



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on August 15, 2011

Pawlenty Earliest Casualty of Ames Straw Poll

A straw poll shows which way the wind is blowing and for Tim Pawlenty (left), it was an ill wind in Ames, Iowa, Saturday that that blew the former Minnesota governor out of the presidential race in record time. Politico reported Monday that Pawlenty's announcement that he was through, a mere 12 hours after the voting, marked the fastest knockout of a White House contender in the history of the Ames polling.



Pawlenty, who announced his candidacy in Des Moines in May and had moved his national campaign headquarters to Iowa, finished a distant third with just under 14 percent of the vote. Pawlenty finished behind Rep. Michele Bachmann of Minnesota (29 percent) and Rep. Ron Paul of Texas (28 percent) "I'm from a small state. I don't have a big national financial network or political network," Pawlenty explained on ABC's [This Week](#) Sunday morning.

"And so I think the measure of us in this phase was really, can you get some lift out of Ames to get the ante, if you will, to get to the next round? And that didn't happen, unfortunately."

A two-term Republican governor from a Democratic state, Pawlenty counted on a strong showing in neighboring Iowa to maintain his top-tier status among Republican presidential hopefuls. Despite intensive campaigning in the state, his campaign did not resonate with voters in Iowa or nationally. Lacking both the front-runner status that former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney has with establishment Republicans and the tea party support that animates the campaigns of Bachmann and Paul, Pawlenty struggled to carve a niche for himself in the crowded Republican field.

"At first he seemed to try to come across as a mainstream establishment candidate that was more conservative than Mitt Romney," political science professor Dennis Goldford of Drake University said in an interview with [Minnesota Public Radio](#). "Since January or February of this year he started emphasizing themes that were much more in line with the tea party and religious conservatives." When that didn't work, he went back to his role as an establishment candidate, Goldford said.

In a debate in New Hampshire in June, Pawlenty appeared reluctant to confront Romney with the sharp criticisms of the Massachusetts health care plan ("RomneyCare") that he had been voicing on the campaign trail. Last Thursday, in a debate at Iowa State University, the site of the straw poll, Pawlenty went after fellow Minnesotan Bachmann, saying her record of accomplishment in Congress is "non-existent." Bachmann appeared to get the better of that exchange, however, as she blasted Pawlenty for expressing support for the Wall Street bailout when he was campaigning for John McCain in 2008, his praise for the individual mandate in the Obama health care reform and his support for a cap-and-trade



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program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Pawlenty may also have lost points with war-weary voters when he went before the Council on Foreign Relations in June and warned against what he described as an “isolationist” trend in some segments of the Republican Party.

The official results showed Bachmann, with 4,823 votes, or 28.55 percent of the total, edging out Paul, who drew 4,671 votes, or 27.65 percent. Pawlenty’s 2,293 votes left him with just 13.57 percent of the total. Despite the mere 9/10 of a percentage point separating Bachmann and Paul, much of the national media has described the latest phase of the Republican presidential competition as a three-way race among Bachmann, Romney, and Texas Governor Rick Perry. Romney, whose campaign is more focused on the New Hampshire primary than the Iowa caucuses in next year’s early voting, did not participate in the straw poll and received 567 votes, or 3.36 percent for a sixth place finish. Perry, who announced his candidacy on Saturday in appearances in South Carolina and New Hampshire, was not on the ballot in Ames. He finished slightly ahead of Romney, however, receiving 718 write-in votes for 3.62 percent. Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum was the fourth- place finisher with 1,657 votes, or 9.81 percent. Georgia businessman Herman Cain came in fifth with 1,456, or 8.62 percent of the votes, finishing ahead of both Romney and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who drew 385 votes, or 2.28 percent. Former Utah Governor and ambassador to China John Huntsman drew just 69 votes, or 0.41 percent, and Rep. Thad Cotter received 35 votes, or 0.21 percent.

Though a non-binding vote no candidate wins any delegates at the event the Ames Straw poll is widely viewed as a test of a candidate’s organizational strength and voter enthusiasm. It also has a history of knocking candidates out early. Former Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson ended his presidential campaign one day after finishing sixth in Ames in 2007. Former Senator (now Governor) Sam Brownback of Kansas pulled out not long after a disappointing third-place finish that same year. In 1999, Lamar Alexander, Elizabeth Dole and former Vice President Dan Quayle all dropped out within days after lackluster showings in Ames. While Pawlenty is the first of this year’s casualties of the Ames vote, others may soon follow.



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