



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on December 23, 2011

Romney, Gingrich, Paul Lead Early Poll for Nevada Caucuses

According to an 8NewsNow/Las Vegas Review-Journal Poll, Mitt Romney is currently leading in Nevada with 33.1 percent of the vote, followed by Newt Gingrich, with 29.2 percent, and Ron Paul with 12.7 percent. Every other candidate polls at 5 percent or less. The Nevada Caucuses are scheduled for February 4, just one month after the January 3 Iowa caucus. It will be the fifth state to host a poll, after Iowa, New Hampshire, Florida, and South Carolina.



Some analysts say that even in third place, Pauls position could prove to be a threat to the current leaders. His campaign in the Silver State is already strong, having established two offices there in October. At the time the offices were opened, Ron Paul 2012 Nevada executive director Steve Bierfeldt declared in a press release, Dr. Pauls team will work hard to spread his message of liberty throughout the state.

Observers are already pondering what a Paul victory in Iowa will do to the establishment. "What he could do is turn a victory in [Iowa](#) into a heart attack for the Republican establishment. They see him as someone they really can't relate to very much," said Tobe Berkowitz, a communications professor at [Boston University](#).

Still, there will be battles for Paul and the other candidates after Iowa. In New Hampshire, Mitt Romney seems to be firmly in first. "[Paul] has positions on issues that elements of the Republican Party are going to see as extreme, remarked Dante Scala, a political scientist at the [University of New Hampshire](#). "If Paul manages to win Iowa there is going to be this reaction among Republican elites, who are going to say 'look we can't put Paul forward, we need a safe candidate.'"

But some contend that a Paul win in Iowa could heavily influence the New Hampshire primary. The *Daily Caller* observes:

[Pollster John] Zogby believes two factors will influence the race after Iowa. First, whether any candidates drop out of the race an outcome which he considers probable. And more significantly, how badly former Massachusetts Gov. [Mitt Romney](#) is damaged if he performs poorly in the Hawkeye State.

After Iowa, Paul could receive a bump-up from former supporters of Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann and former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, said Zogby. They, at least, are damaged if they do poorly



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in Iowa frankly, the same with Rick Perry, he told the *Daily Caller*. That's where Paul could possibly increase his support.

The same may be true of South Carolina, though Paul has a relatively poor showing in that state at the moment. The *Christian Science Monitor* notes, Most opinion polls for [South Carolina](#), the third state to hold a 2012 Republican nominating contest, give a resounding "no" to Paul. The Texan has been polling in single digits in the state, home to many active and retired military personnel who may not take kindly to Paul's non-interventionist military doctrine.

"He's a libertarian Republican. Will that play in South Carolina, [Georgia](#) and elsewhere? The fact that he's a libertarian throws a lot of monkey-wrenches into Republican orthodoxy," Boston University professor Berkowitz said.

But with Paul showing any potential in the early caucuses, establishment Republicans and GOP pundits have already resorted to trying to convince the public that early caucuses suddenly do not matter.

Fox News television host Chris Wallace has attempted to skew what a Paul win in Iowa would mean, making the [argument](#) that it would undermine the credibility of the Iowa caucuses:

The Ron Paul people are not going to like that I'm saying this, but to a certain extent, if Ron Paul wins, it will discredit the Iowa caucus because rightly or wrongly, I think most of the Republican establishment believes he's not going to end up as the nominee, so therefore Iowa won't count.

Cenk Uygur, co-founder and main host of The Young Turks, a progressive Internet and radio talk show, [remarked](#) on Wallace's assertion, "Before you were telling us that Ron Paul had no chance of winning. Ron Paul (mock laugh), what a kook, what a crank! Oh, he's going to win? Well then it doesn't count.

Uygur also pointed out the sudden change of heart that Fox News has had toward the Iowa caucuses, as well as to any of the many straw polls that Paul has won. Up until it became clear that Paul had a good shot at winning in Iowa, Fox News hyped the Iowa caucuses as a significant indication of the momentum of the 2012 presidential election. Suddenly, however, that is no longer true.

By definition, if Ron Paul wins something, it no longer matters, noted Uygur.

One Fox News pundit came to Paul's defense, however. Neil Cavuto told viewers yesterday, I'm not here as a supporter of Ron Paul, but as an opponent of anyone dismissing Ron Paul, or anyone else at this stage. They're all due a fair hearing, not an unfair clearing.

Cavuto also pointed out that Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan were once called unelectable and that history is full of candidates who couldn't make it but did.

Cavuto added, Now if Ron Paul does surprise, don't blame it on average voters who didn't see it coming. Blame it on haughty media pundits who continued dismissing him...

And if establishment Republicans cannot convince the American public that the early caucuses do not count, they may resort to mudslinging. *The Weekly Standard*, for example, a well-known neoconservative publication, has recently attempted to resurrect the myth that Ron Paul is a racist based on newsletters from the early 1990s that were said to be written on his behalf by anonymous and unknown individuals. During a CNN interview, Paul reiterated his claim that he never was associated with those newsletters, but after being pressed on the same topic, Paul chose to end the interview early, prompting CNN to run the headline, Ron Paul gets testy during interview.

Paul remains the most popular Republican candidate among minority groups, according to the latest



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CNN/ORC poll released on Tuesday, with 25 percent of the vote, while Romney has 20 percent, and Gingrich 15 percent.

The real news here is not that Rep. Paul is doing as well as he is; it is that he is doing that well despite being virtually ignored by most of the media until now and despite being dismissed as a serious candidate by most of the Republican establishment.

Photo: Republican presidential candidate former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, middle, speaks as former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, left, and Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, listen during a Republican presidential debate in Sioux City, Iowa, Dec. 15, 2011. : AP Images



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