

Presidency not for the thin-skinned

Actor Alec Baldwin's recent parodies of Donald Trump on NBC's "Saturday Night Live" were among the funniest sketches in the show's long history of mocking presidential candidates.

In one of the comedic debates with SNL veteran Kate McKinnon, who satirized Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, Baldwin underscored the then-Republican nominee's woeful inability to discuss the substantive issues facing the nation.

"Tonight, I'm going to do three things. I'm going to huff. I'm going to puff. I'm going to blow this whole thing," Baldwin, as Trump, admitted.

Trump, who hosted SNL in the past, called Baldwin's portrayal of him a "hit job" and said it's "time to retire the show." But the remark only encouraged Baldwin to do additional parodies.

In his most recent sketch, Baldwin appeared as the president-elect taking meetings with some advisers, including Vice President-elect Mike Pence.

Offended, Trump again criticized SNL as "biased," claimed that

Baldwin's portrayal of him "stinks," and asked for "equal time" to respond.

It's a troubling pattern for the president-elect, who has tremendous difficulty letting things go and not responding even to minor slights. He always has to be right, always has to have his say.

While that approach may have been successful for a real-estate mogul who promoted himself as a hard-driving entrepreneur with a playboy lifestyle, it will not play well in the White House.

"Saturday Night Live" has been mocking presidents and presidential candidates since 1975 when Chevy Chase first parodied Gerald Ford as a bumbling idiot. Others followed, including Dan Aykroyd, who portrayed Richard Nixon as a cry-baby, complaining that everyone hated him, and Tina Fey mimicking an airheaded Sarah Palin. The spoofs were not limited to Republicans, either.

In 1977, Aykroyd mocked Democrat president Jimmy Carter as a know-it-all who had answers for everything from postal machines to

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Playboy magazine interviews. In 1992, the late Phil Hartman poked fun at Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton's

healthy appetite by taking a break from his daily jog to stop at McDonald's and steal food from other customers while answering their questions.

Nor is SNL the only TV show to mock the chief executive.

Comedy Central's Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele satirized the seemingly unflappable Barack Obama by creating a profane alter ego named Luther, played by Key, who gave voice to Obama's bottled-up anger.

Obama and Clinton, like most presidents and presidential candidates, laugh at the parodies, or at least remain silent about them, not wanting to give voters the impression that they lack a sense of humor when others make fun of them.

They understand the art of humor and that many of the most successful presidents — such as Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, John Kennedy and Ronald Reagan — occasionally

used self-deprecating humor to show they can be funny or witty and still be a great leader. It allows the American people to relate to them on a human level.

But Trump doesn't view or use humor that way. He has crafted an image that is based on authority, status and hierarchy, which can only be diminished by self-deprecation or allowing others to make fun of him.

Trump's humor is negative, patronizing, even malicious and serves to make him look better than his victims. Until now, he has managed to attract the voters. But once he assumes the presidency, he will have to change. In executing his duties, a president must interact regularly with adversaries and critics, both at home and abroad. He cannot be thin-skinned.

If a president cannot laugh at himself on occasion, he will not be able to cope with the crises that will inevitably come his way. And that can have severe repercussions for the nation.

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