



Peaceful Transfer of Power

The Constitution calls for federal elections that allow for a peaceful transfer of power. This involves handing over position, power, and responsibility from one leader to the next—when political parties differ and when they do not.

- George Washington leaves office in 1797 after serving two terms
- John Adams concedes defeat to a rival party in 1801 after losing re-election

Precedent

The peaceful transfer of power is marked by examples set by our earliest leaders

“In the eyes of many in the world, this every 4-year ceremony we accept as normal is nothing less than a miracle.”

– Ronald Reagan
First Inaugural Address (1981)

Norm

Tradition

Traditions, from one administration to another, underscore our peaceful transfer

Legitimacy

Without the peaceful transfer of power, elections wouldn't mean much

- Most presidents attend the inauguration of the incoming president
- Since Ronald Reagan, presidents leave a handwritten note for their successors

“This is America. Just as we fight hard when the stakes are high, we close ranks and come together when the contest is done.”

– Al Gore
Concession Speech (2000)

- By accepting the results of the election, the American people give the incoming president the authority to lead

The peaceful transfer of power has become a trademark of American democracy. For over two centuries, our offices have peacefully transitioned power signaling that we are united as a people behind the country, its ideals, and its constitutional system of government.



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