



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on February 14, 2012

The Anti-Romney Vote

The Republican establishment, which has lined up heavily behind Romney, has tried to depict him as the “electable,” if not invincible, candidate in the general election this November. But it is hard to maintain an aura of invincibility after you have been vinced, especially in a month when pundits had suggested that Romney might build up an unstoppable momentum of victories.

In a sense, this year’s campaign for the Republican nomination is reminiscent of what happened back in 1940, when the big-name favorites — Senators Taft and Vandenberg, back then — were eclipsed by a lesser known candidate who seemed to come out of nowhere.



As the Republican convention that year struggled to try to come up with a majority vote for someone, a chant began in the hall and built to a crescendo: “We want Willkie! We want Willkie!”

If there is a message in the rise and fall of so many conservative Republican candidates during this year’s primary season, it seems to be today’s Republican voters saying, “We don’t want Romney! We don’t want Romney!”

Even in Colorado, where Governor Romney came closest to winning, the combined votes for Senator Santorum and Speaker Gingrich added up to an absolute majority against him.

Much has been made of Newt Gingrich’s “baggage.” But Romney’s baggage has been accumulating recently, as well. His millions of dollars parked in a tax shelter in the Cayman Islands is red meat for the class warfare Democrats.

But a far more serious issue is ObamaCare, perhaps the most unpopular act of the Obama administration, its totalitarian implications highlighted by its recent attempt to force Catholic institutions to violate their own principles and bend the knee to the dictates of Washington bureaucrats.

Yet Romney’s own state-imposed medical care plan when he was governor of Massachusetts leaves him in a very weak position to criticize ObamaCare, except on strained federalism grounds that are unlikely to stir the voters or clarify the larger issues.

The Romney camp’s massive media ad campaign of character assassination against Newt Gingrich, over charges on which the Internal Revenue Service exonerated Gingrich after a lengthy investigation, was by no means Romney’s finest hour, though it won him the Florida primary.

This may well have been payback for Newt’s demagoguery about Romney’s work at Bain Capital. But two character assassinations do not make either candidate look presidential.

If Romney turns his well-financed character assassination machine on Rick Santorum, or Santorum resorts to character assassination against either Romney or Gingrich, the Republicans may forfeit



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whatever chance they have of defeating Barack Obama in November.

Some politicians and pundits seem to think that President Obama is vulnerable politically because of the economy in the doldrums. "It's the economy, stupid," has become one of the many mindless mantras of our time.

What Obama seems to understand that Republicans and many in the media do not, is that dependency on the government in hard times can translate into votes for the White House incumbent.

Growing numbers of Americans on food stamps, jobs preserved by bailouts, people living on extended unemployment payments and people behind in their mortgage payments being helped by government interventions are all potential voters for those who rescued them — even if their rescuers are the reason for hard times, in the first place.

The economy was far worse during the first term of Franklin D. Roosevelt than it has been under Obama. Unemployment rates under FDR were more than double what they have been under Obama. Yet FDR was reelected in a landslide. Dependency pays off for politicians, even when it damages an economy or ruins a society.

Thomas Sowell is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305. His website is www.tsowell.com. To find out more about Thomas Sowell and read features by other Creators Syndicate columnists and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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