



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on December 29, 2011

Iowa Campaign Chairman Leaves Bachmann for Paul

The faltering presidential campaign of Rep. Michele Bachmann was dealt another blow Wednesday night when Kent Sorenson (left), her Iowa campaign chairman, turned up at a Ron Paul rally in Des Moines to announce he had left Bachmann and is supporting Paul. Just hours earlier Sorenson had been at a campaign event with Bachmann, Politico.com reported. The Iowa state senator appeared on stage just moments before Paul spoke, and announced his endorsement before a cheering crowd of about 500 at a rally billed as a veterans event.



The defection was more bad news for Bachmann, an Iowa native and member of Congress from Minnesota, who expected a home-field advantage in the neighboring state. But since surging to the top in polls last summer, she has sunk to single digits in recent surveys. She issued a statement Wednesday night, claiming Sorenson was bought off by the Paul campaign.

"Kent Sorenson personally told me he was offered a large sum of money to go to work for the Paul campaign," the Minnesota congresswoman said in a statement emphatically denied by the Paul camp. What made matters worse for Bachmann is that it was [also disputed by her own Iowa political director](#), Wes Enos. Just after midnight Thursday morning, the *Des Moines Register* reported, the Paul campaign released a statement from Enos defending Sorenson and disputing Bachmann's charge.

"I can say unequivocally that Kent Sorenson's decision was in no way financially motivated. His decision had more to do with the fact that Ron Paul supporters have been something of a family to him since he was first elected in 2008," the statement from Enos said. With the Iowa caucuses but a few days away, "Kent believed that he needed to be with them as they stand on the cusp of a potential caucus upset."

In his statement, Enos said that while he disagreed with Sorenson's decision, and would himself remain with the Bachmann campaign, he could not "watch a good man like Kent Sorenson be attacked as a 'sell-out.'... That is simply not the case and it was not the basis of his decision."

"I adore Michele Bachmann, but the fact of the matter is I believe we have an opportunity to take Romney out here in Iowa and I believe that person is Ron Paul," Sorenson said in an interview behind the stage as his new candidate addressed the crowd. "I love Michele, I love the Bachmann family, but I love this country, also." ?Paul had campaigned for Sorenson in his state Senate race and the Iowan said he had remained in touch with the Texas congressman's local supporters even after he had joined the Bachmann campaign. He said he would be with the Paul camp, "at their service," for the remaining days of the Iowa campaign.

"It was difficult, but it was the right thing to do, because [Paul] fights for the values that I hold dear as well," Sorenson said in his [remarks](#) to the veterans and others in the crowd of Paul supporters at the Iowa State Fairgrounds. While praising Bachmann for also fighting for conservative causes, Sorenson said he believes he needs to back Paul in what he described as a "turning point" in the 2012 campaign.



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“When the Republican establishment is going to be coming against him over the next few days, I thought it was my duty to come to his aid, just like he came to my aid during my Senate race, which was a very nasty race,” said Sorenson, who pledged to do all he can “in Iowa and beyond” to help the campaign.

“We're going to take Ron Paul all the way to the White House in 2012,” he told the cheering crowd.

A CNN/*Time*/Opinion Research Corporation [poll](#) released Wednesday showed Bachmann the choice of just nine percent of Republican caucus voters in Iowa. The same survey, taken from December 21-27, showed former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney leading in Iowa with 25 percent and Paul a close second, as the choice of 22 percent. Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, a frontrunner in the state two weeks ago, sank to fourth place at 14 percent, while a surging former Senator Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania moved into third place as the choice of 16 percent of likely caucus voters. Jon Huntsman, who has campaigned almost entirely in New Hampshire, showed up at one percent, behind “None” and “No opinion,” at two percent each.

Both Bachmann and Texas Governor Rick Perry have suffered steep declines in voter preference surveys since mid-August, when Bachmann won the Ames Straw Poll, edging out Paul by only 152 votes, and Perry made a highly publicized entrance to the campaign, announcing his candidacy in South Carolina and New Hampshire that same day. At the time, both were described in the national media as among the three, including Romney, who made up the “top tier” of candidates. Perry's verbal gaffes and poor performances in the early debates have contributed to his decline, while Bachmann's sliding poll numbers have been accompanied by a number of jolts along the way. In September, her national campaign manager, Ed Rollins, resigned, citing health reasons. The following month, her entire [paid staff in New Hampshire walked out](#), apparently without her knowledge, after it had become clear that the national campaign, heavily focused on Iowa, was making a minimal effort in New Hampshire.

Meanwhile, both Gingrich and Paul have risen to challenge and at times pass Romney in the Iowa polls. Romney's lead over Paul in the latest poll, though within the margin of error, is a reassuring sign for the former Bay State Governor, who has done the lion's share of his campaigning in New Hampshire, where he continues to hold a sizable lead. New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation primary will follow the January 3 Iowa caucuses by exactly one week.

Paul's campaign manager, Jesse Benton, appeared to discount other challengers, including Gingrich, in explaining Sorenson's choice of Paul as the candidate to “take Romney out” in Iowa.

“He said he has come to realize that this is a two-person race,” Benton said, and that “Ron is the only conservative alternative to Romney and the establishment status quo.”

Photo: Iowa State Senator Kent Sorenson speaks at a rally for Republican presidential candidate, Rep. Ron Paul, at the Iowa State Fair Grounds in Des Moines, Iowa, Dec. 28, 2011: AP Images



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