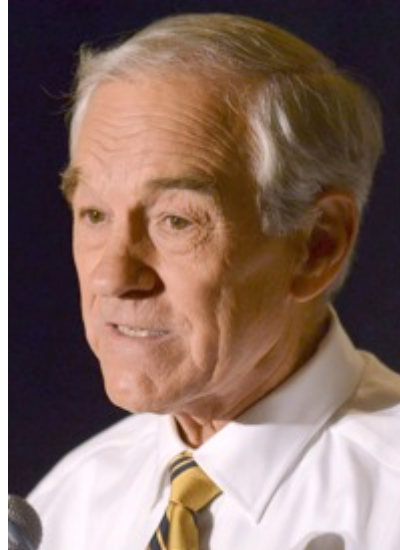




Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on January 12, 2012

Paul Urges Non-Romney Rivals to Get Out of Race and Unite Behind Him

In a [statement](#), Paul's national campaign chairman Jesse Benton asserted that Paul's strong finish in the Granite State, and his "top-tier showing in Iowa," demonstrate that "he is the sole Republican candidate who can take on and defeat both Mitt Romney and Barack Obama."



This is, of course, a direct contradiction to everything the pundits have assured us to be true about Paul's candidacy. First they said he had the proverbial snowball's chance of winning the GOP nomination; and if he did become the nominee, they added even more emphatically, he would be trounced by Obama in the general election.

Benton has the better of the argument. In Iowa Paul came within 3,800 votes of both Romney and Rick Santorum, who practically tied for first place; more importantly, he ended up with the [same number of delegates](#) as each of them. Then, in New Hampshire, he received 23 percent of the vote to Romney's 39 percent, far better than pre-election polls had indicated he would perform and well above any of the other candidates. Furthermore, as Benton pointed out, "Ron Paul has won more votes in Iowa and New Hampshire than any candidate but Mitt Romney." Paul's vote count comes to about 65 percent of Romney's. Santorum, his closest competitor, has just 41 percent of Romney's total, and he received only nine percent of the vote in New Hampshire. There are many more primaries before the Republican National Convention, but these numbers clearly indicate that Paul at present is the only candidate giving Romney a run for his money.

Moreover, as Benton noted, with Paul's prodigious fundraising ability, he is currently the only candidate other than Romney capable of mounting "a full, national campaign, competing in state after state over the coming weeks and months." No matter how good the other candidates may be, they simply don't have the money to compete; Paul does.

In addition, Paul has momentum that his non-Romney rivals lack. While the hares have watched their poll numbers skyrocket only to plummet again just as quickly, Paul, the tortoise, has seen his numbers rise slowly and steadily. A recent [Reuters/Ipsos poll](#), taken before Tuesday's vote, has Paul's support among Republicans and Independents up by five percentage points over the last month. He is now tied for second place in the poll (Romney remains in the lead) with Newt Gingrich, who is on his way down, having lost eight points since the last survey. The other candidates peaked early; Paul is still on the rise as the primary season gets underway.

Suppose Paul does get the Republican nomination. What about the general election? "Ron Paul and Mitt Romney," Benton said, "have been shown in national polls to be the only two candidates who can defeat Barack Obama." About Romney there is little question among establishment pundits, who,



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[ConservativeHQ's David Franke](#) tartly observes, "have lost no opportunity in recent months to assure us that the 25% candidate is the only Republican who can beat Obama." But, he asks, "if it weren't for that assumption, what would Romney's level of support be? 5%? Your guess is as good as mine." As to Paul, as early as 2010 national opinion polls showed that he could [tie or even beat Obama](#). And just this week [CBS News](#) released the results of another survey showing that Obama could be fought to a statistical draw only by — guess who? — Mitt Romney and Ron Paul. (Obama, according to the poll, would defeat all other GOP candidates.) Benton was right on the mark.

Having argued that Paul is the only candidate who can defeat both Romney and Obama, Benton then made his pitch. "Ron Paul is clearly the conservative alternative to Mitt Romney as the campaign goes forward," he stated. "We urge Ron Paul's opponents who have been unsuccessfully trying to be the conservative alternative to Mitt Romney to unite by getting out of the race and uniting behind Paul's candidacy."

Good luck.

There is no doubt that the other candidates have been trying to position themselves as conservative alternatives to Romney and that they would do well to unite behind one man if they truly believe Romney is too liberal. But given the great divide between their brand of conservatism and Paul's, they hardly seem likely to oblige the Congressman by dropping out of the race. Indeed, some of their comments, such as Gingrich's remark that Paul "scares me to death," suggest that they would remain in the race if only to prevent Paul from being the nominee. Most would probably be far more comfortable with Romney. (Santorum, in fact, [endorsed](#) the former Governor last time out.)

Still, it's hard to fault the Paul campaign for trying. Certainly the facts, based on current trends, are on their side. Just the same, asking other candidates to leave the race so you can win is hardly likely to be a successful strategy — but then that was never the point. The point was to make the case to voters to get behind Paul as the only non-Romney candidate who can win in November. Only time will tell if the strategy is more successful with Americans stepping into voting booths this primary season than with politicians hoping to move into 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue next January.

Photo of Ron Paul: AP Images



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