



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on February 8, 2012

Santorum Rolls Up Three Wins: Minn., Colo., Mo.

"I don't stand here to claim to be the conservative alternative to Mitt Romney," Sen. Santorum [told](#) supporters as results came in, "I stand here to be the conservative alternative to Barack Obama."

The victories marked the first state victories for Santorum since Iowa and stopped a two-state winning streak by former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, who remains in the lead in the delegate count and in fundraising. Romney placed second in the non-binding [Missouri](#) primary and the [Colorado](#) caucus (losing 40-35 percent to Santorum), but only a distant third in the [Minnesota](#) caucus (Santorum 45 percent, Texas Congressman Ron Paul 27 percent, and Romney 17 percent).



Santorum's victories will likely help to bolster the former Senator's campaign fundraising, which would have threatened to dry up without a victory during February. Santorum has tried to position himself — despite stump protestations to the contrary — as the conservative alternative to Mitt Romney, as have Ron Paul and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich. With 55 percent of the vote in the non-binding Missouri primary and his caucus wins, Santorum may have more evidence to convince Republican voters that he is the GOP alternative to Romney.

Texas Congressman Ron Paul also received some encouraging news in national Reuters/Ipsos [poll](#) February 7. Rep. Paul has risen to second place among GOP voters nationally behind a sinking Mitt Romney (29 percent), a sinking Newt Gingrich (19 percent) and a surging Rick Santorum (18 percent). In the national poll, both Paul and Santorum had seen noticeable increase in support compared with previous polls.

It's unclear what the Santorum caucus victories mean for former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who had won South Carolina and had been the only one to seriously contest Mitt Romney in Florida. Gingrich — who wasn't on the ballot in Missouri — gave no sign of pulling out of the race.

Likewise, Paul's dedicated supporters will almost certainly continue to fund his campaign until the convention, regardless of the results from individual states. Paul was the second-best funded GOP candidate in the fourth quarter of 2011, pulling in \$13.3 million in mostly small donations. Only Mitt Romney — whose donors include employees of Goldman Sachs and most of the big Wall Street financial firms that received taxpayer bailouts in 2008 — raised more: \$23.9 million in the final quarter of 2011.

Rep. Paul vowed to continue his campaign, despite being the only major candidate not to win a state yet. Paul's campaign contends he is the only alternative to the flip-flopping Massachusetts moderate and that Santorum and Gingrich are unelectable in part because they have failed to qualify for a number of presidential primary and caucus ballots in states that have yet to vote. Indeed, neither Santorum nor Gingrich will be on the [Virginia](#) ballot. Santorum additionally failed to qualify for the



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[Indiana](#) and [District of Columbia](#) ballots, and Gingrich will not be on the [Ohio](#) ballot.

While frontrunner Mitt Romney continues to spin the inevitability of his nomination (and the [mainstream media continues to parrot](#) his talking points), Romney's falling national polling numbers and losses in three states February 7 may keep this presidential race a wide-open contest for at least a few more weeks. The next state contest to watch will be Maine's, with caucuses February 3 through 11.

Photo of Rick Santorum: AP Images



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