



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on February 1, 2012

Romney Wins Florida; Paul and Santorum Focus on Caucuses

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich placed a distant second with 32 percent of the vote, but pledged to carry on his campaign in his concession speech that evening. Gingrich had won the South Carolina primary 10 days earlier by a similar double-digit 40-28 percent margin.

Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum (who had won the Iowa caucuses) placed third in the primary with 13 percent of the vote, and Texas Congressman Ron Paul finished last of the four candidates with a mere seven percent of the vote. Paul and Santorum had [largely skipped](#) the Florida primary contest, as the expensive media market and winner-take-all delegate rule made competition in the Sunshine State less favorable than upcoming caucus states such as Nevada, Maine, Colorado, and Minnesota.



The Gingrich campaign was also rocked by [charges](#) January 31 that one of its staff members had deliberately stepped on the bare toes of 29-year-old Ron Paul supporter Eddie Dillard. The Ron Paul campaign [called](#) for a Gingrich campaign apology, citing "today's deplorable behavior against Ron Paul supporter Eddie Dillard in Florida reflects very poorly on Congressman Gingrich."

The Florida results have caused many to wonder if the Tea Party retains the electoral strength and principles it demonstrated in the 2010 midterm elections. [Exit polls](#) demonstrated that the top two candidates receiving the votes of Tea Party supporters (Romney 40 percent, Gingrich 38 percent) backed both the TARP bailout package in 2008 and the individual healthcare mandate that has been considered the linchpin of ObamaCare. Both issues helped to spark the Tea Party movement in 2008 and 2009. Meanwhile, the two candidates on the ballot who opposed both initiatives were spurned by pro-Tea Party voters, with [Tea Party "Godfather"](#) Ron Paul winning just six percent of the votes from Tea Party supporters and Rick Santorum winning just 14 percent.

Photo of Mitt Romney: AP Images



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