

Romney wins Republican primaries in Arizona and Michigan

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29 February 2012

Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney won the Republican presidential primary in Arizona easily and was projected to win the primary in Michigan narrowly, as vote counting continued late into the night Tuesday. Turnout in both states was virtually unchanged from 2008.

Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum finished second in both states. Texas Congressman Ron Paul placed third and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich placed fourth in Michigan, and the two finished in the reverse order in Arizona.

Romney won Arizona with 48 percent compared to 26 percent for Santorum. Because of the winner-take-all rules established by the state Republican Party, none of his rivals seriously contested the state and Romney won all 29 delegates at stake.

In Michigan, where delegates were awarded separately for each congressional district, the 30 delegates were split nearly evenly, since Santorum seemed likely to win seven congressional districts in the center, west and north of the state, while Romney was ahead in the seven districts in the state's population center, the southeast.

Santorum had briefly led the polls in Michigan, the state where Romney was born and where his father was a three-term governor in the 1960s, but fell behind after a barrage of advertisements from the Romney campaign, which had a huge financial advantage.

Exit polls showed a sharp drop in support for Santorum among working women who chose to vote in the Republican primary, suggesting that his attacks on

contraception and women working outside the home had backfired even among more conservative women.

With many precincts still unreported, Romney led Santorum in Michigan by 41 percent to 38 percent, barely topping his 39 percent showing in 2008 when he defeated the eventual Republican presidential nominee, John McCain.

In both states, Romney had the support of the Republican Party establishment and most office-holders. Arizona Governor Jan Brewer and the state's senior senator, John McCain, backed him, as did Michigan Governor Rick Snyder and most of the state's delegation in the House of Representatives. In Michigan, both the right-wing *Detroit News* and the pro-Obama *Detroit Free Press* endorsed Romney over Santorum in the primary.

The prospect of a Romney defeat in Michigan produced an outpouring of despair by Republican media pundits who saw Santorum as a likely landslide loser in the general election. There were suggestions that a Santorum victory in Michigan would produce a late entrant into the Republican contest.

The *Wall Street Journal* published three separate commentaries on February 24 lamenting the likelihood that Santorum's focus on social issues like abortion, contraception and gay marriage and his hectoring and intolerant tone would alienate millions of voters, particularly women.

Romney, however, declined to make any criticism of Santorum's ultra-right positions, either in the last campaign debate, February 22 in Arizona, or in his day-

to-day campaign appearances and television interviews. Instead, he attempted to outflank Santorum from the right, branding him a Washington “insider” who supported higher federal spending.

Romney spent much of the Michigan campaign denouncing the Obama administration’s bailout of the auto industry from the right, claiming that even more cuts should have been imposed on auto workers than the White House extracted. These included a 50 percent cut in starting wages for all new-hires and cuts in health benefits for retired workers.

Obama responded to these attacks by appearing before a legislative conference of the United Auto Workers union in Washington. The assembled union bureaucrats gave him rapturous applause because the bailout preserved their six-figure salaries and privileges, even as it slashed the jobs and wages of rank-and-file workers.

Despite a significant lead in delegates, Romney is far from locking up the Republican nomination. More delegates will be selected March 6, when ten states hold primaries and caucuses, than have been chosen in the first two months of the campaign. In the first 10 primaries and caucuses, Romney has won five states, Santorum four, and Gingrich one.

In the upcoming Super Tuesday contests, Romney is currently leading in the polls in Massachusetts, Vermont and Virginia (107 delegates); Gingrich in Georgia (76 delegates); and Santorum in Ohio, Oklahoma and Tennessee (167 delegates). Caucuses will be held in Alaska, Idaho and North Dakota (87 delegates).

A divided result on March 6 would make it far more difficult for any of the four candidates to accumulate the 1,144 delegates that constitute a majority until late in the contest, if at all.

A continuing factor in the Republican presidential contest is the influence of so-called super PACs, through which a handful of billionaires pump tens of millions of dollars into nominally independent committees that run massive advertising campaigns

promoting one or another candidate and targeting their rivals.

The Gingrich campaign, despite winning only the South Carolina primary January 21, has been sustained by \$11 million from billionaire Las Vegas casino mogul Sheldon Adelson and his family. On Monday, a representative of the super PAC Winning Our Future said that Adelson had put in another seven-figure contribution to finance pro-Gingrich television advertising in states voting in March, including Mississippi, Alabama and Kansas, as well as the Super Tuesday states.



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