

wsbt.com

What to expect at this year's Republican Convention

Patrick Roth, WSBT 22 Reporter

CLEVELAND — The days of the smoke-filled rooms and back room deals are, for the most part, long gone.

These days, conventions are made-for-TV spectacles. But for the more than 2,500 delegates this year's Republican National Convention, there is still an important job to do.

"Our job really is fairly simple and straight forward," said Victor Fitz, a delegate from Michigan's 6th Congressional District. "That's to decide who the Republican nominee will be for president. Basically, the person that could be the next president of the United States."

"Really the main point of the convention is to go through the formal nomination process of a candidate for president of the United States," said Rudy Yakym III, an Indiana delegate from the 2nd Congressional District.

Just like during the primaries, political experts say there is

something different about this year's convention.

"Most of the time you'll have the party elite primarily on board," said Jamie Smith, a political science professor at Indiana University of South Bend. "Even with the last few conventions, there's been small pockets of resistance to the nominee. Those are a lot less public than our current situation."

Even though Trump secured enough delegates to win the nomination back in May, he still faces strong opposition within the party.

Some see the convention as a chance for Trump to unify the party.

"There have been divisions, I think in both parties, that probably run deeper than what you'd normally see," Yakym said. "But I would also think that as we get deeper into the fall election, you'll see more party unity on both sides of the aisle."

"You do often times have candidates trying to highlight up and coming people in the party, as well as past candidates who have unified the party and are very popular," Smith said.

That will be a difficult task for Trump.

Several prominent Republicans, including Arizona Sen. John McCain and Mitt Romney, the last two Republican nominees, have

said they aren't going to attend this year's convention.

Trump's formal rivals for the nomination, including South Carolina Sen. Lindsay Graham, Florida Sen. Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush also won't be attending. Bush and Romney have gone so far as to say they can't bring themselves to vote for Trump.

Some of the Republicans who are going, such as Speaker of the House Paul Ryan, have found themselves in an awkward situation.

"It could be that they are there, more as they see it, to help their party, and not their party's nominee," said Sean Savage, a political science professor at Saint Mary's College.

There is certainly one move that Trump has made that some think could go a long ways towards helping achieve party unity: his running mate.

"There's a whole right wing of the party that's not yet behind Trump," Yakym said. "The choice of Mike Pence would really go a long way towards helping heal the party and bring about party unity."

"I think part of it is Pence's own personality and style," Savage said. "Years ago, Pence had a political radio show and he referred to himself as Rush Limbaugh on decaf."

At the end of the day, the biggest selling point for Trump to

Republicans and many independents might simply be: he's not Hillary Clinton.

"Even if you have some resistance over unifying around the nominee, which is a bit unusual, this contrast that they're going to build all week may really be effective," Smith said.

"It really gets down to, when you need a doctor, you don't go and look for the person who says things in the most eloquent fashion, you look for the person who can get the job done," Fitz said. "And that's what we have in Donald Trump."