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MARY CHIND/THE REGISTER Mike Huckabee volunteer Kathy Wells of Saint Ignace, MI organizes materials at the Huckabee tent.

Romney wins, Huckabee in 2nd

THOMAS BEAUMONT AND JENNIFER JACOBS REGISTER STAFF WRITERS

August 11, 2007

STORYCHAT: 27 Comments

Ames, Ia. — Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney emerged on top at Iowa GOP's straw poll Saturday in Ames.

The win boosted the former Massachusetts governor's standing as the party's frontrunner in Iowa, although attendance at this first show of Iowa campaign strength appeared to fall short of expectations.

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Romney, who heavily outspent his opponents preparing for the fundraising event, received 4,516 votes or 31.6 percent.

Roughly 30,000 to 33,000 Republicans attended the state party fundraiser on the Iowa State University campus, short of organizers' goal of exceeding the crowd of 38,000 who attended the most recent straw poll in 1999.

Table with 4 columns: Candidate, Votes, Pct. and 11 rows of candidate data including Mitt Romney, Mike Huckabee, Sam Brownback, etc.

A factor in the lower turnout was the absence of some of the field's better-known candidates — former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani and Sen. John McCain of Arizona, and likely candidate Fred Thompson, a former U.S. senator from Tennessee.

Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee had said his campaign's future depended on a strong showing in Ames. He finished in second place, with 2,587 votes or 18.1 percent. Sen. Sam Brownback of Kansas placed third with 2,192 votes, 15.3 percent after campaigning aggressively to be the choice of the Iowa GOP's

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influential social conservatives.

Meanwhile, former Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson, who said he would quit the race if he finished worse than second place, finished sixth with 1,039 votes or 7.3 percent. Voting machine difficulties delayed the announcement of the vote totals.

About 1,500 ballots needed to be recounted, said Mary Tiffany, a spokeswoman for Republican Party of Iowa.

Two machines caused the problem, said State Auditor David Vaudt. "What likely happened is someone submitted their ballot too quickly after the other," he said. The ballots from those machines were hand counted, then re-fed into the system to recalculate the vote. A campaign poll-watcher said in one instance, a black box contained 500 paper ballots but the machine's memory said it had scanned in 498.

Romney, the leader in recent Iowa polls, had said a victory in Ames would ensure his place in his party's top tier nationally. He described himself Saturday as the candidate of change that he argued the party requires in order to win in 2008.

"Change begins in Iowa and change begins today," Romney told more than 10,000 Republican activists during his speech at Iowa State's Hilton Coliseum. "If there's ever been a time we need to see a change in Iowa, it's now."

Romney, Brownback, Huckabee and Thompson were among eight candidates to attend the high-profile political festival that marks the end of the first round of the campaign for Iowa's leadoff GOP nominating caucuses. The straw poll votes are nonbinding, and voters are free to choose another candidate in the official Iowa caucuses.

Giuliani's and McCain's decisions in June to skip the event altered the straw poll's role. Typically seen as a potential first measure of candidate strength in the field at large, this year's event was more of an opportunity for a second-tier candidate to emerge.

Candidates also attending were U.S. Reps. Duncan Hunter of California, Ron Paul of Texas and Tom Tancredo of Colorado, as well as Chicago businessman John Cox.

Brownback had sparred with Romney in the weeks leading up to Saturday, challenging Romney's commitment to opposing abortion rights, a key issue to Republican stalwarts in Iowa. Brownback, who opposes abortion rights, had been conducting a telephone campaign attacking Romney on his abortion position and other issues.

"We win when we stand on principles and do not

abandon them," Brownback said in an indirect reference to his criticism of Romney, who supported abortion rights until after his election to governor in 2002.

The event was expected to raise roughly \$1 million for the Iowa Republican Party, partly through sales of the \$35 tickets, but more through rental fees the candidates and interest groups paid to set up tents around Hilton Coliseum.

Participating candidates viewed the event as a practice run for mobilizing their Iowa organizations, a priority in the organization-heavy caucuses, scheduled to launch the 2008 nominating contests in January.

Romney, Brownback and Huckabee had rented hundreds of tour buses to deliver their supporters to the grounds around Hilton Coliseum.

The campaigns bought up blocs of thousands of tickets and handed them out to their supporters, with more than just hope that they would vote for them at voting stations in Hilton Coliseum and nearby buildings.

Romney's campaign aides had asked people who received a ticket from them to sign a pledge to vote for the candidate, which annoyed at least one family. Voting generally went smoothly, although the sweltering day's high humidity was a factor in some ballots sticking together, which caused marginal delays, party officials said.

The grounds around the coliseum were transformed by mid-morning into a scale model of the Iowa State Fair, going on 40 miles south in Des Moines. A Ferris wheel sponsored by FairTax, a group promoting tax reform, spun while Des Moines rock band The Nadas jammed on a stage set up in Romney's compound outside Hilton Coliseum.

Hundreds of attendees streamed onto the grounds as buses from all over the state unloaded.

With roughly 50 voting machines set up in sites in Hilton and surrounding buildings, lines formed quickly as balloting began at 10 a.m. Staff from the Story County auditor's office supervised the voting, and state Auditor David Vautd oversaw the ballot counting. There were few complaints about the voting process.

Inside, syndicated radio host Laura Ingraham was the master of ceremonies, and the polished stagecraft included candidate videos played on jumbo screens.

The nation's political news media were focused on the event, despite the high-profile no-shows. More than 400 members of at least 150 news organizations were on hand covering the event. Dozens of satellite news trucks crowded the parking area just south of the arena.

Giuliani said in June that he would not participate in the straw poll, suggesting his campaign could more wisely spend the estimated \$3million it would take to prepare for Ames by investing in his early-state campaigns.

McCain said his reason for giving up his straw poll plan was that Giuliani's absence diminished the contest's significance. Later, McCain slashed his Iowa and national campaign organizations in light of financial trouble.

"I think anybody who is not in the straw poll made a mistake," U.S. Sen. Charles Grassley, an Iowa Republican, told reporters. "They are losing an opportunity to refortify their national position. And particularly Giuliani, that's for sure."

Lorna Burnside, a rare undecided Republican attending the event, said she doesn't begrudge Giuliani or McCain for skipping the event, but thinks they did their Iowa campaigns a disservice.

"You can't get this many people together and not make an impact by staying away. You just can't do it," she said. "There's just too many people here."

Staff writers Jennifer Jacobs and Jason Clayworth contributed to this article.

STORYCHAT

CONVERSATION STANDARDS

The Register's standards: What we'll allow, what we won't

From the editor: Inviting robust conversation, but spelling out a few rules



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Reader Comment

Posted by: **annefrank**
on Sat Aug 11, 2007 8:48 pm

I watched some of the Repubs on C-Span today and they seemed to do a lot of screaming about terrorists and illegals! Hopefully, those Repubs and their families are hiding safely under their beds tonight.

But where are their health care plans?? What about their environmental plans?? even Dr. Paul doesn't believe all Americans should have affordable health care - but is he willing to opt out of Medicare?

Reader Comment

Posted by: **lancelotcq2**
on Sat Aug 11, 2007 8:35 pm

Has anyone actually been watching these Republican candidates? Their backward thinking amazes and astounds me. They talk about no current issues, nothing that actually applies to modern day america. Their entire agenda is fear, repression, giving in to corporate interests and oil oil oil.

Let's not talk about the issues, no, let's not talk about things that once made the Republican party great, things like reducing the size of government and allowing people to think for themselves. That would take half of a brain, a brain that apparently refuses to inhabit the cobwebbed skull of Lindsay Graham or for that matter dog hanger and chief Mit Romney.

The Republican presidential race has just sunken to a new low in something already so sub-basement that it belongs on a Houston class submarine retrofitted for the war on terror at 30 Billion a pop, complete with billion dollar torpedos retrofitted as troop transports doing the same damn thing the Coast Guard does with canoes.

Just look at these Republicans at this poll. They look like they all might fall over and turn to dust instantly if not held up by their bossom breasted trophy wives.

This isn't politics, it's something best reserved for the cigar rooms these mindless, thoughtless, backward thinking non entities should go back to.

Ron Paul the target.

Posted by: **SamHouston**
on Sat Aug 11, 2007 8:34
pm

Iowans I hope you understand that the people here that are bashing Ron Paul are paid professionals and not very good at what they do.

Posters like USMC and ajsdad come to this post as influence peddlers.

I wonder how much of the 200K they got.

The only Candidate who is for our Constitution is Ron Paul period.

I urge all of you to look at his voting history and youtube his name so that you can see how everyday he fights like a lion for Americas middle class.

**Diebold, fraud, and
Republican hypocrisy**

Posted by: **AnkenyDebate**
on Sat Aug 11, 2007 8:33
pm

But weren't the Republicans accusing the Democrats of whining about Diebold not long ago? I find it ironic that Iowa's Republican party now has direct experience with this problem!

I filled out a survey form at the Republican Party booth in the Varied Industries bldg at the state fair on Thursday. One of the questions was about voting fraud and whether or not making it easier to vote might increase such fraud.
Hmmm...

Reader Comment

Posted by: **politicalman**
on Sat Aug 11, 2007 8:31
pm

This delay will only feed the violent paranoid fantasies of the Ron Paul Cultists, who were already spinning their guy's defeat before the votes were even cast.

Reader Comment

Posted by: **rg123**
on Sat Aug 11, 2007 8:17
pm

What a surprise the diebold machines messed up and did not count the vote right.

Reader Comment

Posted by: **JJCDAD**

on Sat Aug 11, 2007 8:09
pm

Increasing the minimum wage is pointless. What we need is to bring back the hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs that have been given away to Mexico, China, etc. Those were the jobs where an 'average Joe' could earn an honest wage and support a family doing so. All we have left are pointless service industries that only serve to feed off fellow Americans. We need to get back to producing and exporting something besides ill will.

Example:

How many televisions are produced in the USA? - ZERO!
How many televisions are purchased by US consumers every year? - MILLIONS!

Reader Comment

Posted by: **annefrank**
on Sat Aug 11, 2007 7:56
pm

>>>the left wing has gotten so far left it is pretty much anarchist

4Americans - actually the country is no longer conservative - but with conservative media comprising 90% of talk radio - most people don't know. However, they do know they don't have affordable healthcare nor affordable housing. They do know that hating gays doesn't pay the rent. They do know the rich are getting richer and the poor getting poorer. If Fox News were "fair and balanced" - wouldn't they have aired this report? Why didn't they? Hmmmm.....

The report below was compiled in June 2007 - and John Edwards plans and solutions are in sync with all the issues below ---

http://mediamatters.org/static/pdf/progressive_majority.pdf

The role of government — 69 percent of Americans believe the government "should care for those who can't care for themselves;" twice as many people (43 percent vs. 20 percent) want "government to provide many more services even if it means an increase in spending" as wanted government to provide fewer services "in order to reduce spending."

The economy — 77 percent of Americans think Congress should increase the minimum wage; 66 percent believe "upper-income people" pay too little in taxes; 53 percent feel the Bush tax cuts have failed because they have increased the deficit and caused cuts in government programs.

Social issues — 61 percent of Americans support embryonic stem cell research; 62 percent want to protect Roe v. Wade; only 3 percent of Americans rank gay marriage as the "most important" social issue.

Security — 43 percent of Americans say we are spending too much on our military; 60 percent feel the federal government should do more about restricting the kinds of guns that people can purchase.
» Read the Report and Spread the Word!

The environment — 75 percent of Americans would be willing to pay more for electricity if it were generated by renewable sources to help reduce global warming; 79 percent want higher emissions standards for automobiles.

Energy — 52 percent of Americans believe "the best way for the U.S. to reduce its reliance on foreign oil" is to "have the government invest in alternative energy sources;" 68 percent of the public thinks U.S. energy policy is better solved by conservation than production.

Immigration — 57 percent of Americans feel "most recent immigrants to the U.S. contribute to this country" rather than "cause problems." 67 percent of Americans feel that "on the whole" immigration is a "good thing for this country today."

Health care - 69 percent of Americans think it is the responsibility of the federal government to make sure all Americans have access to health coverage; 76 percent find access to health care more important than maintaining the Bush tax cuts; three in five would be willing to have their own taxes increased to achieve universal coverage.

Reader Comment

Posted by: **KingCrimson**
on Sat Aug 11, 2007 7:21
pm

Bush?

Tough on illegals?

Isn't he the guy that signed the SPP agreement with Fox and Martin in 2005 to kick off the North American Union?

Gotta love destroying our independence. That's TOUGH !!!!!

Reader Comment

Posted by: **annefrank**
on Sat Aug 11, 2007 7:17
pm

People please - no matter how much Repubs rev up the base by claiming they'll throw out illegals - the U.S. is NOT packing them into trains and shipping them back to Mexico! It ain't gonna happen.

So - if you're voting for someone because they're the loudest and baddest on illegals - please think again.

At least Bush made a step in the right direction yesterday by enforcing U.S. laws against corporations that hire illegals. Of course these laws have been the law since the late 80s but Bush has NOT enforced penalties on companies that violate the law - nor has he enforced penalties on mining companies that violate safety regulations - but that's another post.

Why should employers be given AMNESTY??

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