



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on March 19, 2012

GOP Establishment Shuts Down Missouri Caucus to Avoid Paul Victory

"It definitely got wild," Eugene Dokes, the county Republican chairman, [told](#) the Associated Press after the aborted caucus, claiming that: "I had to tell a number of people not to approach me, not to come from behind me and not to scream at me. I think there was the possibility of someone trying to inflict personal injury or harm to me." However, there's no evidence Dokes was threatened in the more than dozen [videos](#) of the caucus that appeared on YouTube after the caucus.



The posted video recordings were banned at the caucus and provided the nominal reason for one arrest and the loud protests. The videos showed the crowd remaining in their seats and orderly while shouting extremely loudly at perceived rule violations by Dokes through Matt Ehlen, whom Dokes had elected caucus chairman after a controversial vote where Ehlen was the only candidate. Local television stations [reported](#) that Paul supporters had become "verbally aggressive," a characterization imperceptibly different from a crowd enthusiastically supporting their candidates.

GOP officials nominally shut down Missouri's ongoing presidential caucuses in St. Charles County after Ron Paul and Mitt Romney supporters protested enforcement of an outdated caucus rule that bans videotaping of caucus proceedings. The futility of enforcing such an antiquated rule in the 21st century became apparent within hours of the close of the convention, as dozens of surreptitious mobile phone recordings of the caucus proceedings appeared on YouTube.com. In an era when virtually all mobile phones also double as high definition video recorders, such a rule has become impossible to enforce.

Missouri Republican Party Chairman David Cole issued a [statement](#) calling for transparency in the caucus process, a statement that seemed to imply the video-recording rule should be eased: "We understand that emotions run high, but it is important that these caucuses are conducted in a fair, open, and honest manner. Today's events in St. Charles were unfortunate — and the meeting was adjourned to protect the safety of all participants. Moving forward, the State Party plans to reach out to all parties involved. We will come to an agreement to ensure that St Charles County is fully represented throughout the nominating process."

The Associated Press [reported](#) that Doakes and Ehlen called police when Paul and Romney supporters



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loudly booed after the putative caucus chairman declared several resolutions passed by voice votes that did not appear to win by a majority of the 2,500 caucus attendees: "Two off-duty St. Peters police officers, who had been hired for the event by Republicans, called in for support from five law enforcement agencies, including the Missouri State Highway Patrol. A police helicopter arrived at the scene."

Two Ron Paul supporters were arrested by municipal police on "trespassing" charges, one during the caucus for openly refusing to stop video-recording. After the caucus was shut down, Paul campaign coordinator Brent Safford was also arrested for "trespassing," when he tried to reconvene the caucus outside the high school where the abortive caucus had taken place. Romney and Paul supporters in attendance charged that county GOP leadership was in the pocket of the Santorum campaign in posts on [local media](#) and various [social media](#), alongside the more than a [dozen YouTube videos](#) posted overnight.

Brent Safford had been backed by both the Paul and Romney campaigns to become caucus chairman, but Stafford [claimed](#) in a post on DailyPaul.com that Dokes refused to recognize any nominations for caucus chairman other than Ehler. The crowd angrily chanted "Brent Safford, Brent Safford" when Dokes and Ehler refused to recognize Safford. Dokes and Ehler resolved to adjourn the caucus after Paul and Romney supporters continued an unbroken series of crowd booing, but Safford [pointed out](#) that the rules of the convention required a two-thirds vote to adjourn and tried to continue the caucus in the front lawn outside of the high school where it had first convened. Police arrested Safford on the front lawn of the high school, but left 300-400 other caucus-goers — who were listening to Safford — unmolested. (To see a YouTube video showing Stafford's arrest, [click here](#).) Safford [wrote](#) on the DailyPaul.com "When I asked what I was being arrested for, or if I was being arrested, I was told they would tell me later. Eventually I was booked for trespassing and released."

Ehler insisted during the caucus that Paul supporters vigorously follow state rules on video recordings, but Ehler himself [ignored several rules](#) that were also on the state caucus rulebook, such as following *Robert's Rules of Order*, ignoring points of order, and adjourning without a two-thirds majority vote.

Photo: Screen-grab from a [YouTube video showing Brent Stafford's arrest](#)



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