidential campaign ends Tuesday, Nov. 8. Earlier today, I taped a message, primarily for our students, simply asking that they take heart, keep this polarized election in perspective and plan to vote.

This has been a long and difficult campaign for many, and we're seeing news stories about high levels of stress triggered by intense political beliefs and deep-seated concerns about the direction of our nation.

Many of us on campus, though, are old enough to remember earlier elections characterized at least in part, by this same kind of hyper-partisanship. There have been times in our history when the passions of the campaign season made it difficult to believe that friends and families would ever be able to reconcile their political differences. But we always do reconcile. Regardless of the outcome, we come together as a nation and respect the will of our our fellow citizens.

Criticism of media coverage of earlier campaigns, once played out when a vice presidential candidate berated reporters he called "the nattering nabobs of negativism." Religious discrimination was challenged in 1960, when a razor-thin margin ended a jarring campaign that turned partly on whether the nation was ready for a Catholic president. It was.

The first presidential election I remember was in 1956 between Dwight D. Eisenhower (the incumbent) and Adlai Stevenson, an Illinois native and "my" candidate. Stevenson had lost to Ike in 1952 and, sadly for me, again in 1956. As a youngster, I remembered watching Stevenson's eloquent concession speech and his response later to a question about how he felt. His reply? He "felt like a little boy who had stubbed his toe—too old to cry and too hurt to laugh." Some may feel the same way next Wednesday when the results are clear, but our nation is resilient and, regardless of who is elected, we will find a way to move forward and to support the will of the people.

For all of us—faculty, staff and students—our responsibility is to vote. We need to exercise our birthright and take this opportunity to be fully engaged and informed. We also need to be respectful of the decisions made next week. Win or lose, we can only have an impact if we vote. I'll see you at the polls on Nov. 8!