

Goeas Assesses Political Landscape Heading Toward November

WASHINGTON, DC — Last Wednesday, The Ripon Society held a virtual discussion with veteran pollster, and the President & CEO of the Tarrance Group, Ed Goeas (pictured above giving a presentation last fall.)

As a long-time public opinion expert and strategist, he discussed the political landscape of the country four months out from Election Day. He kicked off his remarks by dissecting the different political factions of President Trump's support.

"One of the things we saw very early on after the election of President Trump is that the electorate settled into several different groupings," Goeas explained. "It's interesting, because the news media very often will say 'the Republican base,' sometimes they'll say 'the Trump base,' and those are two very different things. The true Trump base in this country is about 33% – 34% of the electorate. They are the group of people that liked him from the day he got into the race and became more and more intense and more solid in terms of how they felt about him. And they have stuck with him through not only the 2016 campaign, but through his whole presidency and certainly are there for him very much today.

"The next group of voters that is very key in kind of analyzing different points, where we stay on is what I would refer to as the non-Trump specific Republican base. There are about 11% or 12% of the electorate. They overwhelmingly liked the policies of President Trump, but they have a problem with his persona, his character, his style, his approach to talking about issues out there. They fade in and out over time, but they are pretty much locked in after the tax vote. It was a policy they all agreed with.

"When the President is getting his job approval in the mid-forties, that is because he's combining the Trump base and that softer Republican base."

According to Goeas, the President will have to rely on one of his campaign's core strategies from 2016 for overcoming his favorability deficit with the general public – making his opponent even more disliked.

"If you look at the average of all the polls on favorability with President Trump, he is at 40.6% favorable and 56% unfavorable. So he's almost exactly where he's been in the entire campaign. Now that tells me one thing as a strategist, which is, I believe the Trump campaign understands how solid that vote is on his favorable/unfavorable rating. If you look at his job approval today, it had been up in the mid-forties and has slipped to 41.4%. His disapproval is at 56.5%. And again, it's because of that anchor that he has on favorability. My point is that for them



President & CEO of the Tarrance Group Ed Goeas

to have any hope of winning this election, they are going to have to drive Joe Biden's negatives up also over 50%.

"The Trump base is so strong in support of the President that it's going to be fairly easy for them to do so. As soon as they perceive anyone as being against the President, they immediately go into the negative column with them. So they don't have to spend a great deal of time building the negatives – he's already 80% of the way there already just by running against President Trump. The reason why that is important is that, in this election, I think what we're going to find is the same 19% to 24% of the electorate who are unfavorable towards both candidates. For the second time in a row, I believe the true swing vote in this campaign is going to be that group of voters that dislike both candidates."

Goeas then touched on the state of the horse race between President

Trump and Joe Biden, saying that this past month has been the toughest on the President's campaign for reelection.

"I truly believe we are at rock bottom right now in the presidential race for Donald Trump. The advantage he usually has is when he is talking about the issues, particularly talking about the economy or taxes or jobs. His numbers go up because he gets a majority support in the country for those issues. I think, unfortunately, both the combination of the coronavirus months that we have gone through and the social and racial unrest that we have gone through, what people are hearing from him is not his policies, but they're hearing and seeing his persona. So it is the worst of all worlds for Trump."

Goeas then put the 2020 election into context, pointing out how the down ballot races in the Senate will be affected with Trump at the top of the ticket.

"I think we have kind of a tough board looking at it today," Goeas stated bluntly. "I will say that one of the problems I think many of the senators have had is that with the Trump base. If you give them any sense that you are not a hundred percent supportive of the President, they will turn on you very, very quickly. And many of these States that we're looking at are States that not only do you need the Trump base, you need the Republican base,

and you need to start pulling in some independent voters.”

Goeas continued.

“If you’re a hundred percent Trump, a hundred percent of the time, it makes it very hard to begin moving over and getting those people that may be more fluid in terms of supporting Trump – and certainly makes it hard to go after those independents. I have seen many senators in these races go on the air, talking about what they have done, not what Trump has done and supporting it, not what Trump has done and going against it, but just talking about what they have done as the senator for their state. And I’m beginning to see some separation in the numbers where Trump may be down, but they’re up by a few points or even more. That is going to be the key – can they create some separation there that if Trump does not recover and come back, is he going to pull them underwater or not?”

After concluding his opening remarks, Goeas answered a handful of questions from the crowd at home. One question posed to him brought up the President’s support among older voters – a demographic that has appeared to soften for the President.

“Yes, we are seeing a drop off there. That Republican group I talked about earlier that like his policies, but don’t like his persona, tends to be seniors. His style is just not something that they deem as appropriate. His character is not something they particularly gravitate to. The 45 to 65 year old age group – and more so the 45 to 55 age group – that really is the Trump base that is out there.”

Goeas concluded by mentioning a recent ad released by the Trump campaign, which according to him, does more harm than good with his relationship with seniors.

“One of the worst commercials I’ve ever seen, and Trump needs to talk to his people about it, is one that they currently have on the air. It attacks Biden for his memory, and I think, unknowingly, they showed him stuttering. I’m in that senior age group, and I know there are times when your memory goes, you forget a name or you forget something in the moment, and making fun of that in a candidate is not the right message those seniors need to be seeing. Making fun of that is not going to play well with the seniors, and they need to take that spot off the air right away.”

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