

## NBC editor: Trouble ahead for Trump, GOP

By Geoff Spillane

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CHATHAM — Beth Fouhy, senior political editor for NBC News and MSNBC, came to Chatham Thursday to handicap the 2016 presidential race. If her data holds true, it's not good news for Donald Trump or the Republican Party.

Fouhy spoke to an audience of nearly 200 at the Monomoy Regional Middle School auditorium as part of a distinguished speaker series presented by the Chatham Marconi Maritime Center and named after her late father, Ed Fouhy, who died last year in Chatham. He was a television news executive and five-time Emmy Award winner.

During the hourlong presentation, Fouhy discussed each party and candidate's base of support, battleground states to watch and potential routes Hillary Clinton and Trump have to get to an election-clinching 270 Electoral College votes.

"This election has been anything but boring," Fouhy said at the start of the presentation. "I didn't anticipate the turns this campaign would take."

Fouhy cites "the big blue wall," 18 states that are likely to vote Democratic, that could almost guarantee Clinton 242 electoral votes right off the bat on Nov. 8. California, which is a solid blue state, has 55 electoral votes or more than 20 percent of what is needed to win the presidency. Fouhy likened the Democrat's advantage to starting an offensive push at an opponent's 30-yard line in a football game. In recent elections, several Western states and Virginia have transitioned from being traditionally Republican to Democratic states, she said.

“Republicans have Texas, that’s about it,” said Fouhy, referring to large electoral count states. “It will be a tough climb for the Republicans to win the presidency,”

Overall, 13 states with 106 total electoral votes are expected to vote Republican. Battleground states currently in play for both candidates include Florida, Ohio, North Carolina, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire and one congressional district in Maine. Maine and Nebraska are the only states to allocate electoral votes by congressional district. As of Thursday, NBC News was forecasting 268 electoral college votes for Clinton, 190 for Trump and 80 “up for grabs,” she said.

The path to victory is much easier for Clinton, according to latest poll data. The only way she could lose the election would be to lose Ohio, Florida, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire and Maine’s congressional district. Trump, on the other hand, would need to pull off victories in all of those states and keep North Carolina in his column. “He doesn’t have much of a path,” Fouhy said.

Clinton has a significant lead among African-American, women and younger voters. She also has the edge among college-educated voters. Trump is narrowly ahead with white, male and non-college educated voters.

Both candidates have their challenges, according to Fouhy. For Clinton, it’s millennials who supported Bernie Sanders, and men. Trump has challenges with women and Latino voters. “There’s a vast gender gap,” Fouhy said.

Both candidates, as widely reported, suffer from historically high unfavorable ratings. The Republican Party may have been at a disadvantage from the get-go in this race. The party’s base of support of predominantly white, older, married, rural and religious voters with little or no college education is shrinking, according to Fouhy. The erosion of the white vote is particularly hurting the GOP, she said.

On the other hand, the Democratic Party is seeing its base grow with the addition of non-white, single, urban, “unchurched” and college educated voters. Republicans do, however, have a more committed voting base that comes out for all elections, not just in presidential years, Fouhy added.

Win or lose, Trump should be given his due because his constituency has made itself heard and has to be part of the political conversation moving forward, according to Fouhy.

“The Republican leadership doesn’t know what hit them,” she said, adding, “I’m sure a lot of you are eager for this to be over with.”

— Follow Geoff Spillane on Twitter: @GSpillaneCCT.