



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on March 4, 2012

Romney Bests Paul, Santorum in Washington Caucuses

The victory by Romney marks the fifth straight victory by the Romney campaign since Rick Santorum took three caucuses in Colorado, Minnesota, and Missouri back on February 7. The victory gives the Romney campaign a morale boost going into the March 6 “Super Tuesday” primaries. Ten states will have primaries or caucuses on that day, the single largest primary day of the entire campaign.



The Washington state caucuses featured voting irregularities in Benton county, where reports in local papers were made that somewhere between [“hundreds”](#) and [“1,500”](#) were turned away from an overflow caucus. Politico initially reported Mormon-heavy Benton county as a stronghold for Rick Santorum, though Romney won the caucus in that county. “The county, which has a heavy Mormon population, gave about a quarter of its vote share to Romney in the 2008 caucuses, even though he had already dropped out of the presidential race by then,” Politico.com [explained](#) in a correction.

The Romney victory took place on the heels of a revamp of the former Massachusetts governor’s economic agenda, which was first announced in a February 24 [speech](#) in Detroit. “First, I will make an across-the-board, 20% reduction in marginal individual income tax rates,” Romney [announced](#). “By reducing the tax on the next dollar of income earned by all taxpayers, we will encourage hard work, risk-taking, and productivity by allowing Americans to keep more of what they earn.” Romney made no mention of it in his economic agenda on his campaign website, which includes a [160-page tome](#) that laid out his economic agenda in great detail. The campaign website plan is an uninspiring and wonkish plan with a few tax cuts and even smaller spending cuts that would cap federal spending at 20 percent of national gross domestic product. The 20-percent level is aimed at the average spending levels under the Democratic Presidents — not Republicans — of the past 40 years. An analysis of the Romney economic plan posted on his website by the non-partisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget (CRFB) [concluded](#) that Romney would essentially make no change to the current budget trajectory of large deficits into the indefinite future. In the CRFB analysis, Romney’s agenda would keep the deficit at Obama levels, while Santorum and Gingrich’s tax cut proposals would spike the deficit even higher than Obama’s proposals. Only Texas Congressman Ron Paul’s proposals would make a serious dent in the deficit, according to the CRFB analysis.

The massive tax cuts recently proposed by Romney, without compensatory spending cuts, would place the Romney agenda closer to the Gingrich/Santorum agenda of increasing deficits, though Romney



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contested this assertion in the Detroit speech. “These changes will not add to the deficit,” Romney [told](#) his motor city audience. “Stronger economic growth, spending cuts, and base broadening will offset the reductions.”

Others remain unconvinced. Romney’s largest spending cut would be to propose cuts in Social Security payments for those who retire after 2022, but Romney has no large immediate cuts. Even Romney’s neoconservative fans have begun to resort to cynicism to the new numbers. “Medicare and Social Security reform will not begin until 2022. Yet the tax cuts are supposed to go into effect right away. How to close the gap?” David Frum [wrote](#) on CNN.com February 26. “Do the numbers even add up? One might cynically answer: Who cares? The speech is not intended as policy. It’s intended to corral Republican primary voters. If Romney wins the election in November, that will be the time to think seriously about economic plans.”

Photo of Mitt Romney: AP Images



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