

# Santorum withdrawal cedes Republican nomination to Romney

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Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum announced Tuesday he was suspending his campaign for the Republican presidential nomination, effectively ceding the party's nomination to former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, the wealthiest of the candidates seeking the nomination and the one with the most backing from Wall Street and the party establishment.

Santorum did not endorse Romney or even speak his name in a brief statement announcing his withdrawal, but a campaign spokesman said that Romney and Santorum would meet soon to discuss the general election campaign against President Obama.

While there are still two challengers remaining in the race, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Texas Congressman Ron Paul, neither has seriously threatened Romney's standing as the frontrunner or finished better than third in any primary or caucus in the past two months.

Romney increased his lead with victories in all three primaries held on April 3, in Wisconsin, Maryland and the District of Columbia. A tally published by the Associated Press showed Romney with 660 delegates to this summer's Republican National Convention, Santorum with 281, Gingrich with 135 and Paul with 51. A total of 1,144 delegates is required to win the nomination.

Santorum's withdrawal was followed by a series of endorsements of Romney by Republican elected officials who had remained neutral on the contest up to now, including several identified with the ultra-right Tea Party movement, including Florida Governor Rick Scott and Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal.

The emergence of Santorum as the second-strongest of the Republican presidential candidates only underscored the widespread popular alienation from

both parties of big business, the Democrats as well as the Republicans. Only six years ago, Santorum was swept out of office in the landslide repudiation of the Bush administration and the war in Iraq that gave the Democrats control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

His campaign was widely regarded as quixotic, but Santorum became the principal representative of the Christian fundamentalist right, the only significant popular base of the Republican Party. He denounced abortion, contraception, gay marriage and other targets of right-wing evangelical Protestant and Catholic forces.

In all, Santorum won 11 states out the 37 that have voted so far, although he won primaries only in the South—Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Oklahoma—while winning poorly attended caucuses in Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, Colorado, Kansas and Missouri. In each of these contests, fundamentalist evangelical Christians comprised 50 percent or more of the Republican electorate, and evangelical prejudice against Romney's Mormon religion contributed to Santorum's success.

Despite claiming a superior appeal to the industrial working class because of his roots in the western Pennsylvania coal-mining region, Santorum lost critical primaries to Romney in Michigan, Ohio, Illinois and Wisconsin, more densely populated states where evangelicals were a lesser proportion of the voters. He withdrew from the race after falling behind Romney in the polls two weeks before the April 24 primary in Pennsylvania, his home state.

Santorum could not compete with the well-financed campaign of his multi-millionaire opponent, who raised far more money than all his Republican rivals

combined, drawing heavily from his supporters in investment banking, hedge funds and the stock exchange.

The main function of the Santorum campaign was to consolidate the Christian fundamentalist wing of the Republicans behind a single candidate and push the Republican Party and its eventual nominee even further to the right. He is expected to demand significant influence on the Republican platform and a major speaking role at the Republican National Convention in Tampa four months from now as the price of his eventual support for Romney as the nominee.

The *Wall Street Journal* praised Santorum's campaign for having forced Romney to adopt a more aggressive stance on cutting taxes for the wealthy, and to distance himself from his own health care program in Massachusetts—a cost-cutting effort with an individual mandate, which provided the model for the Obama health care legislation.

During the primaries, Santorum went so far as to denounce the famous statement by Democratic candidate John F. Kennedy in 1960, when Kennedy said that if elected he would not allow the Pope or the Catholic Church to exert influence on government policy. Such an avowal of the separation of Church and state “almost made me throw up,” Santorum declared.

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In the course of a three-month campaign of primaries and caucuses, Romney never criticized Santorum for adopting too intolerant or extreme a position on any issue. Instead, he devoted vast resources to television ads attacking Santorum from the right, as a supposed advocate of excessive federal spending, concessions to the unions, and political compromise with Democrats in Washington.

The result of the campaign for the Republican presidential nomination is that the general election contest in November will offer a “choice” between two multi-millionaires whose overall political outlook and specific policies are virtually indistinguishable.

Romney and Obama agree, for instance, on the bailout of Wall Street, on maintaining the police-state apparatus of the “war on terror” initiated by George W. Bush, and on continuing the US war of aggression in Afghanistan and Pakistan. While Romney today attacks the Obama health care law from the right, Obama's

scheme is largely identical to the plan Romney signed into law in Massachusetts.

Both the Democratic incumbent and his Republican challenger endorse a bipartisan budget-cutting deal that would eviscerate social programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. The only difference is that Obama seeks, cynically and dishonestly, to give himself a populist cast by proposing a token tax increase on the wealthy, while Romney disavows even the slightest infringement on accumulated wealth.

Precisely because the actual differences are so small, the Obama campaign seeks to magnify them to a ludicrous degree. Speaking to reporters Tuesday before a fundraising event in Florida, Obama claimed, “This election will probably have the biggest contrast that we've seen maybe since the Johnson-Goldwater election—maybe before that.”

Obama addressed a student audience at Florida Atlantic University, presenting himself as the scourge of the super-rich, demanding they pay their fair share in taxes. After this piece of campaign demagoguery, Obama resumed the main business of his Florida campaign swing, meeting with multi-millionaires and collecting checks that totaled nearly \$2 million. Among the events was a luncheon appearance at the home of Hansel Tookes, a former president of Raytheon International and one of Obama's thousands of corporate CEO supporters.



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