



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on March 23, 2015

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Inside Track

Paul Wins Again, Walker Finishes Strong Second, in CPAC Straw Poll

Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky came in first for the third straight year and Governor Scott Walker of Wisconsin made a strong second-place showing Saturday at the end of the three-day Conservative Political Action Conference in the Washington, D.C., suburb of National Harbor, Maryland. Paul, whose supporters have adopted a “Stand with Rand” theme, hailed the “constitutional conservatives” who chose to stand with him at the CPAC event.



“Our party is filled with constitutional conservatives who have chosen to stand with me for a third consecutive straw poll victory,” the Kentucky Republican said. “Since President Ronald Reagan, the (conference) has been the gold standard on where conservatives stand. The constitutional conservatives of our party have spoken in a loud and clear voice today.”

Paul captured 26 percent of the votes cast by the 3007 conference attendees who participated in the poll. Walker, the Republican governor whose controversial curbing of the bargaining power of public employee unions has won the admiration of many of the party’s grassroots conservatives, came in second with 21 percent. His victory in Wisconsin in a recall vote as well as his election triumphs in a “blue” state have impressed some GOP strategists for his ability to attract working class and middle income voters from among Democrats as well as Republicans. Walker, who received some flak for his refusal to discuss foreign policy or answer a question about evolution during a visit to London last month, said during his appearance at the conference on Thursday that the massive protest demonstrations in Madison during the labor unrest had prepared him for dealing with foreign crises, including the conflict with the ISIS terrorists in the Middle East.

“If I can take on 100,000 protesters, I can do the same across the world,” he said. Asked about that comment on Saturday, Walker likened his battle with public employees to President Reagan’s 1981 firing of striking air traffic controllers.

“Candidly, I think foreign policy is something that’s not just about having a PhD or talking to PhDs. It’s about leadership,” he told [a gathering of GOP donors in Palm Beach, Florida](#). “I would contend the most significant foreign policy decision in my lifetime was made by a president who was previously a governor. A president who made a decision that wasn’t even about foreign policy. It was in August of 1981, when Ronald Reagan fired the air traffic controllers.”

Texas Senator Ted Cruz finished in third place with 11.5 percent of the vote, followed by retired neurosurgeon Dr. Ben Carson in fourth with 11 percent. Former Florida GOP Governor Jeb Bush,



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considered by some to be the early front-runner and a favorite of the GOP's Washington establishment and deep-pocket donors, finished fifth at 8 percent of the vote.

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie of New Jersey finished near the bottom of the pack, in 10th place with 2.8 percent of the vote. Christie, who declined to run for president in 2012 despite the urging of a number of party leaders and conservative pundits, had been considered a formidable candidate for the 2016 nomination. His reputation has since suffered, due in part to the "Bridgegate" scandal of September 2013 when three traffic lanes from Fort Lee, New Jersey, were shut down for four days, cutting off access to and from the town via the New York-New Jersey George Washington Bridge. Christie claimed he knew nothing about it and vigorously denied allegations that the lanes were closed as retribution against Fort Lee's Democratic Mayor Mark Sokolich for not endorsing the Republican governor in his 2013 reelection campaign.

Three Christie appointees to the New York-New Jersey Port Authority resigned over the scandal, which became the subject of an investigation by the U.S. Attorney for New Jersey, the Port Authority and the New Jersey Legislature. The state has been billed nearly \$9 million in legal fees by lawyers representing the Christie administration in the investigations, the [Wall Street Journal reported](#).

Christie has also been criticized for an apparent shortness of temper. At the CPAC conference he defended his conduct at a public event last fall when he told a heckler to "sit down and shut up," suggesting that kind of bluntness is needed in the nation's capital.

"Yeah, well, sometimes people need to be told to sit down and shut up," Christie said, drawing laughs and applause from the audience. "Some more of that stuff should be happening in Washington, D.C. because there's so much ridiculous stuff being spewed, especially out of the White House. Someone should say it's time to shut up."

Others receiving votes were former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, in sixth place with 4.3 percent of the vote; Florida Sen. Marco Rubio in seventh with 4.3 percent; Donald Trump in eighth place with 3.5 percent; and former Hewlett Packard executive Carly Fiorina in ninth with 3 percent. Former Texas Gov. Rick Perry finished in 11th place, with 1.1 percent, just ahead of the decimal point contingent, led by Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal, in 12th with .9 percent. Former GOP vice presidential candidate and Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin finished 13th with .8 percent.

Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, who won the Republican caucuses in Iowa in 2008 with a strong pro-life and defense of traditional marriage theme, finished last in the voting with just .3 percent.

Fiorina, the only woman written and talked about as a potential GOP contender, formed a political action committee two weeks ago to raise money for a possible presidential campaign. Despite her loss to veteran Senator Barbara Boxer in the U.S. Senate race in California in 2010, Fiorina at the CPAC gathering sounded eager to take on the widely anticipated Democratic nominee for president in 2016.

"If Hillary Clinton had to face me on a debate stage at the very least she would have a hitch in her swing," Fiorina said, employing a baseball analogy. "Like Mrs. Clinton, I too have traveled the globe. Unlike Mrs. Clinton, I know that flying is an activity, not an accomplishment," Fiorina said to roars of applause. "Mrs. Clinton, name an accomplishment."

Fiorina also called on Clinton to explain how her acceptance of donations from foreign governments to the Clinton family's foundation, the non-profit Clinton Global Initiative, would not be a [conflict of](#)



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[interest](#) if she runs for president. The foundation has received millions from foreign governments, the [Washington Post reported](#) last week, including some with intricate diplomatic, military, and financial relationships with the United States. Contributing nations include Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Australia, Norway, and the Dominican Republic.

“She tweets about women’s rights in this country and takes money from governments that deny women the most basic human rights,” Fiorina said. “She tweets about equal pay for women,” she added, “but won’t answer basic questions about her own offices’ pay standards — and neither will our president.”

Photo of Sen. Rand Paul: AP Images



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