



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on June 19, 2011

Ron Paul Wins RLC Straw Poll in a Landslide

In a big win for the Congressman from Texas, he nearly doubled the tally of the second place candidate — Jon Huntsman, the former Governor of Utah.

The top four vote getters were: Rep. Ron Paul (612 votes), Jon Huntsman (382 votes), Rep. Michele Bachmann (191 votes), and Herman Cain (104 votes).

None of the other candidates (Romney, Palin, Gingrich, Pawlenty, Santorum, Johnson, Roemer) garnered above 100 votes.

As for the poll itself, delegates at the convention were asked, "If the primary election for president were held today, for whom would you vote?"



The candidates on the ballot, listed alphabetically, were: Michele Bachmann, Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, Jon Huntsman, Gary Johnson, Thaddeus McCotter, Sarah Palin, Ron Paul, Tim Pawlenty, Buddy Roemer, Mitt Romney, and Rick Santorum.

Dr. Paul's victory was not without controversy, however. Friday night after Herman Cain's speech, some of Cain's supporters openly accused the very vocal Ron Paul contingency of booing the former pizza executive. Today, many of those same detractors were heard complaining that the straw poll was fixed, accusing Paul's campaign of stuffing the virtual ballot box.

Other rumors buzzing through the venue regarded the fact that there was a noticeable pack of young Republicans scurrying around the Hilton Riverside. Word began to circulate that the Huntsman campaign bought tickets for these youthful backers and actually bussed in a large group of college kids to inflate their man's vote total. In response to questions about the accusation, the Huntsman people "did not deny" spending money to boost his performance in the poll.

In fairness, Jon Huntsman's second place showing is surprising given the fact that Huntsman hasn't declared his candidacy and was a no-show at the New Orleans event.

The Paul victory isn't surprising at all, however. Representative Paul is accustomed to winning these precursor straw polls. The Texas Republican also [won](#) the straw poll conducted at the CPAC conference held last winter.

Predictably, the mainstream media are portraying the Paul campaign's victory as the less- important story. This line from a CBS News [story](#) is an example of the bias: "With the Libertarian-leaning Paul seen as unlikely to win the party's nomination, the second-place finish will be seen as a victory for Huntsman, the former ambassador to China who is announcing his presidential campaign next week."

[Politico](#) and [CNN](#) ran similarly slanted stories on the relevancy of a Ron Paul straw poll victory.

No matter how detractors diminish the importance of the victory (the *LA Times* [says](#) of straw polls: "They mean absolutely nothing about winning actual delegates to the Republican National



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Convention”), there is no debating the attention that Dr. Paul’s straw poll success will draw for his campaign.

Perhaps the most important fact underlying Ron Paul’s straw poll victory is the average age of the substantial bloc of supporters that carried him to the first-place finish.

I’ve spent three days at the Republican Leadership Conference and I would (unscientifically) estimate that the average age of the delegates (not counting the Ron Paul supporters) is between 60 and 65. An uninformed observer would be excused for mistaking the group for attendees at an AARP convention.

Ron Paul’s supporters are another story, however. From my own observation, I would estimate the average age of the “Ron Paul 2012” crowd to be about 30 or 35. They are active, loud, animated, and dedicated.

In fairness, they likely don’t have the money of their older colleagues, but they have the zeal of youth and their behavior at the RLC witnesses their intention to promote the cause of their man’s candidacy no matter how well-established the opposition.

Additionally, this latest stunning victory will likely give an even bigger bounce to the Paul campaign and will further energize his already pumped up boosters, and they may use this fuel to propel their ultimate goal of getting the good doctor elected in November 2012.

However, they do serve to call weekend media attention to a successful candidate. And, Paul's supporters hope, cause them to look more into Paul's libertarian small government, anti-war, anti-foreign-military-involvement stances, which drew him significant applause during Monday's debate in New Hampshire.

November 2012 is a long time away, but in these early days of the race for the White House, straw polls are at least one accurate indication of the ability of the candidates on the ballot to get out the vote.

Admittedly, Ron Paul doesn’t consistently perform so well in traditional telephone surveys. But having worked for a few years in that industry, the reason for the lackluster poll numbers likely has more to do with the framing of the questions than with the popularity of the candidate.

The Republican Leadership Conference is over and the goal now is for candidates, including Congressman Paul, to take the experiences of this past week and convert them into fuel for the long, hard primary road that lies ahead.



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