Despite Changing Dynamics, Republicans Will Nominate the “Next in Line” Candidate for President in 2012

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Thesis Statement

Republicans have a record of nominating the “next in line” candidate as their presidential nominee, as the party favors candidates that are known by its members and have paid their dues.

While Republicans have consistently nominated the “next in line” candidate to be the party’s presidential nominee over the past 60 plus years, there is reason to believe that changing dynamics within the party will bring an end this tradition in 2012. From the conservative media’s impact on the results of recent Republican primary elections to the Republican Party’s lengthening of its nominating contest, establishment candidates have targets on their backs now more than ever.

Despite the identity crisis of the Republican Party, Mitt Romney, the runner-up in the 2008 Republican presidential contest and the “next in line” candidate, will be the Republican nominee in 2012. Romney’s previous run for the party’s nomination prepared him to win this contest and enabled him to develop the organization and fundraising network needed to win.
Chapter 1 – Literature Review

While there are plenty of books that focus on presidential primary elections, most of these works were written between 1960 and 1985. Given that the very nature of political campaigns has evolved considerably over just the past ten years, there is a real void in terms of the books that exist on presidential primary contests; as a result, I relied heavily on newspapers and publications that cover politics to support my thesis statement.

The Party’s Choice, which was written by William Keech and Donald Matthews, was helpful in writing chapters on the 1948, 1952, 1960, and 1968 Republican presidential nominating contests. From state-by-state analysis of the results to in depth descriptions of the factors that both helped and hurt the leading candidates in each of these races, the book provided valuable insight in terms of the key dynamics in each contest. The Republican Party 1854 – 1966 by George H. Mayer was also very helpful writing the chapters on the 1948 and 1952 primaries, as it provided considerable insight into these pivotal elections.

U.S. Presidential Primaries and the Caucus-Convention System: A Sourcebook by James W. Davis provided significant detail on the presidential nominating process for the different political parties from the early 1800’s through the early 20th century. The book also provides insight regarding the 1960’s and early 1970’s rules changes, which had a profound impact on the Republican presidential nominating process. Davis’s
work was especially helpful in identifying the factors that have been so integral in helping the “next in line” candidate continue the tradition of winning the nomination.

While there truly is a shortage of books written about modern day presidential primaries, *Primary Politics - How Presidential Candidates Have Shaped the Modern Day Nominating System* by Elaine Ciulla Kamarck provided some valuable insight regarding both the 1980 and 2008 Republican presidential contests. Also, the Heritage Foundation, which runs a website devoted purely to Ronald Reagan, http://www.reagansheritage.org, was very helpful in drafting the chapter on the 1980 contest. The website provided great perspective on Reagan’s long and bumpy road to the White House, including his time as Governor of California and failed runs for the White House, which I would argue were integral to his win in 1980.

For the races from 1988 to 2012, I largely used password protected websites, including Lexus Nexus, Articles Plus and Proquest. These sites were also helpful in drafting the chapters on the 1948 to 1980 primaries as well. Of the previously mentioned sources, Proquest’s allows one to search historical newspapers, which was especially helpful in writing this paper; almost every chapter in this paper cites a few newspaper articles that I found by using this feature.

The final chapter underscores the reasons why Mitt Romney, the “next in line” candidate, will win the Republican nomination in 2012. I wrote this chapter last, as all the research I did on the races that preceded it helped me to decide how I wanted to frame the chapter. Because fundraising is so integral to the success of a campaign, I relied heavily on opensecrets.com and the Federal Election Commission’s website to
track down donations to current presidential candidates from individuals and Political Action Committees, in addition to independent expenditures. Endorsements are also a factor in today’s presidential nomination contests; while they don’t necessarily translate directly into votes, endorsements provide organizational advantages which often lead to success at the polls. http://www.p2012.org/ was helpful in tracking down endorsements in 2012, as it provided a list of governors, senators and members of Congress that endorsed each of the candidates.

Chapter 2: Background on the Republican Party and the Nominating Process

From the early 1800’s when Congressional caucuses decided who their party’s presidential nominee would be1 to the national party conventions, which came about in 1828, the presidential nomination process was heavily controlled by local political bosses and elites during much of the 1800’s. In the early 1900’s the Progressive Movement commanded a more open and democratic process, shaped by the will of the people at large, rather than by individuals looking to advance their personal interests when deciding which candidate to support. Through the efforts of this movement, reformers took power in state legislatures around the country and incrementally

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formalized the nominating process into state sanctioned events, resulting in the advent of presidential primaries.\(^2\)

The reforms made by progressives were only a start, as the respective presidential nominees did not reflect the will of the members who made up the parties. While President Theodore Roosevelt won all but one of the ten primaries held in 1912, he failed to win the Republican Party’s nomination because William Taft maintained influence over the Republican Party leaders within the 35 plus caucus convention states. In the aftermath of the loss, Roosevelt and the Bull Moss Party, which he formed after his loss in the primary, advocated for a “nationwide presidential primary.”\(^3\) However, the movement lost its momentum by the 1920’s, as the next 30 plus years were marked by negative progress in terms of ensuring that the average person had a say in who their party nominated for president. By the mid 1930’s, eight states had repealed their laws authorizing presidential primaries, bringing the total number of states that held primaries down to just 17.\(^4\)

Prior to the reforms of the 1960’s, Republican and Democrat party leaders alike still maintained influence over who their party’s presidential nominee was going to be. While many states held primaries prior to the reforms, they were largely advisory and simply provided party leaders an idea of who their voters favored; elites within the

\(^2\) Ibid, 12.

\(^3\) Ibid., 15.

\(^4\) Ibid., 16.
party maintained the final say in deciding who the party nominated, as delegates were
determined by party bosses, elected officials and other elites.

At the behest of former President Dwight Eisenhower, who was disgusted by the
behavior he saw from convention delegates when he watched the 1964 Republican
National Convention on television, Ray Bliss, Chairman of the Republican National
Committee, assembled a committee to look into reforming the Republican National
Convention. However, the effort lacked real focus on true reform, as its members were
simply looking for input on how to make the convention more viewer friendly to those
watching on television.

Despite attempts from more progressive factions of the Republican Party, it
rejected ideas to make the party more inclusive and representative of its more liberal
leaning elements. The party turned a blind eye to Congressman William Steiger’s (WI)
efforts to make the delegates more diverse with a greater percentage of women and
minorities. Additionally, the Rippon Society, which was made up of moderate to
liberal Republicans, failed in its efforts to challenge how the number of delegates were
apportioned to states. In the lead up to the 1972 Republican National Convention, this
group fought the policy of giving states “bonus delegate votes” which benefited more
conservative states. Had the reform measures of the Rippon Society been adopted, the
number of delegates given to New York and California would have increased

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7 Ibid, 30.
significantly, with New York’s going to 168 delegates from 88 and California increasing to 164 from 96. However, under the plan that was adopted at the convention, which was favored by the conservative wing of the party, “the eight most populous states that cast 52 percent of the 1968 vote for Richard Nixon received only 37 percent of the delegates to the 1972 convention.”

While Republicans were slow to adopt many of the Democrat reforms to their presidential nominating process, primary voters became more integral to the Republican presidential nomination process, because states around the country passed laws during the 1970’s to make the results of their primaries and caucuses binding. These reforms resulted in the Republican National Convention becoming more of a formality, with the party’s nominees typically being determined months prior. Additionally, these reforms led to candidates announcing their intention to run for their party’s nomination much earlier in the process. In the days of yore, it was not atypical for a candidate to announce their intentions to run in the early part of the same year as the election. Today, candidates often announce a year before the Iowa caucuses in order to build their team and raise their profile in states with early primaries.

The presidential primary season has only continued to grow longer with each passing election, requiring candidates to raise more money in order to support their campaigns, often at the expense of lesser known candidates, who aren’t as skilled at

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8 Ibid, 30-31.
9 Ibid, 36.
10 Ibid, 35.
11 Ibid, 36-37.
Along with the need for candidates to raise more money, campaign finance reforms have been enacted and accordingly, candidates have worked to find ways to circumvent those rules in an effort to stay competitive. In 1974, Congress passed the Federal Election Campaign Act, which provided candidates with matching funds and placed limits on candidates who accepted those funds. The law also instituted a maximum contribution of $1,000 on individuals and $5,000 for political action committees, requiring candidates to retool their fundraising efforts to focus on soliciting contributions from a larger number of people.

With greater regulation of campaign finance came loopholes that have been widely used by candidates for over 30 years, including multi-candidate political action committees (PAC’s). President Reagan was the first candidate to take advantage of the multi-candidate loophole, as his PAC raised nearly $7 million, roughly 90% of which was spent on his race for the 1980 Republican presidential nomination. Following in Reagan’s footsteps, nearly every candidate running for president since 1980 has formed a leadership PAC, as it has proved to be an effective tool to receive high dollar contributions from individual donors.

Over the past twenty plus years, the primary schedule has been front end loaded, which has provided an advantage to candidates who were well known and have
greater resources, as it allowed them to have a greater presence in more states. Previously, lesser known candidates focused a majority of their resources and time on one or two of the early primary states and used the free press they received from those performances in order compete in other states. In recent years candidates who used this strategy have faced considerable challenges with the majority of states holding their primaries before April; however, the Republican National Committee’s rules changes after the 2008 presidential election have stretched out the process in an effort to make it more challenging for a candidate to win the nomination during the first few months after the Iowa caucuses.

Brief History of Republican Presidential Nominations

Since its inception in 1854, the Republican Party, which was founded by disillusioned members of the Whig Party who opposed slavery, has been a fixture in the two party system that has defined America’s political process over the past 150 plus years. While the party’s first nominee for president, John C. Fremont, lost, the party faithful had to wait only four more years, as Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860. Over the next fifty years, Republicans lost only three presidential elections until

16 Ibid, 42-43.


1912 \(^\text{19}\) when former President Theodore Roosevelt ran as a third party candidate against incumbent President William-Taft, splitting the Republican vote, which resulted in an easy victory for Woodrow Wilson. Republicans took back the White House in 1920 and held it until 1932, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt defeated incumbent President Herbert Hoover. The 1932 election and the events that preceded it, including it the Stock Market crash in 1929 and the start of the Great Depression, ushered in an era of Democrat dominance that would last for 20 years.

Starting in 1948, the Republican Party, tired of the Democrats’ stronghold on the White House, has nominated candidates who are well known both within the party and by the electorate. From this point forward the party has nominated its “next in line” candidate, which can be defined as the sitting vice president or the runner up in a previous presidential primary, in almost every election where a sitting Republican president wasn’t running for re-election. Over the past sixty years, only twice have Republicans nominated a candidate that didn’t fit into this category, with Senator Barry Goldwater (AZ) winning the party’s nomination in 1964 and Governor George W. Bush (TX) in 2000; in both cases, there was no Republican candidate that fit the “next in line” definition, therefore this theory has yet to be proven wrong. While General Dwight Eisenhower didn’t fit perfectly into the “next in line” candidate definition as laid out above, the successful efforts of elites within the Republican Party to recruit him for the race qualifies him as the “next in line” candidate.

\(^\text{19}\) “List of Republican Presidents,” Republican Presidents, available at http://www.republicanpresidents.net/.
Given the Republican Party’s preference for nominating candidates for president who are known by the party insiders and rank and file members alike, this paper focuses on the factors that have proven this theory true in nearly every election since 1948 where there wasn’t an incumbent Republican president running for the party’s nomination.

Chapter 3: Republican Presidential Contests (1948 – 2008)

1948 Republican Primary

The 1948 Republican presidential primary proved to be the first of many to come where the party nominated the front runner candidate and, in this case, a candidate who headed up the ticket in the previous election. Governor Thomas Dewey (NY) was the Republican’s presidential nominee in 1944, an election he lost to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt; however, his strong performance in the race led to his front runner status in 1948. Ultimately, it was hard fought primary, which Dewey won at the Republican National Convention, defeating former Governor Harold Stassen (MN), Senator Robert Taft (OH), Governor Earl Warren (CA), General Douglas MacArthur and Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg (MI). Dewey’s nomination marked the first time the Republican Party put up a previously failed nominee.\(^{20}\)

Dewey’s candidacy offered the Republicans a strong nominee whose notoriety and past electoral success, including his lopsided gubernatorial re-election in 1946, gave the party a real chance to take back the White House for the first time in 16 years. Given the experience he gained as the party’s presidential nominee in 1944, Dewey’s name identification and notoriety as a Federal Prosecutor made him the “next in line” candidate.21

While Governor Dewey was the clear choice of moderate Republicans in the race, Senator Taft was the leader of the GOP’s conservative wing. Taft’s appeal to the conservative base was a byproduct of his isolationist positions on foreign policy and promises to abolish many of the New Deal social welfare programs. Additionally, Taft’s prior run for the Republican nomination in 1940 and reputation as the Republican’s “acknowledged congressional leader on domestic policy” made him a top tier candidate.22 Given his appeal to conservatives and Ohio roots, his base of support was in the Midwest and parts of the South.

While Taft had many upsides as a candidate, he was limited by his lack of interest and skill in campaigning.23 Additionally, leaders within the Republican Party perceived him to be too conservative and controversial to win a presidential election.

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22 Keech and Matthews, The Party’s Choice, 72.

With Senator Taft being the choice of conservatives and Governor Dewey the establishment candidate, Governor Harold Stassen of Minnesota filled the void as the liberal Republican in the race. While serving as Governor, Stassen decided not to run for re-election in 1942 and instead joined the Navy during World War II. Following his service, Stassen went on to serve as a delegate to the United Nations Conference in 1945, which he used as a spring board for his impending candidacy for the Republican nomination. Stassen continued to build his national profile, as he embarked on a speaking tour around the country, where he visited every state in the union.

Rounding out the Republican field was Governor Earl Warren (CA), Senator Vandenberg (MI) and General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Allied Commander. While all of the candidates were interested in becoming president, both Warren and Vandenberg pledged to not campaign for the nomination and MacArthur, who was serving in Japan at the time, was unable to campaign but made it clear that he would not decline the GOP nomination if it were offered to him. Additionally, due to General Dwight Eisenhower’s popularity after the allied victory, partisans were clamoring for him to enter the race; however, he announced during the early part of 1948 that he was not running.

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From the outset of the race for the nomination, Governor Dewey was the favorite with Stassen his closest challenger. However, Taft gained ground in the year before the primary, surpassing Stassen as Dewey’s leading rival.\textsuperscript{28} In the lead up to the New Hampshire primary, Dewey led the field amongst “party rank and file with 33 percent,”\textsuperscript{29} and he went on to capture six out of eight delegates in the Granite State. On April 6\textsuperscript{th}, Stassen tasted victory for the first time, as he carried Wisconsin, winning 19 out of the state’s 27 delegates while General MacArthur, a native of Wisconsin, came in 2\textsuperscript{nd} with eight delegates. Stassen received a considerable bump as the result of his surprise victory, which earned him the headlines and free press that his campaign so desperately needed. The following week Stassen used his momentum to carry Nebraska’s primary, where he received 44\% of the vote followed by Dewey, who came in second with 35\%, and Taft third with 10\%.\textsuperscript{30}

On April 20\textsuperscript{th}, Dewey won in New Jersey, carrying 41\% of the vote, while Stassen finished second with 35\%. The following week, Stassen narrowly defeated Dewey in Pennsylvania, carrying 32\% of the vote to Dewey’s 30\%.\textsuperscript{31} As a result of Stassen’s momentum and Dewey’s sputtering campaign, the Dewey campaign decided that it

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{27}Keech and Matthews, \textit{The Party’s Choice}, 72.
  \item \textsuperscript{28}Ibid, 71-72.
  \item \textsuperscript{29}Ibid, 126.
  \item \textsuperscript{30}Ibid, 127-128.
\end{itemize
would have to focus on stopping any potential surge from Taft, who it identified as being the most likely recipient of votes from Dewey supporters. With the Ohio primary next on the map, Stassen took the fight to Taft in his home state; however, Taft ended up carrying over 83% of Ohio’s 53 delegates.

Heading into the final significant primary, Dewey, Stassen and Taft understood the importance of a strong showing in the Oregon primary, as its symbolic value would ultimately impact decisions made by party insiders. As a result, Dewey and Stassen vigorously campaigned in the state, with Dewey “adopting a more aggressive and folksy campaigning style” which helped to provide him the momentum he desperately needed.\(^\text{32}\) Adding to the energy surrounding Dewey’s campaign was his strong performance in nationally syndicated debate in the days leading up to the primary. Before the debate Dewey’s campaign predicted their candidate would win by over 7,500, and the debate provided them additional momentum, which resulted in Dewey beating Stassen by over 10,000 votes and capturing each of Oregon’s delegates.

Going into the 1948 Republican National Convention, the race remained a near dead heat between Senator Taft and Governor Dewey; although, Dewey maintained a slight advantage over Taft. In terms of where their support lied, Dewey had the upper hand with the “rank and file” while Taft was the choice of “party regulars and leaders.”\(^\text{33}\) However, there was a contingency that wanted anyone but Dewey to win the nomination, and they worked aggressively to convince other factions to coalesce in


\(^{33}\) Ibid, 172.
support of another candidate. These efforts ultimately proved to be futile, as uniting around candidate proved to be nearly impossible. For example, if Taft were to endorse Senator Vandenberg, his supporters, who were more conservative, would likely defect and vote for Dewey, because they were more closely aligned with him on foreign policy.\textsuperscript{34}

As the voting was about to begin, two lesser known nominees, Senator Edward Martin (PA) and Congressman Charles Halleck (IN), dropped out of the race and a strong percentage of their supporters defected to Dewey. On the first ballot, Dewey held a commanding lead over Taft and Stassen, 434 to 224 to 157 respectively, which meant he needed just over 130 more votes to clinch the nomination.\textsuperscript{35} On the second ballot, Dewey increased his lead by just over 80 votes while Taft increased his votes by 50, splitting nearly all of the support of those who switched their vote. Additionally, momentum was shifting in Dewey’s favor with 21 Stassen supporters and 16 from Taft switching their votes to support him. While Dewey had not clinched the nomination after the second ballot, it was clear that his opponents had little shot of catching him. As the convention gavelled out for the night, nearly all of the top tier candidates dropped out of the race, including Taft, Stassen, Warren and Vanderberg. Dewey received support from all the delegates the following day on the third ballot.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 173.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, 174.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, 175.
1952 Republican Primary

In the aftermath of Dewey’s devastating loss in the 1948 presidential election, many candidates showed promise in their efforts to win the Republican nomination in 1952. From the outset General Dwight Eisenhower and Senator Taft positioned themselves well ahead of the pack, and it was clear very early on that they would be the front runners in the race, with Eisenhower, the war hero, surging ahead of Taft.

A Gallup poll from March 1951 indicated that Republican’s preferred Eisenhower over Taft by a margin of more than two to one (38% to 18%); however, just two months later Taft pulled within ten points of Eisenhower, trailing him just 30% to 22%.37 Former Governor Harold Stassen (MN) and Governor Earl Warren (CA), both of which ran for the nomination in 1948, rounded out the top-tier Republican candidates for the nomination. Ultimately, the 1952 Republican primary, the first where the American people were able to watch on television,38 proved to be a hard fought race that went multiple ballots at the convention in Philadelphia.

After World War II, Eisenhower served as the U.S. Army’s Chief of Staff and was responsible for the demobilization of U.S. forces before retiring from the Army and taking over as President of Columbia University. However, President Truman called Eisenhower back to service, as he took over as Commander in Chief of the North


Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1950. While Truman’s decision was seen by some as a politically savvy way to remove Eisenhower from the political equation, it didn’t prevent Governor Dewey, along with other Republican king makers, from reaching out to Eisenhower while he was overseas in an effort to persuade him to run as a Republican in 1952.

Given that Eisenhower had been recruited by the Democrats in 1948, in addition to the fact that his party affiliation was unknown, he was persuaded by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (MA) to announce that he was a Republican, which he did just weeks into 1952. In the coming months pressure for him to run grew, and Eisenhower stepped down from his post at NATO in late April to focus his time on running for the Republican nomination. In addition to his late entry into the race, Eisenhower lacked the campaign experience that his opponents enjoyed; however, his name identification and reputation as an American hero during World War II and in the years after proved to be an intangible benefit of epic proportion to his candidacy. Adding to his momentum, Governor Dewey threw his support behind Eisenhower, making him the de-facto choice of the Eastern Republicans. Eisenhower was also endorsed by other party leaders, including former Republican National Committee (RNC) Chairman Hugh Scott, Senator Lodge, Senator Frank Carson (KS) and Senator James Duff (PA).


42 Keech and Matthews, The Party’s Choice, 74-75.
Even before there was any indication that Eisenhower might enter the Republican primary, it was clear that battle for the nomination was between Senator Taft and him. While Eisenhower appealed to moderate Republicans, Taft was the conservative stalwart in the race. Taft was also popular with party leadership and operatives, as Republican county chairmen preferred him over Eisenhower by a margin of three to one in the months leading up to the primary.\textsuperscript{43}

In the fall of 1951, Taft announced his intentions to run for the Republican nomination, which led to many Republican delegates pledging their support to him. Also, Taft’s ability to spend a great deal of time campaigning for the nomination while Eisenhower was serving with NATO in Europe was a considerable advantage;\textsuperscript{44} however, his lack of comfort on the stump neutralized this advantage. Additionally, his inability to relate to voters, poor delivery and rigid conservatism raised concerns regarding his electability in a general election, which added to his challenges in attracting support from delegates in the Northeast, an integral group given the populous and delegate rich nature of the region.\textsuperscript{45}

Rounding out the field was Governor Warren and former Governor Stassen. Stassen, in an effort to secure the nomination, worked to court the favor of Governor Dewey; however, it was clear very early on that he was fighting an uphill battle and

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, 75-76.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 75.

had no chance of receiving the support from Dewey needed to gain momentum. Governor Warren, whose simultaneous primary victories in California’s Republican and Democrat primaries, had the ability to gain the support of both Republicans and Democrats alike, as he made clear his ability to garner bi-partisan support in a general election. Additionally, Warren ran alongside Dewey in the previous presidential election, which helped improve his name identification; however, his liberal record as Governor placed him to the left of even the liberal-leaning eastern wing of the party controlled by Governor Dewey.46

In the first primary in 1952, which wasn’t held until March 11th, General Eisenhower defeated Senator Taft by 11% in the Granite State.47 While he lost the Minnesota primary to Stassen, the State’s former Governor, his strong showing earned him additional media attention and accolades from political pundits.48 In the Wisconsin primary Senator Taft campaigned aggressively and carried the state with ease; however, Eisenhower’s name was not on the ballot in the state. Neither Eisenhower’s nor Taft’s name was on the ballot in the Nebraska primary, and Taft easily carried the contest, defeating Eisenhower by over 10,000 votes. Taft’s momentum continued into the Illinois primary where he won more than 70% of the one million plus votes cast. In the New Jersey primary, the governor endorsed Eisenhower causing Taft to attempt to have his name stricken from the ballot; however, Taft was unsuccessful and failed in his

46 Ibid, 484.
efforts to manage expectations surrounding his performance in the Garden State. Eisenhower carried New Jersey on April 15th with over 60%, while Taft finished second with 25%. The following week, Eisenhower carried Pennsylvania, winning 74% of the vote, and on April 29th he won 70% of the vote in Massachusetts. On May 6th, Taft carried his home state of Ohio, where he won 79% of the vote, and the following week he won with the same share of the vote in West Virginia. In the second to last primary Eisenhower won a resounding victory in Oregon, followed by a heart breaking loss to Senator Taft in South Dakota by 900 some votes.

Going into the 1952 Republican National Convention, Eisenhower and Taft emerged in nearly the same place they started, as both were still the front runners. In terms of their support, Eisenhower fared well amongst Republican voters while Taft maintained strong support amongst party leaders in counties throughout the country. Given their different pockets of support, Eisenhower was expected to fare better with state delegations “where rank-and-file GOP members directly chose national convention delegates.” Taft on the other hand was stronger with the “delegates from states selecting delegates at local caucuses and state conventions, where the preferences of state and local party leaders ordinarily prevail.” However, Eisenhower carried only 47% of the 590 votes cast from delegates residing in primary states compared to 37% for

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49 Ibid, 132-133.


51 Keech and Matthews, The Party’s Choice, 133.

52 Ibid, 177.
Taft. Additionally, Eisenhower won 52% of the 616 votes cast from states that held conventions or caucuses compared to 46% for Taft.\(^{53}\)

Ultimately, the fact that Eisenhower was able to garner an endorsement from over half of the 25 Republican governors, while Taft received the endorsement from only three governors, provided him a significant advantage, as governors typically control their party’s political apparatus in their state. Eisenhower carried nearly 75% of the vote in states where Eisenhower was endorsed by the governor while Taft received just under 20% in these states.\(^{54}\) Eisenhower also performed well in non-primary states due to his strong grassroots support with rank and file Republicans.\(^{55}\)

Eisenhower and Taft were neck and neck going into the Republican National Convention until Eisenhower’s campaign accused Taft’s camp and their allies within the RNC of "stealing" delegate votes in Southern states, as they maintained that Taft's supporters in the South had denied Eisenhower supporters a vote and put Taft delegates in their place. In response, Eisenhower’s team put together their "Fair Play" proposal, which eliminated Taft delegates in these states and replaced them with pro-Eisenhower delegates. The plan passed unanimously, resulting in Taft losing many Southern delegates. After the vote, Taft’s team offered “the entire contested portion of the Louisiana delegation to Ike;” however, Eisenhower’s camp refused their offer and drafted up a plan that placed Eisenhower delegates in all of the sports in Georgia,

\(^{53}\) Ibid, 178.

\(^{54}\) Ibid, 179-180.

\(^{55}\) Ibid, 181.
Louisiana and Texas that Taft’s team tried to steal. Team Eisenhower’s plan passed, resulting in a shift their way and the demise of Taft’s candidacy.56

Ultimately, the 1952 Republican contest came down to electability and Eisenhower’s popularity was too much for Taft to overcome. Eisenhower’s broad appeal to the American people was the most important factor in his securing the Republican nomination.

1960 Republican Primary

Shortly after Eisenhower was re-elected in 1956, Vice-President Richard Nixon became the front runner for the Republican nomination in 1960. According to a Gallup poll from August 1957, Nixon led all candidates by a margin of at least four to one with Senate Minority Leader William Knowland (CA) a distant second at 12%, former Governor Stassen at 7%, Ambassador and former Senator Lodge at 6%, former Governor Christian Herier (MA) at 4% and Governor Goodwin Knight (CA) at 3%. Additionally, he led his Republican opponents among independent voters, 35% of whom favored him compared to 10% for Stassen, 9% for Knowland, 7% for Lodge and 6% for Herter.57 Despite Nixon’s front runner status, he faced competition for the Republican nomination from Senator Knowland and Governor Rockefeller; however,

56 Ibid, 182-183.

the race was never competitive, as Nixon won the nomination in decisive fashion, with both candidates dropping out of the race before the primaries even started.

Nixon was popular amongst Republican’s with his approval rating ranging from 50% to over 80%. In addition to his strong standing with the rank and file, Nixon maintained strong ties to leaders and operatives within the party.58

While Knowland’s experience as the Republican Leader in the Senate provided him with the background needed to effectively work with Congress if elected president, he maintained a rather low profile with the electorate which made his path to the nomination all the more of a challenge. Also, given his position within the U.S. Senate, he was expected to be an advocate for the Eisenhower administration, whose successes would ultimately benefit Nixon more than his own candidacy. In an effort to raise his national profile and possibly make his candidacy more attractive to Republican primary voters, Knowland left the Senate and ran for Governor of California in early 1957. However, he lost the 1958 general election to Edmund G. Brown, eliminating any chance of him posing a credible challenge to Nixon.

With Knowland out of the picture, there was an opening for someone to challenge Nixon. Nelson Rockefeller, who was elected Governor of New York in 1958, a year that was a particularly tough one for Republicans, became an overnight contender for the nomination. Conversely, Nixon spent much of the 1958 election cycle on the stump for candidates who ended up losing their races.59

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58 Keech and Matthews, The Party’s Choice, 47.

Ultimately, many believed that if Rockefeller was to have any chance of defeating Nixon, he would have to defeat him in the primaries and show Republican delegates that he had strong support from rank-and-file Republicans. However, Rockefeller pledged to hold off campaigning for the nomination until early 1960 for fear of angering the voters who elected him.

Nixon too pledged to hold off on starting to campaign, stating that he would wait until October 1959 at the earliest. According to Nixon, who was serving as vice president at the time, he didn’t want to do anything that would jeopardize Eisenhower’s administration, as he worried that people would interpret him aggressively running for the Republican nomination as politicizing the White House.

By late summer in 1959, the race was between Nixon and Rockefeller; although, it was Nixon’s to lose. In the lead up to the 1960 Republican Presidential Primary, Nixon consistently led Rockefeller by more than ten points throughout the race. Roughly a year before the first primaries, Nixon polled at over 55% compared to Rockefeller who was in the low

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20’s at the time. By mid-Fall, Rockefeller started to test the waters, traveling around the country in an attempt to assess his chances at the nomination. Rockefeller decided that Nixon was too formidable to overcome and dropped out of the race the day after Christmas.

Running unopposed in the primary, Nixon received over 85% of the vote in each of the 16 primaries, finishing with 90% of the vote. Nixon easily won the 1960 nomination on the first ballot at the Republican National Convention. His victory underscored the advantages provided to a “next in line” candidate, as none of the other candidates in the Republican field could match his name identification and voters familiarity with him.

1968 Republican Primary

Despite a drubbing at the polls in the 1964 election, where incumbent President Lyndon B. Johnson handily defeated Barry Goldwater, Governor Richard Nixon (CA), the former Vice-President and Republican nominee for president in 1960, aggressively

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64 Saad, “Lack of GOP Front-Runner for 2012 Is Atypical.”

65 Keech and Matthews, The Party’s Choice, 49.


67 Keech and Matthews, The Party’s Choice, 162.
campaigned his way into front runner status heading into the 1968 Republican Presidential primary. Nixon faced an early challenge by Governor George Romney (MI), Governor Rockefeller and the spirited grass roots focused Governor Ronald Reagan (CA) campaign.

Despite his failed attempt to run for Governor of California in 1962, Nixon’s name was floated as a potential presidential candidate in 1964; however, he passed on running, as he likely foresaw his party’s dim chance of taking back the White House. In the aftermath of the debacle for Republicans that was the 1964 election, Nixon aggressively worked to build his image and developed allies and grassroots support by working tirelessly to elect Republicans in the 1965 off year election and the 1966 midterm election.68 Nixon’s efforts paid off, as he was the early favorite in the race; although, Governor Romney experienced a surge in popularity following the election, as he raced ahead of Nixon in the polls. By January 1967 Nixon had reclaimed his spot at the top of the Republican field, polling at over 40%, with his next closest competitor, Romney, some ten points behind him. Over the next few months he maintained his double digit lead over Romney, who struggled in the polls after he made comments that he was brainwashed into supporting the Vietnam War.69

With Nixon’s help, Republicans fared well in 1966, as they picked up nearly fifty seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, three U.S. Senate seats and eight governorships, taking back many of the seats they lost in 1964. While the mid-term

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68 Ibid, 67.

69 Saad, “Lack of GOP Front-Runner for 2012 Is Atypical.”
election proved to be a great cycle for Nixon, Governor George Romney (MI) was re-elected by wide margins and his coattails proved to be long, as Michigan Republicans picked up a seat in the U.S. Senate and five in the U.S. House of Representatives. With the strong showing in Michigan, Romney outpaced Nixon in the polls taken after the election.70

However, Romney’s time as front runner was short lived as a result of his performance while being under the microscope of the national press corps, which proved to be crippling to his efforts to win the nomination in 1968. In addition to his “moralistic approach” to politics, which was not well received by the press, he lacked foreign policy experience. Given that the Vietnam War was at the forefront of voter’s minds, presidential candidates were expected to offer their thoughts on the conflict and a critique of how it could be better managed. Romney’s roundabout answers to press corps questions regarding Vietnam caused his poll numbers to plummet.

Nixon reclaimed the mantle as front runner in the race just four months after the 1966 mid-term election. By the early fall, the bottom fell out of Romney’s campaign, as he was quoted as saying that his stance on Vietnam had changed and was the result of the fact that he was “brainwashed during his 1965 visit to Southeast Asia.” In the aftermath of his verbal blunder, Romney saw his poll numbers precipitously slip, resulting in him falling to fourth place in the race.71

70 Keech and Matthews, The Party’s Choice, 68.
With Romney’s campaign on life support in late March, Governor Rockefeller was pulled into the race, as he acknowledge that he was being drafted but that he hadn’t, nor would, do anything “by word or by deed, to encourage such a call.” However, in early April, Rockefeller announced that he was going to run after all, citing his concerns about the civil unrest in the country. Rockefeller’s pitch to voters was that Nixon was unelectable and that he would make a stronger general election candidate, citing polls that showed him running stronger and beating the leading Democrat nominees.72

In addition to the entry of Rockefeller, Governor Reagan also entered the race, filling the gap left after Romney dropped out. Reagan kicked off his grass roots focused campaign for the nomination by speaking to Republican groups around the country.73 Having just been elected Governor in 1966, Reagan, didn’t actively campaign for the nomination outside of California; although, his name appeared on the ballot in most states that held primaries. As a result of this decision, Reagan was held to single digits in all but three primaries.

In the first primary, Nixon easily carried New Hampshire with 79% of the vote, as Rockefeller finished a distant second with 11%.74 Less than two weeks after the primary, Rockefeller announced that he was dropping out of the race, effectively

72 Ibid, 125.
73 Ibid, 125-126.
making Nixon the only candidate actively campaigning and the de-facto nominee.\textsuperscript{75} By the close of the 1968 primary season, Reagan had received the most votes of any of the candidates as a result of his decisive victory in his populous home state of California.\textsuperscript{76}

At the outset of the 1968 Republican National Convention, Nixon held a considerable lead over Reagan, whose strategy was to ensure that Nixon didn’t win on the first ballot with the hope that those who voted for Nixon out of a sense of duty might be persuaded to change their vote to him. However, Senators’ Barry Goldwater (AZ), Strom Thurmond (SC), John Tower (TX) and other conservative party leaders convinced delegates from the South to support Nixon, who amassed a majority of delegates in support of his candidacy on the first ballot. Realizing he wouldn’t be able to win, Reagan encouraged his delegates to support Nixon, resulting in Nixon carrying 692 delegates to 277 for Rockefeller and 182 for Reagan.\textsuperscript{77}

\textit{1980 Republican Primary}

With the nation struggling economically, incumbent President Jimmy Carter’s political vulnerabilities were significant, so much so that he faced a challenge from Senator Ted Kennedy (MA). As a result of the turmoil within the Democratic Party, there was a real opportunity for Republicans in 1980, which helped the party field a


\textsuperscript{77} Busch, “Ronald Reagan’s Electoral Career.”
strong pool of candidates, including former Governor Ronald Reagan (CA), Senate Minority Leader Howard Baker (TN), George H.W. Bush, the former Republican National Committee Chairman/Congressman/United Nations Ambassador/Central Intelligence Agency Director, former Governor John Connally (TX), Congressman John Anderson (IL) and Congressman Phil Crane (IL). While the field of candidates in the race was particularly strong, Ronald Reagan was the clear front runner in the group and outside of a few ups and downs in the race, he enjoyed a pretty smooth ride to the nomination.

Going into the 1980 Republican race, Reagan, who was narrowly defeated by incumbent President Gerald Ford in the 1976 Republican primary, was the “next in line” candidate; however, opinion makers both within the Republican Party and media perceived Reagan as too old and having missed his opportunity to be president. Unfazed by his critics, he formed a political action committee (PAC) right after Ford defeated him at the 1976 Republican National Convention and placed a million dollars in unspent campaign dollars from his failed campaign in the PAC, which he put towards running in 1980.\(^78\) By the time the race for the Republican nomination started to heat up in early 1979, Reagan led the field with 31%, although Ford was within striking distance at 26%. On May 1st, 1979, George H.W. Bush announced that he was formally entering the race. His early entry in the race came as a surprise to no one, as

\(^{78}\) Ibid.
he had been on the campaign trail for over a year before making his intentions official; however, his campaign struggled for months to find its legs in the race.  

According to polls taken in late spring through mid-summer, Reagan and Ford were running neck and neck; however, Reagan pulled ahead 36% to 22% according to an August of 1979 Gallup poll.  

Throughout the fall, Reagan remained the clear favorite to win the Republican nomination; although, Bush’s Maine and Iowa straw poll wins provided him the momentum he needed to narrow the gap between him and Reagan.  

According to a late November poll from ABC News – Harris Survey, which sampled both Republicans and Independents, Reagan increased his lead to 38% of the vote, followed by Baker at 21%, Connally at 15% and Bush at 6%.  

By late December Reagan was so confident that he was going to win the Republican nomination that he decided to take three weeks off from campaigning to spend time at his ranch in


80 Saad, “Lack of GOP Front-Runner for 2012 Is Atypical.”


82 Louis Harris, “Reagan could lock up GOP nomination early,” Chicago Tribune, Nov 22, 1979, D4. Available at
California. Additionally, he often held just one to two campaign stops each day, far fewer than the other candidates in the race.\textsuperscript{83}

Just weeks into the New Year, Reagan held a commanding lead over Bush, polling at over 30\% compared to Bush who was at just over five percent. Given the reforms that Republican put in place in the late 1960’s, the preferences of voters mattered much more in the 1980 primary than in races before the reforms. In total, the Republican contest included a total of 17 caucuses and 35 primaries.\textsuperscript{84}

Bush’s victory in the Iowa Caucuses propelled him into a dead heat with Reagan, as they were tied at 27\% each according to a poll that sampled Republican and Independent voters. Additionally, Baker was a distant third at just over 10\%, followed by Connally at ten percent while Anderson, Dole and Crane all were all polling under five percent. Despite the victory, Bush still trailed the more conservative Reagan amongst Republicans, albeit by only six points.\textsuperscript{85}

Following Bush’s win in Iowa, which provided considerable momentum to his campaign, he followed it up with a decisive win in Puerto Rico; however, Reagan was


not on the ballot. As a result of Bush winning the first two contests, Reagan focused his efforts on carrying New Hampshire and, in the days leading up to the primary, Reagan and Bush agreed to a debate which was paid for by Reagan’s campaign. However, unbeknownst to Bush, Reagan’s team invited all of the candidates to participate, which resulted in an aggravated Bush complaining to the moderator that the other candidates were ineligible. The moderator was sympathetic to Bush’s position and ruled the other candidates ineligible; however, Reagan protested at the debate, saying that since he had paid for the debate, he was demanding that the others were allowed to participate. The Reagan campaign’s stunt paid off, as their candidate came off looking very democratic, while Bush looked like a sore loser. The incident likely played a role in Reagan’s reversal in fortunes, as he avenged his first two losses, winning with 50% of the vote compared to 23% for Bush, 13% for Baker and 10% for Anderson.86 Coming out of New Hampshire, Reagan’s campaign replaced their campaign manager on the same day as the primary in an effort to take the campaign in a different direction.87

By March of 1980, the race was down to Bush and Reagan, who was faring well in primaries; however, Reagan’s campaign had spent heavily early in the race and was forced to scale back their efforts moving forward.88 The Reagan Campaign laid off roughly half of its staff due to the fact that, had it not slashed costs, it would have reached the spending cap of nearly $18 million, which was required for candidates who

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86 Davis, U.S. Presidential Primaries and the Caucus-Convention System: A Sourcebook, 149-150.
87 Busch, “Ronald Reagan’s Electoral Career.”
accepted federal matching funds, and been precluded from spending any money from mid April through the end of the nominating contest. Conversely, Bush was waiting on over $2.5 million in matching funds, which would provide him the resources he needed to claw his way back.

In the first contests in March, Bush carried Massachusetts while Reagan won in Vermont. In an effort to secure the nomination, Reagan’s team understood the importance of doing well in the South, as President Carter’s political team had pressured southern states to move up their primaries, figuring that the President would do well there, aiding his efforts to defeat liberal primary challengers. Along this vein, Reagan’s aides worked with South Carolina’s Republican Party Chairman and convinced him to schedule a “special state convention” in the fall of 1979. During the convention, the party decided to hold their election three days before the date when the other Southern states were holding their primaries. Ultimately, the Reagan campaign’s efforts to influence the South Carolina Republican Party’s decision to hold their primary before the others was a shrewd political move, as Reagan’s team used their political leverage over Governor Connally in South Carolina to set the tone for his strong showing in the South. Reagan defeated Connally 54% to 30% in South Carolina, and

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90 Kamarck, Primary Politics - How Presidential Candidates Have Shaped the Modern Day Nominating System, 36-37.

Connally dropped out shortly after the race.\textsuperscript{92} Reagan went on to sweep the southern primaries, carrying Alabama, Florida and Georgia by a margin of at least 25%.

In late March, Reagan defeated Congressman Anderson in Illinois, Anderson’s home state, on March 18\textsuperscript{th}.\textsuperscript{93} The following week Bush defeated Reagan in Connecticut, a state where his father was a U.S. Senator; however, he picked up only a slight majority of the state’s delegates, with 15 compared to 14 for Reagan. That same day, Reagan carried New York, which provided him over 70 delegates compared to the six that Bush received there.\textsuperscript{94} During the first week of April, Reagan won handily in Kansas, Wisconsin and Louisiana, defeating Bush by double digit margins in each state.\textsuperscript{95} In the Pennsylvania primary on April 22\textsuperscript{nd}, Bush outspent Reagan more than five to one\textsuperscript{96} and carried the state with nearly 55\% of the vote; however, Reagan carried almost two-thirds of the state’s 77 delegates. Reagan’s success with the delegates was attributed to his campaign’s focus on direct outreach to top-tier delegate candidates.\textsuperscript{97}

Reagan narrowly defeated Bush in Texas, and on May 6\textsuperscript{th} Bush won in Washington, DC; however, Reagan wasn’t on the ballot and, given the small number of delegates the win accounted for, it was moral victory for Bush if nothing else. That

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{92} Kamarck, \textit{Primary Politics - How Presidential Candidates Have Shaped the Modern Day Nominating System}, 36-37.}

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{93} Guide to U.S. Elections, p. 423.}

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{94} Busch, “Ronald Reagan’s Electoral Career.”}

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{95} Guide to U.S. Elections, p. 423.}

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{96} Busch, “Ronald Reagan’s Electoral Career.”}

\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{97} Kamarck, \textit{Primary Politics - How Presidential Candidates Have Shaped the Modern Day Nominating System}, 128-129.}
same day Reagan carried Indiana, North Carolina and Tennessee, and he won in Maryland and Nebraska the following week. Bush split the May 20th contests with Reagan, winning in Michigan while Reagan carried Oregon. With his win, Reagan surpassed the 998 delegates he needed to secure the nomination and the race had finally come to an end.98

By the end of the 1980 Republican primary, Reagan amassed 29 wins and received 61% of all votes cast. Bush finished a distant second in the race, having carried five states and finished with 23% of the vote, followed by John Anderson, who received a respectable 12% of the vote.99 Reagan won the nomination on the first round at the 1980 Republican National Convention.100

1988 Republican Primary

The Republican race to replace Ronald Reagan in 1988 was marked with many top-tier candidates declining to enter the Republican primary, including Senator Howard Baker (TN), Governor Thomas Kean (NJ), Congressman Donald Rumsfeld (IL), Governor George Dukemejian (CA) and Governor James Thompson (IL).101 However, the field included many top-tier candidates, including Vice-President Bush, Senator Bob Dole (KS), Congressman Jack Kemp (NY), and Pat Robertson, a televangelist, but it was


clear from the start of the race that the contest would be between Bush, the next
candidate in line, and Dole, who also had considerable support within the Republican
establishment.102

As runner up to Reagan in 1980, Bush served as his Vice President from 1981 to
1989 and was the definitive favorite leading into the 1988 Republican presidential
primary. While piggy backing on to Reagan’s popularity, he carved out his own niche,
pledging a "kinder and gentler nation" in an effort to woo moderate voters.103 While
Bush made his fortunes in the oil and gas business in Texas, Washington was his home.
He was the ultimate Beltway insider, having served as a former Chairman of the RNC,
Congressman, United Nations Ambassador and former Central Intelligence Agency
Director. His experience, service to the party and ties to President Reagan were all key
factors in his strong showing out of the gate in the 1988 Republican presidential contest.
According to a Gallup poll taken a little over a year before the Iowa caucuses, Bush led
the field with 33%, while Senator Bob Dole (KS), his closest competitor, was at 14%.
Throughout the entire year, Bush maintained a sizeable lead over Dole.104

While Bush was the establishment candidate, Senator Dole was also favored by
the Republican establishment, as little separated the two on most issues. Like Bush,
Dole too was no stranger to the limelight of a presidential campaign having served as

102 Jon Margolis, “1988 candidates have something to prove,” Chicago Tribune, October 12, 1987, p 10. Available at


104 Saad, “Lack of GOP Front-Runner for 2012 Is Atypical.”
the running mate to Gerald Ford during the 1976 race. His resume also included service in the U.S. House of Representatives (1961 to 1969), and he had been a U.S. Senator since 1969, where he had served as the Republican Leader since 1985. Additionally, Dole was Chairman of the RNC from 1971 until 1972. While Dole’s connections throughout the Republican Party were an asset to his candidacy, his persona left something to be desired; throughout the race he was criticized for his style, as many cited his constant talk about legislation pending before Congress and tendency to delve into the weeds on issues, rather than talking about broad based ideas to move America forward. Like so many members of Congress who have run for the presidency, Dole had a hard time transforming his personality into that of an executive, where big ideas matter more than minutia.

Going into the Iowa Caucuses, it was clear that a number of the Republican candidates had a real shot to win the contest, as just over a third of the voters sampled some three weeks before the election had decided how they were going to vote. In the famed Ames Straw Poll, which took place in September of 1987, Robertson handily


won with 34%, followed by Dole with 25%, Bush with 23% and Kemp with 14%. However, in the months since the pole voters had more time to focus on the race and, as a result, formed stronger opinions regarding the candidates.

Despite the uncertainty going into the first contest, Dole won a big victory in Iowa on February 8th, defeating Robertson, who finished second, and Bush, who finished third. With the first contest out of the way, the election moved to New Hampshire, where a contentious debate during the days leading up to the state’s primary did little to shift the dynamics in the race, as Bush maintained a solid lead in the Granite State leading up to the primary. Bush ended up carrying New Hampshire and defeated Dole by a margin of nine percent in a state where Dole was favored during the months leading up to the primary. While the loss was tough on Dole, he compounded its negative impact on his campaign when sounded off in an interview after the loss, telling Bush to “stop lying about my record” when asked what he would say to Bush if he had the chance.

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In the week after the New Hampshire primary Dole avenged his loss, carrying South Dakota and Minnesota, while Bush finished fourth and third respectively. According to polls of those who voted in South Dakota, those polled indicated that they supported Dole over Bush because he was “a much stronger leader” and was “more caring and compassionate.”

Despite the disappointing performances, Bush defeated Dole by a margin of four percent in Vermont and nearly 30 percent in South Carolina, providing him the momentum he needed going into Super Tuesday, when nearly one in three states held their primary.

Super Tuesday proved to be the real turning point for Bush in the race, as he ended up winning all 16 primaries, bringing him to 700 delegates, some 500 more than Dole. By mid-March, the race was down to Bush and Dole, as Kemp dropped out just a few weeks after Super Tuesday and Robertson was barely in the race. Robertson’s abysmal third place finish in his home state of Virginia was a clear sign that he had no chance of winning the nomination, and it was only a matter of time before he bowed out. While Dole was still in the race, his campaign was running low on money and was forced to go off the air in many media markets, and his campaign let go of roughly half of its paid staff.

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Going into Illinois, it was clear that its primary might be Dole’s last stand, as he pulled all of his television advertisement buys and purchased a half hour time slot in prime time the Saturday before voters went to the polls.\textsuperscript{116} Despite the Dole campaign’s best efforts, Bush carried Illinois in decisive fashion and given his domination of Dole in the delegate count and sizeable lead heading into the Wisconsin primary,\textsuperscript{117} it was time for the Senate Majority Leader to return to his job in Washington. On March 29\textsuperscript{th} Dole announced that he was dropping out of the race and endorsed Bush, as the Vice-President was all but assured to be the Republican nominee, with Robertson the only other candidate in the race.

In total, Bush won 68\% of the 12 million votes that were cast.\textsuperscript{118} His runner-up finish in the 1980 contest and time as Vice-President enabled him to establish a rapport with the Republican electorate, which laid the foundation for his dominating performance in 1988.

\textit{1996 Republican Primary}

After a runner up finish to President Bush in the 1988 Republican presidential primary, Senate Majority Leader Dole, ran for the Republican nomination for the third


\textsuperscript{118} Guide to U.S. Elections, p. 453.
time. Given his position in the Senate and strong name identification among Republican voters, Dole was the clear front runner and the Republican establishment’s clear choice in its effort to unseat President Clinton. Senator Phil Gramm (TX), Senator Arlen Specter (PA), Steve Forbes, publisher of Forbes Magazine, Senator Dick Lugar (IN), Alan Keyes, Governor Peter Wilson (CA) and Pat Buchanan rounded out the field of top tier candidates running in the Republican primary. Additionally, a number of high profile individuals declined to run, including Colin Powell, who could have had a real impact on the outcome of the race had he run.

Key to Dole’s success in the 1996 Republican primary was his ability to raise money, as his campaign raised over $30 million just a few months into the year. His resource advantages were a byproduct of his stature within the Republican Party and that, coupled with his connections to Republican power brokers, made him virtually unstoppable. Roger Stone, a Republican consultant and Chair of Senator Specter’s campaign, talked about how it was clear that Dole was the favorite in the Republican field due to his runner up status in 1988 and stature within the party. Stone said there’s


"a royalist mentality to the party. A natural line of succession exists. Republicans have
nominated the front runner since serious primaries began in 1952."  

Roughly a year before the first primaries, Dole led the field with support from
38% of Republicans and Republican leaning Independents, while former Vice President
Dan Quayle, his closest competitor, trailed him by over 20 points. Dole’s lead in the
polls, combined with the challenges of raising the amount of money needed to be
competitive, kept other top tier candidates out of the race. Former Vice-President Dan
Quayle withdrew his candidacy nearly a year before the first primary, as he cited his
distaste for raising money as a contributing factor. Additionally, Jack Kemp, who went
on to be Dole’s running mate in the race, bowed out of the primary just a few weeks
before Quayle, citing his lack of desire to raise the kind of money he needed to be
competitive.

With Quayle and Kemp out of the race, Dole’s support increased amongst
Republican leaning voters to 46% with his next closest competitor, U.S. Senator Phil
Gramm (TX), at 13% in an April 1995 Gallup poll. By the fall, Dole held a
commanding lead over his opponents, as he led the field with 35%, followed by Gramm
at 9% and Buchanan at 8%. However, given his reputation for being excitable, his
opponents intentionally provoked him at every opportunity in an effort to get him to

http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,982648,00.html#ixzz1k8PCniG5.

124 Saad, “Lack of GOP Front-Runner for 2012 Is Atypical.”


126 Saad, “Lack of GOP Front-Runner for 2012 Is Atypical.”
lash out in retaliation, as they knew that he would lose support if voters saw him as angry and erratic.\textsuperscript{127}

Despite Dole being nearly everyone’s favorite to win the nomination, the possibility of Colin Powell entering the race added an interesting dynamic to the race. A September 1995 poll showed that Dole and Powell were tied at the top of the field with each receiving support from 22\% of New Hampshire Republicans.\textsuperscript{128} However, Powell announced in early November that he wouldn’t be seeking the Republican nomination, resulting in Dole’s support increasing 18\% to 54\%.\textsuperscript{129} Dole’s lead in the pre-Thanksgiving poll proved to be no fluke, as his level of support remained consistent in the months leading up to the Iowa Caucuses. In a Gallup Poll in late January, 47\% of Republicans preferred Dole as the party’s nominee compared to 16\% for Forbes, 8\% for Gramm, 7\% for Buchanan and 3\% for Alexander.\textsuperscript{130}

In the first contest, Dole carried Iowa on February 12\textsuperscript{th}, but ended up losing to Buchanan just eight days later in New Hampshire. A Gallup poll taken after the Granite State primary showed that Dole still held a sizeable lead over the rest of the field, as he was the choice of 41\% of Republicans. With his win in New Hampshire,

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{129}] “DOLE GETS THE BOOST,” Time Magazine, November 9, 1995. Available at http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,5058,00.html#ixzz1ksHdfjSZ.
\item[\textsuperscript{130}] Jones, “Iowa, New Hampshire Results Often Shift National Preference: Particularly when upsets occur in the key early states.”
\end{itemize}
Buchanan saw his poll numbers increase as well, going from 18% to 25%. However, his views put him well outside the Republican establishment given his resentment of big business, adamant opposition to free trade and his views on the size of government.\textsuperscript{131} Alexander also saw his poll numbers increase as a result of his strong performances in the first two contests, as he was now at 14%.\textsuperscript{132}

Coming off his second place finish in New Hampshire Steve Forbes also received a bounce in the polls, as 17% of likely Republican voters supported him.\textsuperscript{133} Forbes used his momentum to power his campaign to victory on February 24\textsuperscript{th} in Delaware, and three days later he won in Arizona. However, that same day Dole won in both North Dakota and South Dakota and went on to carry South Carolina and Puerto Rico in the days before Super Tuesday.\textsuperscript{134}

On March 5\textsuperscript{th}, Dole delivered a near knockout blow to his competitors, carrying Colorado, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, Georgia and Maine. In total, he carried nearly 200 delegates on Super Tuesday, representing 20% of the total he needed to clinch the nomination. Dole’s strong performance proved to be a real turning point in the race, as his decisive victories resulted in Senators’ Alexander and Lugar exiting the race. Michael Duffy, National Political Correspondent for TIME


\textsuperscript{132} Jones , “Iowa, New Hampshire Results Often Shift National Preference: Particularly when upsets occur in the key early states.”

\textsuperscript{133} “WHO IS SWITCHING TO FORBES AND WHY,” Time Magazine, February 12, 1996. Available at http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,984087,00.html#ixzz1kryrECxp.

\textsuperscript{134} Guide to U.S. Elections, p. 453.
Magazine, said “before, it was Dole's nomination to lose. Now, it's Dole's nomination. He still has three more big primary days in three weeks, if Forbes stays in it, but he's already turning his attention to defeating Clinton.”

Dole won in New York on March 7th, where he carried each one of the state’s 93 delegates. His win significantly increased his already sizeable lead over his competitors, which resulted in Steve Forbes dropping out a week later. In total, Forbes “spent more than $30 million” on his campaign and carried two states; however, despite receiving over 900,000 votes in the primaries, he netted only 76 delegates.

Given his strong momentum and Midwestern roots, Dole was strongly favored going into the Illinois, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin primaries on March 19th. He won all four contests, crossing the 996 delegate threshold needed to clinch the Republican nomination.

While Dole stumbled in a number of the first contests, he went on to win over 20 primaries, including South Carolina, which provided him the momentum he needed after losing in New Hampshire. Outside of a few minor stumbles, Dole faced few hurdles in his path to the nomination. Ultimately, his standing within the party and the Republican electorate’s familiarity with him led to his strong performance in the race.


2008 Republican Primary

Heading into the 2008 Republican primary, Senator John McCain (AZ) was the clear front runner early in the race and “next in line” candidate. However, his support for comprehensive immigration reform during the spring and summer of 2007, a position that put him out of the mainstream of the Republican base, reminded conservatives of his past transgressions and his campaign struggled. With McCain’s poll numbers tanking, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani replaced him as the front runner in the race, as he led in national polls for most of 2007. Other formidable candidates in the race included former Senator Fred Thompson (TN), Governor Mike Huckabee (AR), Former Governor Mitt Romney (MA), and Congressman Ron Paul (TX). Ultimately, Giuliani’s positions on social issues and his campaign’s poor strategic decisions in the early contests led to his downfall in the race. McCain took advantage of Giuliani’s vulnerabilities and peaked at the right time, with strong performances in the early primaries. By early February of 2008, it was clear that McCain had the nomination wrapped up.

Having finished runner up to the former Governor George W. Bush (TX) in 2000, McCain was Bush’s heir apparent and the early favorite to win the 2008 Republican presidential nomination. While the race between McCain and Bush had been contentious, McCain adopted the Bush campaign doctrine, as he hired former Bush

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staffers in senior leadership roles in addition to aggressively courting former Bush-Cheney donors. Additionally, in an effort to build support for his candidacy in 2008 and raise his profile nationally, McCain worked tirelessly to elect Republican candidates in 2006 during the mid-term elections. In total, he acted as a surrogate in nearly 350 campaign fundraisers for congressional candidates during the 2006 mid-term election cycle.

While McCain worked for years to develop the reputation as a straight shooter and bi-partisan leader, many of the things that made him popular with moderate voters and the main stream media led to his struggles during the 2008 primary. With immigration reform at the center of Congress’s legislative agenda in early to mid 2007, McCain sponsored a comprehensive immigration bill with Senator Edward Kennedy (MA), the Republican Party’s longtime liberal poster boy for everything that was wrong with the Democrats, which earned him the scorn of Republican media personalities who play an integral part in influencing the party’s activists and primary voters. The episode re-opened prior wounds, including McCain-Feingold, a law that many conservatives believe trampled free speech. By mid-July, McCain’s fundraising numbers were lagging behind those of other top tier candidates and, with less than $2

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million cash on hand, his campaign laid off staff and both his campaign manager and chief strategist stepped down.\textsuperscript{142}

With McCain struggling, Giuliani stepped up and filled the role as front runner, leading the field throughout most of 2007; however, his decision to not compete in Iowa, New Hampshire and South Carolina, due to the fact that he thought he wouldn’t be able to win in those states, resulted in a momentum change.\textsuperscript{143} While Giuliani’s campaign was slowing down in later 2007, McCain had embraced his role as the underdog and was mounting a comeback.

After a disappointing performance in Iowa, a state where he invested little time and money, McCain staked his campaign on New Hampshire, where he won in 2000. McCain went on to defeat Romney 37\% to 31\% in the Granite State on January 15\textsuperscript{th}, while Huckabee and Giuliani finished a distant third and fourth respectively. That same day, Romney carried Michigan, a state where he grew up and his father was Governor, with nearly 40\% of the vote, defeating McCain by nine percent. Romney went on win the Nevada and Wyoming caucuses following New Hampshire and Michigan.\textsuperscript{144} On January 29\textsuperscript{th}, McCain avenged his devastating loss in the Palmetto State primary just eight years prior, narrowly defeating Huckabee 33\% to 30\%, in addition to carrying Florida with 36\%. Giuliani finished a distant third behind both

\textsuperscript{142} Liz Sidoti, “McCain Campaign Suffers Key Shakeups,” Breitbart. Available at http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D8Q9QP0G0&show_article=1.

\textsuperscript{143} Saad, “Lack of GOP Front-Runner for 2012 Is Atypical.”

\textsuperscript{144} Kamarck, Primary Politics - How Presidential Candidates Have Shaped the Modern Day Nominating System, 40-41.
McCain and Romney in Florida, winning only 15% of the vote\textsuperscript{145} and dropped out of the race after his abysmal finish.

With the field of top tier candidates down to McCain, Huckabee and Romney, Super Tuesday proved to be a defining moment in the race, with McCain winning nine of the primaries, Huckabee winning four and Romney winning two. McCain’s domination of Super Tuesday was the byproduct of his wins in mostly blue states, reflecting his appeal to moderate Republicans, while Huckabee’s wins came exclusively from southern states, with McCain finishing a close second in all but the Arkansas race. While Romney finished a close second in a number of the contests that McCain won, his only wins came in Utah and Massachusetts,\textsuperscript{146} both states where he had close ties given his Mormon faith and time as Governor of Massachusetts. Romney’s disappointing Super Tuesday performance was the sign he needed to see that the race wasn’t his to win, as he dropped out of the running just a few days later.\textsuperscript{147}

The following week McCain’s momentum propelled him to wins in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia. On February 19\textsuperscript{th}, McCain went on to win in Washington and Wisconsin and he closed out the race on March 4\textsuperscript{th}, winning

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Texas, Ohio, Vermont and Rhode Island,\textsuperscript{148} which put him over the 1,191 delegate mark needed to secure the nomination.\textsuperscript{149}

**Chapter 4 – Finding Itself, the Republican Party (2009 to 2012)**

Given the backlash on the right in response to a perceived federal overreach by both Republicans and Democrats alike, conservatives united in the months following Barrack Obama being elected president in a way they never had before. Grassroots movements like the tea party, made up of individuals angered by excessive spending, a culture of bailouts and President Obama’s $787 billion stimulus package united in early 2009 and the drumbeat continued to grow louder and louder in the months ahead. As a result of the ever growing tea party movement and a “throw the bums out” sentiment amongst an energized Republican base, 2010 proved to be a change election unlike any seen before. Both Democrat and Republican incumbents, regardless of seniority, accomplishments and reputation, fell in the primaries and general election to candidates who opposed the status quo in Washington and offered a truly outside perspective.

During the waning years of George W. Bush’s second term, the drumbeat of conservatives disillusioned by their belief that little separated the Republicans they worked to elect and the Democrats started to grow louder and louder. While President


Bush received some push back from fringe elements of the Republican Party and conservative movement during his first term on White House initiatives that called for greater Federal Government intervention, they did not go after the president and his administration forcefully, as Bush was wildly popular in the months and years following September 11th. Given that he was beloved by social conservatives and defense hawks alike, President Bush was able to move forward initiatives like No Child Left Behind and Medicare Part D that were an anathema to fiscal conservatives with minor resistance. However, as independents deserted Bush during his second term, so did many conservatives who were angered by mounting deficits and the White House’s support for comprehensive immigration, a concept labeled as “amnesty” by many on the right. During the debate over immigration reform in early to mid 2007, mounting internal tensions continued to rise within the Republican Party and amongst conservative opinion makers on the right, who lashed out at President Bush over his support for the bill and other past transgressions.

With the Republican Party in disarray and conservatives fighting over what being a Republican and a conservative truly meant, the financial crisis during the summer of 2008 was another nail in the GOP’s coffin. In response to our markets being on the brink of disaster, the Federal Government took over both Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which “owned or guaranteed about $5 trillion worth of the $12 trillion in mortgages issued on U.S. houses” and pumped $700 billion program into the Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP), which purchased mortgage backed securities with little
to no value. The federal takeover was a bipartisan effort coordinated by the Bush Administration and the Democrat controlled Congress.

With conservatives disillusioned by the Bush years and the prospect of McCain being the Republican stand bearer for the next four years the 2008 election was doomed from the very start for Republicans. However, with the election of Barrack Obama in 2008 and Democrats firmly in control of Congress, the Republican Party’s self loathing was redirected to the president and congressional Democrats. Upon taking office in late January of 2009, President Obama wasted no time in rallying our struggling nation to get behind his proposal of a billion dollar public works bill designed to stimulate the economy and put Americans back to work. Making matters worse in the eyes of conservatives was the fact that the president tasked Congress with writing the bill and determining how to spend the money, which resulted in many wasteful pet projects designed to help the residents in certain congressional districts rather than the county as a whole. Just a few months following the passage of the stimulus, the very first tea party rallies were held in cities around the country to protest the wasteful spending by the Federal Government.

As the President’s focus shifted to expanding health care to millions of people across the county, support for the tea party flourished and the right united in opposition to the big government policies coming out of Washington. By the time members of Congress left for August recess in 2009, health care reform was in the

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limelight and it was clear that conservatives, moderates and independents alike were outraged. When members went back to their districts that August, they found that their town halls were filled with angry constituents looking to spar with them over a bill they not so affectionately referred to as “Obamacare.”

To the chagrin of the White House and Congressional Democrats, the health care overhaul fight drug on until late March 2010, when healthcare reform, which was broken down into two pieces of legislation, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) and the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010, was finally passed and signed into law. While Democrats celebrated the victory publicly, it was clear the toll that getting the bill passed had taken on their standing with the American people. Not only did the PPACA unite conservatives and energize them in an election year, but all the negative press caused independent swing voters to lose faith in the Democrats and the president, both of which disproportionately received their votes in 2006 and 2008. When President Obama started talking about healthcare in the spring of 2009 his approval rating was strong, ranging from the low to mid 60’s; however, nearly a year later when health care reform passed, his approval rating was consistently in the low 50’s. This is a very telling statistic and it was clear that the 2010 mid-term election would be a tough one for congressional Democrats.

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The 2010 Mid-Term Election

Conservatives were also outraged over other administration initiatives, including programs like “cash for clunkers” and Dodd-Frank, which regulated financial markets in the U.S. Just a few months into 2010, it was clear that the November mid-term was going to be a change election, as numerous long term incumbents were defeated in their primaries and conservatives defeated establishment candidates in many of the Republican primaries. The American public’s outrage also led to near record numbers of retirements with over one third of all Senators up for re-election retiring. In total, twelve senators retired, the second highest number to do so since 1935.\footnote{Retiring senators: Why are so many calling it quits?,” The Christian Science Monitor. Available at http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2010/0222/Retiring-senators-Why-are-so-many-calling-it-quits.}

In addition to members of Congress retiring in droves, 2010 was an unusual year, as long-term incumbents lost their primaries and numerous mainstream Republican candidates lost to inferior candidates. The 2010 mid-term election proved to be one for the history books and gives us insight into what may be in store during the upcoming presidential election. While mid-term primary elections see a considerably smaller turnout than presidential primaries, they serve as an indication of political base’s mood heading into a presidential primary. Because U.S. Senate and gubernatorial candidates run in statewide primaries, they serve as better examples than U.S. House of Representatives candidates, who run in district’s that are often ideologically
homogeneous. From New York down to Florida, all the way to Alaska, statewide Republican mainstream candidates lost races in 2010 like never before.

While the Northeast is made up of traditionally moderate Republicans, conservatives flexed their muscles, defeating candidates who gave the party their best chance at winning the general election in numerous contests. While tea party backed Carl Paladino defeated former Congressman Rick Lazio to be the Republican nominee for Governor in New York, Christine O’Donnell defeating former Governor and nine-term Congressman Mike Castle in Delaware’s U.S. Senate primary proved to be one of the biggest upsets in the cycle. While the GOP establishment in Delaware and Washington lined up behind Congressman Castle, the fringe of the Republican Party found his voting record, which placed him well to the left of his Republican colleagues, to be unacceptable and threw their support behind O’Donnell, who failed in two previous runs for statewide office. Despite polling data indicating that Congressman Castle would trounce Chris Coons, the Democrat nominee, the conservative media and advocacy groups scuttled Castle’s candidacy.154

In the Southeast, which is one of the more conservative parts of the country, Florida House Speaker Marco Rubio, a tea party darling, held such a sizeable lead over Governor Charlie Crist in Florida’s U.S. Senate primary that Crist dropped out of the primary and decided to run as an independent. Also, Rand Paul, who had never been

elected to office before, handily defeated Secretary of State Trey Grayson, the Republican establishment’s candidate in Kentucky’s U.S. Senate race.

The Western states saw the most upsets with political novices unseating multiple term U.S. Senators in Alaska and Utah and unlikely wins by fringe candidates in both Nevada and Colorado. In Alaska, former magistrate judge Joe Miller defeated incumbent Senator Lisa Murkowski; although, she ran as a write in candidate in the general election and defeated Miller. In Utah, Mike Lee, who, like Paul, had never been elected to office, defeated Senator Bob Bennett at the Republican Party’s convention.155 In Colorado, businessman Dan Maes defeated former Congressman Scott McInnis in the state’s gubernatorial primary, and Weld County District Attorney Ken Buck, the tea party backed candidate, defeated Lieutenant Governor Jane Norton, who was a former Interior Secretary under President George W. Bush, in the U.S. Senate primary. Norton was the early favorite in the race, as she received backing from the Republican establishment in Colorado and Washington, including the National Republican Senatorial Committee156 and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce;157 however, 2010 was not a year that favored establishment candidates, and Colorado’s primary proved to be no exception. Buck rode the support from the tea party and conservative activists to


victory on the August 10th, where he defeated Norton 51% to 49%. In Nevada’s U.S. Senate Race, Sharon Angle defeated mainstream candidates, who would have been much better suited to take on Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, including Sue Lowden, the Chair of Nevada Republican Party, and Danny Tarkanian, whose father was the longtime coach of the men’s basketball team at University of Nevada-Las Vegas. Key to Angle’s victory in the primary were endorsements and free press from conservative media outlets and other power brokers in the conservative movement, including the Tea Party Express.

**RNC Rules Changes**

As a result of the disappointing 2008 presidential election loss, the Republican Party was forced to examine the factors that contributed to the crushing defeat and vowed that it would right its wrongs in 2012 by not making the same mistakes again. The conservative wing of the party decided that their blunder was nominating McCain, a moderate, and that the party must put up true conservatives in future races. However, the Republican establishment knew that not to be the case, as it was nearly impossible for any Republican to win the election given the American people’s distaste

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for the direction the country was moving after eight years of a Republican president. They concluded that McCain was put at a disadvantage when he locked up the nomination months before Obama emerged as the Democrat’s nominee, as he fell out of the limelight and no longer received the earned media that he received during the primary fight.

In 2008, Senator McCain locked up the nomination just a little over a month into the contest, while the Democrat primary was a dead heat until Senator Obama won the nomination on June 2nd. While the Democrat primary was contentious, the elongated contest enabled Obama to stay in the spotlight for months after McCain faded away, providing him free media coverage and the attention needed to build a strong foundation for his general election campaign.

In an effort to better position the party’s 2012 nominee for the general election against President Obama, the RNC changed its presidential nominating contest rules in a way that extends the primary season and makes it almost impossible for one of the candidates to walk away with the nomination in the first month or two. In August 2010, the RNC changed the timing of the 2012 race for the party’s presidential nomination, resulting in a process that is longer and puts more emphasis on consistently solid performances as opposed to previous primaries where the winner of each state took all of its delegates. Under the new system devised by the RNC, the states’ holding their contests in January, February and March in 2012 are required to

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award their delegates on a proportional basis. In total, just over 500 delegates will be provided through winner take all contests in 2012 and nearly 920 delegates will be awarded in proportional representation contests. Additionally, over 860 delegates will be determined between unpledged delegates and other sources. These changes make the 2012 race very different from previous Republican contests. In 2008, 10 states used a system of proportional representation, 12 used winner take all systems, 7 were winner take all but broken down by congressional district, 3 directly elected their delegates and 6 states used a different way distribute delegates to their primary winners. Additionally, the RNC ruled that only Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada could hold their respective contest before March 1st.

Chapter 5 – The “Next in Line” Candidate Wins Again in 2012

Fresh off finishing runner-up to John McCain in 2008, Mitt Romney is the clear choice of the establishment wing of the Republican Party in the 2012 Presidential Primary and fits the mold of the “next in-line” candidate; however, he faces an uphill battle in a primary filled with Republican voters who have continually searched for a


164 Kamarck, Primary Politics - How Presidential Candidates Have Shaped the Modern Day Nominating System, 84.

viable alternative to the former Massachusetts Governor. While Republicans have clearly demonstrated their preference for the “next in line” candidate over the past 60 plus years, 2012 has shown many signs that this year could be an exception to this rule. However, this will not be the case. While the right wing of the party has incessantly searched for a more conservative alternative to Romney, the other candidates in the race are deeply flawed, espouse ideologies that render them unelectable in the general election, and lack the campaign resources and infrastructure needed to compete in the race.

While the RNC’s changes to the presidential primary process will ensure that this race drags out longer than it has in previous contests, which comes at the expense of “the next in line” candidate, the advent of Super PAC’s has provided top tier candidates with additional financial advantages. Romney’s fight to win the nomination hasn’t been nor will it be an easy one; however, the Republican Party will continue its sixty plus year tradition of nominating the “next in line” as the party’s presidential candidate.

Despite Governor Romney’s willingness to be a team player, including his early exit from the 2008 contest and efforts over the past three years to elect Republicans, the conservative wing of the Republican Party is distrustful of him. Romney’s past transgressions in their eyes are many, including his prior support for gay marriage, abortion and health care overhaul in Massachusetts while he was Governor, which anti-Romney forces on both the right and left have coined “Romneycare.” President
Obama’s claim that Romney’s comprehensive health care law inspired his landmark 2010 law at the federal level has fueled conservative opposition to Romney, as many on the right see little difference between the two on this issue. Romney’s Mormon faith, while a much bigger issue when he ran in 2008, is still a thorn in his side and impedes his ability to connect with the evangelical wing of the party, which represents a significant part of the Republican primary voting bloc in many states. As the result of what is at best skepticism and at worst hatred, many on the right refuse to accept Romney as their party’s nominee and will not tire until they find a true alternative to him. From their fleeting outcries of support for numerous candidates throughout the race, the right remains in search of a messiah to defeat Barrack Obama, provided that he or she meets the criteria of a “true conservative.”

**Media’s Role in Defeating Romney**

While there are many factors that contribute to the right’s distaste for Mitt Romney and other Republican establishment candidates, none is more significant than that of our media in the 21st century. The internet, including the blogosphere, talk radio and cable news offer more opportunities for conservative voices to be heard today than ever before. While the efforts of the conservative media are largely uncoordinated, they often echo similar themes and pile on against politicians they oppose. From the Republican revolution of 1994 to the growing outrage over out of control spending, which brought us the Tea Party movement and the historic 2010 mid-term election, the conservative media plays a pivotal role in defining how Republicans form opinions of
our politicians and political system. Because the conservative media and its opinion makers don’t believe that Romney is one of them, they will continue to use their position of prominence and the tools available to them to scuttle his candidacy.

Republicans have long complained about the main stream media’s bias against their candidates; however, it is clear that the conservative media is biased against Democrats and Republicans who it deems to be not conservative enough. While Mitt Romney is not the first Republican presidential candidate to be the victim of this bias, it factors into the challenges he faces in his effort to win his party’s nomination. In a study done earlier this year (New Year’s Day to January 10th) George Mason University’s Center for Media and Public Affairs identified a media bias against Romney. Of the nearly 120 stories on the Republican contest, Romney was the only candidate to receive negative coverage more than half the time from Fox News’s “Special Report” and the ABC, NBC and CBS national nightly news programs. While Romney fared better on Fox News with just under two thirds of the stories about him were negative, nearly 80% of the stories aired by the major networks about him were negative.166

The media’s ability to shape the way the American people think is a key factor in the 2012 Republican primary and will be no less of an issue in the race this fall. While bias is difficult to measure and often challenging to identify, it is something that the

Romney Campaign will have to effectively combat. Romney, like all candidates, makes
gaffes while on the campaign trail and has taken positions that don’t fit perfectly with
the conservative orthodoxy; however, the same can be said for all of the other
candidates in the race.

Alternatives to Romney

The conservative wing of the Republican Party refuses to accept Romney as their
nominee for president, and 2011 saw numerous candidates challenge Romney atop the
polls in the lead up to the first primaries. Since the fall, Governor Rick Perry (TX),
former House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich (GA), former Godfather’s
Pizza CEO Herman Cain, and former U.S. Senator Rick Santorum (PA) have all led in
the polls at one point or another, and the volatility of the race has continued into the
race’s early contests, including both primary and caucus states; however, Romney will
win the nomination because the other candidates in the race are deeply flawed and
espouse ideologies that render them unelectable in a general election. This final point is
especially important, as Republican voters have traditionally been less ideological than
their Democrat counterparts, as electability has proven integral to who the Republican
Party has nominated to be its presidential candidate over the past sixty plus years. In
early contests, including the Florida primary, exit polls showed electability to be the top
issue on voters’ minds when they cast their ballot.167

The Republican field in 2012 isn’t a particularly strong one by most standards, as many of the candidates in the race are deeply flawed and lack the skills to win the nomination. From infidelity to repeatedly making off color comments to lacking the mental dexterity needed to be president, many of the Republican candidates have little shot to win the party’s nomination.

Since the days of Ronald Reagan, social conservatives have been an integral part of the Republican Party’s base and the well documented infidelity of Newt Gingrich, Herman Cain and even Donald Trump, who flirted with the idea of running for the nomination during the summer of 2011, make their paths to the nomination all the more challenging. Conversely, Romney married his wife, Ann, over 40 years ago\(^{168}\) and, through two presidential campaigns, nothing has ever come out questioning their marriage.

Of all the Republican candidates in 2012, Herman Cain proved to be the most interesting in the field, as he is the first credible African-American to run for the Republican presidential nomination. Rising from obscurity, his campaign gained considerable momentum in late September when he won the Florida straw poll with 37\%, defeating Perry (15\%) and Romney (14\%).\(^{169}\) The win provided him the momentum and positive press coverage he needed to reach Republican primary voters


who weren’t closely following the race and was largely a byproduct of his strong performances in debates. He broke 10% for the first time in national polls in early October and, by the end of the month, he was narrowly ahead of Romney in most polls, which continued into early November; however, allegations that he sexually harassed four women he worked with during his time at the National Restaurant Association grabbed headlines for weeks during early November, crippling his campaign.

With each day that passed dribs and drabs of info leaked, providing more detail about sexually aggressive incidents with these women and details of money paid out by the Restaurant Association to settle with his accusers. Making matters worse, Cain, in an effort to get out in front of the next headline grabbing story, told the American people that there would be another woman coming forward; however, this time the charge wasn’t sexual harassment, it was Ginger White, who disclosed details of their decade affair. Further incriminating Cain was his own recognition of his friendship with White, which included financial help. The final nail in Cain’s coffin was White’s interview on MSNBC where she expressed remorse about the affair, saying she didn’t know that he was married and that she felt terrible about what they had done. On the first Saturday in December 2011, Cain announced that he was suspending his campaign


in light of the distractions stemming from the numerous allegations of his sexual misconduct; however, he maintained that he was innocent, describing the allegations as "false" and "baseless."\textsuperscript{173}

While Newt Gingrich’s transgressions took place years ago, making them much less damning than those of Cain, additional details broke during the campaign, reigniting the controversy surrounding Gingrich’s actions. From stories of his divorcing his first wife while she had cancer to asking his second wife for an open marriage, Gingrich faced mounting challenges in his efforts to connect with social conservatives. In late January 2012, a video of Marianne Gingrich, his second wife, was played on ABC News’s “Nightline,” where she said that Newt told her “you want me all to yourself. Callista doesn’t care what I do” in 2000. Additionally, Jackie Battley, Gingrich’s first wife, maintained that he divorced her while she had cancer and was in the hospital.\textsuperscript{174}

In addition to inconvenient personal details that have come out, some of the candidates in the Republican field face challenges in their quest to face off against President Obama in November, because their views on certain issues make them unelectable in a general election. While it is clear that the Republican Party has moved further to the right in recent years, it has a clear record of nominating candidates who are electable in a general election, as Republican presidential nominees traditionally


have not espoused views that put them outside of the mainstream on key policy issues. From intolerant remarks toward homosexuals to opposing abortion in all instances outside of a mother’s health to eliminating programs that American’s of all political stripes favor, many of the candidates are unelectable.

While opposing abortion is a part of the Republican platform and the party has consistently opposed gay marriage, the sensitivity of these issues is key to winning the support of swing voters who determine the outcome of elections. Rick Santorum, who performed well in Iowa and the early caucus states, emerged from the bottom quartile of the pack and remains in a dead heat with Romney. While Santorum is clearly an intelligent and passionate candidate, his views and incendiary comments pertaining to homosexuals and abortion make him unelectable in general election, which is why he won’t win the party’s nomination.

Outside of his evangelical Christian base, most Republican voters know little about him, nor where they aware of his views and previous comments that will come back to haunt him. For example, most are unaware that he opposes abortion even in cases of rape or incest. When Pierce Morgan prodded him on the issue in January, Santorum did not shy away from the question when he was asked what he would do if one of his daughter’s became pregnant as a result of being raped. Santorum said, “I believe and I think the right approach is to accept this horribly created — in the sense of rape — but nevertheless a gift in a very broken way, the gift of human life, and accept
what God has given to you.” However, even more damning were Santorum’s comments about homosexuals, where he compared homosexuality to “man on child” and “man on dog” relationships in an effort to make his point that the definition of marriage had always covered a relationship between one man and woman and nothing else. This gaffe produced waves of criticism; however, it was not his first off handed remark on the subject. In a 2003 interview with the Associated Press, he said “If the Supreme Court says that you have the right to consensual (gay) sex within your home, then you have the right to bigamy, you have the right to polygamy, you have the right to incest, you have the right to adultery. You have the right to anything.” While Santorum’s comments may not be offensive to a small segment of the Republican Party, the vast majority of Republicans do not share his feelings on these issues and would have trouble voting for someone who espouses these ideologies.

While Santorum may be the choice candidate for voters looking for an anti-gay candidate, he is not the only candidate in the 2012 GOP field whose beliefs put him or her outside of the mainstream. In an effort to woo socially conservative voters in Iowa, Michelle Bachmann, Rick Perry, Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum all signed a pledge


titled “The Marriage Vow,” a document from The Family Leader, which contains anti-gay rhetoric that candidates vow to support. The pledge states that “social protections, especially for women and children, have been evaporating,” citing a number of factors, including “anti-scientific bias which holds, in complete absence of empirical proof, that non-heterosexual inclinations are genetically determined, irresistible and akin to innate traits like race, gender and eye color; as well as anti-scientific bias which holds, against all empirical evidence, that homosexual behavior in particular, and sexual promiscuity in general, optimizes individual or public health.”

Additionally, voters don’t take many of the Republican candidates seriously, because they believe these individuals lack the intellect needed to be president. This was a criticism leveled against Sarah Palin in 2008 as a result of her gaffes, including her mention of being able to see Russia from some parts of Alaska, not being able to name publications that she reads and bold statements void of detail, which underscored her lack of understanding of important issues. While Democrats have somewhat successfully painted the Republican Party as anti-intellectual, many of the Republican candidates in 2012 have provided additional fodder for those on the left. From Herman Cain’s uninformed statements on foreign policy and other issues to Rick Perry’s infamous debate performance where he boasted that he would eliminate three federal departments upon being elected president; however, after naming the Departments’ of

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Education and Commerce he struggled to remember the third department (Energy) that he could shut down.\textsuperscript{180}

Herman Cain’s early exit from the race had nothing to do with his bizarre statements on foreign policy and even the president; although, they contributed to an anti-intellectual perception of both him and the Republican Party, which didn’t appear to be bothered by his refusal to answer difficult questions regarding foreign policy. Among Cain’s more entertaining quotes was “When they ask me who’s the president of Ubeki-beki-beki-beki-stan-stan, I’m gonna say, ‘You know, I don’t know, do you know?’ And then I’m gonna say, ‘How’s that gonna create more jobs?’ I wanna focus on the top priorities of this country. That’s what leaders do.”\textsuperscript{181} At a campaign rally, Cain said, “Who knows every detail of every country or every situation on the planet? Nobody!” and “We’ve got plenty of experts. We need a leader, not a reader.”\textsuperscript{182} While Cain is intelligent, his lack of interest in foreign policy and the world around him renders him unprepared for the presidency.

The 2012 Republican field includes numerous candidates who are not taken seriously by the American people, including a segment of the Republican Party. Conversely, Romney is respected for his intellect and, outside of Huntsman, is the only candidate in the field who can compete with President Obama for the votes of


independents. Additionally, while Romney’s views have vacillated on various issues, few would describe his views as outside of the mainstream.

**Romney’s Advantages: National Campaign Experience and Financial Resources**

Finally, many of the candidates in the race have never run a national campaign before, and they simply lack the resources and infrastructure needed to compete against Romney. Ron Paul is the only other candidate in the Republican field who has ever run a national campaign, as Pawlenty, Bachmann, Perry, Cain, Gingrich, Huntsman, and Santorum are all running for president for the first time. The advantages of having run previously are invaluable for a candidate and his or her campaign team. However, more important than having a team with national experience, which can be achieved by bringing on presidential campaign veterans, candidates who have previously run a top tier presidential campaign have an established donor network that spans across the country. In addition to the traditional fundraising advantage Romney has over the other candidates, the third party spending on his behalf by Super PAC’s in support of his candidacy has provided him a unique advantage that no Republican presidential primary candidate has previously enjoyed.

In addition to having the experience of being in the presidential primary limelight in 2008, Romney has the advantage of having a team around him that was there for his run just four years ago. He ran a top tier campaign in 2008 and many of his senior campaign aides on his current campaign are veterans of his previous run, including his Campaign Manager, Matt Rhoades; Deputy Campaign Manager, Katie
Additionally, Romney has outraised the other candidates, which has proved to be a big advantage in the race. As a result of his career before entering politics, Romney’s private sector work experience enabled him to develop contacts that have been integral to his campaign fundraising machine. Romney’s run in 2008 provided him a national donor list to work off of when running in 2012, which has provided him a clear advantage over the rest of the field.

At the heart of Romney’s fundraising machine has been his domination of business donors, as the business community feels more comfortable with him than any of the other candidate because they look at him as one of them. CEO’s, corporate leaders, and Wall Street insiders appreciate that Romney, a former business executive, understands the issues they face. Romney’s support amongst those on the higher income scale, many of whom are businessmen and women, is evident when you look at where the money he raised came from.

While the securities and investment industry gave over 60% of its $23,700,000 in contributions to President Obama in the 2008 general election, Romney has bested the president to date during the 2012 cycle. Romney leads Obama $6,820,845 to $2,333,240, outpacing him by a margin of nearly three to one, amongst donations from the Securities and Investment field. Romney is also leading his Republican competitors

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amongst this group, as Pawlenty is a distant second to Romney at $590,715 followed by Perry at $454,424 and John Huntsman at $318,323.\(^{184}\)

Romney also leads his competitors in donations from lawyers and law firms, raising $2,976,646. His next closest competitor in the field was Perry, who raised $543,012 in the same period.\(^{185}\) Also, the real estate industry has contributed $2,706,173 to Romney (over a million more than it has given to the president), $660,460 to Perry, $226,850 to Huntsman, $223,415 to Pawlenty and $199,520 to Gingrich. Additionally, Romney leads the Republican field in contributions from the following industries: business services,\(^ {186}\) commercial banks,\(^ {187}\) education,\(^ {188}\) insurance,\(^ {189}\) computers and internet\(^ {190}\) and health professionals.\(^ {191}\)

While Romney has excelled at fundraising, many of his competitors have struggled in order to raise enough money to stay competitive. Through the end of January, Romney raised $62.3 million. Ron Paul can in second with $30.9 million,


raising less than half of what Romney has brought in. Additionally, Romney’s fundraising totals are over three times what Gingrich has raised, while Santorum has raised only $6.7 million in the same period. 192

Ultimately, Romney’s fundraising advantage over his competitors has proved to be his biggest asset in the campaign. The Romney Campaign hired a full-time staff in many of the early primary states while the other candidates were moving their staffs from state-to-state. The campaign’s resource advantages also allowed its staff more time to cultivate relationships with state and local political operatives, who carry considerable influence in their towns, regions and states, while many of the other candidates in the race were forced to meet local party leadership less than a week before the primaries and caucuses. The campaign’s resource advantages also helped its efforts to identify voters who supported Romney and aggressively work to get those individuals to the polls on Election Day, which is known as Get Out the Vote (GOTV).

Romney’s campaign has also used its fundraising advantage over the other campaigns to blanket the airwaves in primary states with adds in support of Romney, which has helped to shape the way in which voters perceive him, in addition to running negative advertisements, which have helped to define his opponents and educate voters on unflattering things they have said or done. While being the “next in line” candidate doesn’t guarantee that he or she will out raise their opponents, since the Federal

Election Commission was formed in 1974, the “next in line” candidate in the Republican presidential primary outraised their opponents in 1980, 1988, and 1996.193

Additionally, fundraising during this election cycle has been somewhat of an anomaly because of the heightened use of Super Political Action Committees, better known as Super PAC’s. In addition to the Romney campaign easily out raising their opponents, pro-Romney Super PAC’s have aggressively raised money and spent it generously in support of Romney. In total, he received support from two Super PAC’s, Restore Our Future and Citizens for a Working America PAC, which have spent a combined $37.2 million to help Romney win the nomination through March 19th.194 Restore Our Future spent a total of $36.7 million, including $1.2 million in support of Romney’s candidacy and $35.5 million opposing Gingrich and Santorum,195 while Citizens for a Working America PAC has spent a total of $445,000 in support of Romney.196

While Romney is not the only candidate to take advantage of unlimited Super PAC money, the Super PACs that support other candidates in the Republican race have failed to come close to matching the resources raised by the pro-Romney Super PACs. Super PAC’s supporting Romney have spent more money than the combined totals


spent by those supporting Gingrich, Santorum, Cain, Bachmann, Huntsman, and Paul. Outside of Romney, Gingrich’s Super PACs’ have spent the next highest amount, totaling $16.6 million, which was largely attributable to Winning Our Future PAC, while Santorum’s PACs’ have spent $6.7 million, Perry’s have spent $4.2 million, Paul’s have spent $3.6 million, and Huntsman’s have spent $2.8 million.197

Ultimately, Romney is the only candidate in the Republican field that the American people take seriously, and, despite his flaws, he will win the nomination because he’s the best candidate. The 2012 Republican contest has largely been defined by the many debates between the candidates, as they have provided a spring board for candidates struggling in the polls, most notably Gingrich and Cain; however, Romney’s consistently strong performances in the 25 plus debates between May 2011 and March 2012198 is a clear indication of his ability to perform and remain poised in high pressure situations. Romney’s ability to excel in these debates, even as he had a target on his back, is another reason why he is the best candidate in the race. Additionally, his consistency is no doubt reassuring to leaders within the Republican Party, who understand the importance of running an intelligent candidate who can compete against President Obama in a debate.

The party’s support for Romney over the other candidates is clear when you look at the way he has dominated the rest of the field in terms of endorsements from

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197 “Super PACs,” Open Secrets.

Governors, U.S. Senators and Members of Congress. While endorsements are no guarantee of how a candidate will perform, each endorsement results in an intangible amount of support from voters who admire the politician endorsing the candidate, and they provide an opportunity to connect with supporters of the endorsing politician. Additionally, endorsements help candidates with their ground operations, as elected officials typically offer to share their political infrastructure and allies in order to help the candidate get out their message and drive their supporters to the polls. In total, Romney was endorsed by ten governors compared to three governor’s endorsing Perry and two governors endorsing Gingrich. Romney also led the field in terms of endorsements from U.S. senators. In total, 15 senators endorsed Romney compared to one for Perry and one for Paul, who was endorsed by his son. Romney was also endorsed by 63 members of Congress, 13 members endorsed Perry, 12 members endorsed Gingrich, three endorsed Santorum, and two ended Paul.199

Romney is the best candidate in the race and has led the 2012 field in endorsements, money raised and has won every debate. While Romney’s clinching of the nomination may take longer than his recent predecessors, the Republican Party will continue its tradition of nominating the “next in line” candidate for president.

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