



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on January 2, 2012

Santorum Was for Romney Before He Was Against Him

Rick Santorum (left) has been far from alone among the GOP presidential hopefuls in questioning rival candidate Mitt Romney's credentials as a conservative, his reversal of positions (often referred to as "flip-flops") on key issues, and stressing the difficulty he would likely have as the party nominee in explaining the difference between the "ObamaCare" health care law that he wants to repeal and a similar law that Romney, as Governor, steered through the Massachusetts legislature — a law that Obama's political allies have hailed as the model for the federal legislation. But two days before Tuesday's voting in the Iowa caucuses, Santorum was still trying explain his own "flip-flop" on Romney.



On NBC's *Meet the Press Sunday*, Santorum was asked about his endorsement of Romney as a presidential candidate in 2008 — two years after Romney had signed the controversial "RomneyCare" into law and after his earlier positions on issues such as abortion and "gay rights" had been well publicized.

"Governor Romney is the candidate who will stand up for the conservative principles that we hold dear. He has a deep understanding of the important issues confronting our country today, and he is the clear conservative candidate that can go into the general election with a united Republican Party," Santorum said in the press release announcing his endorsement in 2008, when Romney was in what had become a three-way race with Arizona Sen. John McCain and former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee. In the current campaign, *Meet the Press* moderator David Gregory noted, Santorum has been describing Romney as a liberal Massachusetts Governor.

"What changed?" Gregory asked.

"Well, what changed was who he's running against," Santorum replied. "At the time that was five days or four days before Super Tuesday. It was after Florida. And it became clear to me that there were two candidates in the race at that point. I thought Mike Huckabee — I would have loved to have Mike Huckabee out there, but I made the political judgment, right or wrong, that the best chance to stop John McCain, which was what my concern was — I had served 12 years with John McCain. I like and respect John McCain immensely personally and he's done a lot of great things, obviously, for this country. But I did not think he was the right person, based on my experience and deep knowledge of his record, that he was the right person to be, to be the nominee."

Santorum, who has stressed his own credentials as a "full-spectrum conservative," with emphasis on opposition to abortion and same-sex marriage, did not say why he had considered Romney a better choice than McCain. Romney often acknowledged his support of legalized abortion, both as candidate for Governor and in an earlier race for U.S. Senate, but says he has since changed his mind. While he seldom speaks about the issue, McCain's voting record in the Senate has been consistently anti-



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abortion, though he has supported funding for embryonic stem cell research, something Romney has opposed since 2005. McCain has opposed same-sex marriage and has also taken a sound, constitutionalist position opposing a federal constitutional amendment to ban it, saying the decision should be left to the states.

But McCain has never campaigned as a champion of “gay rights” as Romney did in Massachusetts, most notably when running for the U.S. Senate against Edward M. Kennedy in 1994. In a letter addressed to the Log Cabin Club of Massachusetts that fall, Romney pledged to “make equality for gays and lesbians a mainstream concern. My opponent cannot do this. I can and will.”

Asked about that pledge in last month's Fox New debate in Sioux City, Iowa, Romney insisted he has not changed his position.

“I’m firmly in support of people not being discriminated against based upon their sexual orientation,” he said. “At the same time, I oppose same-sex marriage. That’s been my position from the beginning.”

Romney also noted that as Governor he had called for an amendment to the state constitution to overturn the 2003 decision of the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts requiring that the state's marriage laws be changed to apply equally to same-sex and heterosexual couples. Yet Romney, who has campaigned against “judicial activism,” chose to implement the court's decision even though the state's legislature never changed the marriage laws, a point Santorum raised in that same Fox News debate.

“So Governor Romney was faced with a choice: Go along with the court, or go along with the constitution and the statute,” Santorum said. “He chose the court and ordered people to issue gay marriage licenses, and went beyond that. He personally as governor issued gay marriage licenses.”

Yet in 2008, Santorum was praising Romney as, among other things, a stalwart foe of “gay marriage.” He talked up the Romney campaign on conservative talk-show host Laura Ingraham's radio program and, according to a Real Clear Politics report earlier this year, Santorum “hopped aboard Romney's campaign plane, becoming his most visible national surrogate in a flurry of last-minute rallies across the country. Santorum's presence on the trail was designed to highlight Romney's efforts to recast himself as the only true conservative who had a chance to win the nomination, a mantra repeated on some conservative radio networks with the help of Rush Limbaugh and Ann Coulter.”

“I made, I hate to say it, a calculated political decision that Romney was the stronger horse and had a better chance to win Super Tuesday with the resources he had,” Santorum said. “I like him. The time I spent with him, he was a gentleman. He's very sincere.”

Santorum's view of Romney's sincerity — i.e., the genuineness of his stated convictions on fundamental issues — has apparently changed. So has his view of his own “calculated political decision” to join Romney's ill-fated 2008 campaign. On *Meet the Press Sunday*, he recalled that as a pragmatic decision, it was not entirely successful.

“I endorsed him actually seven days before he dropped out of the race,” he said.



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