

The dark side of Donald: Trump's strong personality splits GOP

LONDONDERRY, N.H. — Donald Trump recently won the New Hampshire primary election. Still, for some Republican voters the idea of Trump winning the nomination is almost unthinkable.

"It's a scary thought, actually," Lisa Robillard said at a Marco Rubio rally in New Hampshire. "He doesn't conduct himself in a professional, polished, presidential way. He's embarrassing, quite frankly."

The Democrats and Republicans (GOP) will each choose one presidential candidate before the election this year. Trump is running to be the GOP presidential candidate. Rubio, Jeb Bush, John Kasich, Ted Cruz, and other GOP candidates are also trying to become the nominee.

Some GOP voters laugh at the thought of Trump in the White House.

A Party Divided

"Well, he's just, he's Trump," said Maggie Meade, interviewed at a Bush event last week. "I mean, it should be a word, right? 'Oh, you're such a Trump!'"

There is a divide between voters who find Trump's ego and outrageous ideas exhilarating, and those who find them disqualifying. Republicans are pondering what it means to be "presidential."

"He's just brash and boastful," said Tom Stevens, an undecided voter at a Kasich event Friday. "He excludes people, he demeans people."

Republicans who don't support Trump are scattered among the other candidates' supporters. Surveys show that between a quarter and half of GOP voters dislike him.

"He's A Bully"

"He's not a leader. He's a bully. He doesn't have the right temperament. He's unrealistic. I could go on for hours," said Joan Schooley, an Iowan who was trying to decide whether Cruz or Rubio would be the best bet "to avoid a Trump nomination."

There are at least three big questions about the anti-Trump vote as the election moves forward. One is whether the number of anti-Trump voters will grow or shrink. Another is how quickly anti-Trump voters will get behind one or two of Trump's rivals rather than remain fragmented. And the third is how many of these voters will choose not to vote for Trump in November if he wins the GOP race.

"If he's the nominee, I am going to have a really difficult choice," said Robillard.

Some of these voters expressed a fear of Trump's temperament.

Loose Cannon Or Political Posturing?

"I'm trying to imagine him talking to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin. What's he going to do, pick up his toys and go home if he gets ... (angry)?" Donna O'Toole said at a Rubio rally.

Michael Lucci, who was at the same event, called Trump cocky. He said, "I think he could cause a World War III."

Other voters expressed a disdain for his language and behavior, whether they viewed that behavior as genuine or something done for political effect.

"Bombastic, rude, all the negatives in the dictionary that you can have," Meade said of Trump's attitude. "You have to have some decency. ... You have to be presidential. I wouldn't even like to have him as a friend, to be honest with you," she said.

Lacking A Statesman's Polish

"I'm trying to be a nice person," Trump said Sunday on CNN when asked if he was toning down his behavior on the eve of the New Hampshire primary.

"I think I have the best temperament," he said during Saturday's debate on ABC. "I've gotten along with people for years and years."

Of course, this was the candidate who said politicians were "full of .. (expletive)" at one rally Thursday and promised to "beat the ... (expletive)" out of the extremist group Islamic State at another. At Saturday's debate, he attacked the audience when it booed him.

Bush has made an issue of Trump's behavior.

"We don't need the big dog on the stage, barking out stuff, insulting people," Bush said Thursday in Derry, N.H. Moments earlier, his mother, Barbara, portrayed her son as a kind of anti-Trump — as "the world's nicest man."

Supporters Say He's Honest

For Trump's supporters, the brashness and bluntness signal honesty, strength and a determination to shake things up.

"He's a little bodacious, but ... I'd rather have that and know where somebody stands than someone who would change ... (according to) whoever they're speaking to," said Dave Wykle, who was at a Trump rally Thursday.

"I took Trump as being one of the guys that's going to throw some grenades on the world stage and then we're going to have a mess," said Khris McKay, an undecided New Hampshire voter. He said his attitude about Trump has grown more positive since he saw him speak here.

"Trump has stirred up the pot. He's thrown the hand grenades and got it going," said McKay. "A lot of people can't get that through their head."