

GOP Establishment Icon: 'We Need a Fresh Face'

On Thursday's nationally syndicated Hugh Hewitt Show, Republican strategist Karl Rove discussed the possibility of the GOP establishment tinkering with the rules and handing the nomination to a candidate other than Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, or John Kasich.

He initially discussed Rule 40(b), which requires candidates receive a majority of delegates from at least eight states or territories to be considered for nomination. He also discussed the makeup of the Republican National Committee and the rule-making process.

They then discussed an op-ed Rove penned for Wednesday's Wall Street Journal titled "An Ugly General Election Takes Shape." In it, he took Republican front-runner Donald Trump to task, pointing out the candidate's 33-point unfavorability differential in current opinion polls.

Hewitt asked Rove to expound on that point.

"If he wants to change those numbers, he ought to start acting in a presidential manner, whatever he thinks that is, because right now, his numbers are abysmal," he said. "I mean, 30 percent (favorable rating), no one has ever been nominated for president with numbers this bad. And nobody has ever won the presidency with numbers anywhere near this bad by the time of the election.

"Now maybe the numbers are pliable for him. I doubt it. But he'd better show us some evidence by July 18th that he can change these numbers. He may be popular inside the Republican Party—though he has only gotten an average of 37 percent of the votes—but among general election voters, he's more than 2-to-1 negative."

Hewitt asked if Cruz would be a better alternative, to which Rove said the Texas senator is probably more electable. But, he also cautioned that polling alone shouldn't be a deciding factor in the nomination process.

"I mean, we do need to understand the polls with regard to what the people are thinking about, the people who might be prospective candidates," he said. "But in terms of being able to match somebody head to head against Hillary Clinton, that's going to be difficult to do."

Rove then took his comments a bit further, suggesting any of the current remaining candidates, if nominated, would have a difficult time galvanizing Republican support. His solution—coming from a dyed-in-the-wool member of the GOP establishment—likely wouldn't sit well with rank-and-file Republicans, either.

"If we have somebody who we think has, has been battle tested, and has strong conservative principles and the ability to articulate them, and they are nominated at this convention, there will be a lot of acrimony from the people who were seeking the nomination," he said. "But if it's somebody who has, you know, has those convictions that they can express in a compelling way, we could come out of the convention in relatively strong position ...

"Donald Trump excites a lot of enthusiasm. But he also excites a lot of anger within the Republican Party and outside of the Republican Party. And a fresh face might be the thing that could give us a chance to turn this election and win in November against Hillary."