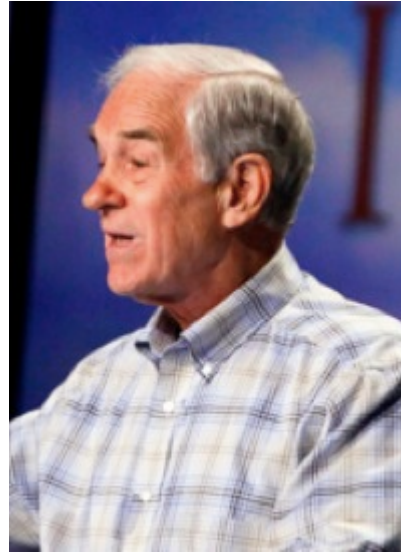




Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on August 15, 2011

Media Mostly Silent on Ron Paul's Surging Candidacy

A link takes the reader to "the full article," which notes that Bachmann, the third-term Minnesota congresswoman "won 4,823 votes, narrowly edging out Ron Paul," who received exactly 152 fewer votes among the 16,892 ballots cast. That was the only mention of Paul in the "full article."



It might seem strange that Pawlenty's distant third-place finish and his exit from the presidential race immediately thereafter should draw more news coverage than Paul's virtual tie with Bachmann for first place. Sunday's [New York Times](#) at least fit Paul, rather than Pawlenty, into the headline and noted in its story the closeness of Paul's 28 percent of the vote to Bachmann's 29 percent. (Actually, it was even closer when you look past the rounding off of numbers. Bachmann's total represented 28.55 percent, while Paul's 4,671 votes gave him 27.65 percent of the total.) But it barely mentioned the Texas Congressman thereafter, beyond noting only that his "libertarian views put him at odds with many Republicans." The *Washington Post* made only one passing mention of Paul in its report on the Ames Straw poll. On CNN's [Reliable Sources](#) Sunday, *Politico's* Roger Simon noted the lack of coverage of Paul's strong second-place finish. Prefacing his remarks by noting ironically, "It's odd for me to be a Ron Paul supporter," Simon said:

But he lost to Michele Bachmann by nine-tenths of one percentage point. In a straw poll that isn't supposed to pick winners, but is supposed to tell us which way the wind is blowing, that's as good as win. So we had a tie for first. But where is he on the morning shows this morning? Where are all the stories analyzing what it means that Ron Paul essentially tied for first place at Ames?

Host Howard Kurtz asked: "And the reason that he has essentially been ignored is...?"

"Well, the media doesn't believe that Ron Paul has a hoot in hell's chance of winning the Iowa caucuses, winning the Republican nomination, or winning the presidency. So we're going to ignore him," Simon replied. At that point radio talkshow host Stephanie Miller chimed in with her assessment of how both the news media and opposing candidates should deal with Ron Paul:



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Yeah, I mean, I think it's because, Howard, that's the one thing Donald Trump has ever been right about, that [Paul's] unelectable.... My favorite part of the debate [in Ames] Thursday night is that, you know, Rick Santorum broke the golden rule of Republican debate and that's pretending that Ron Paul is invisible.

The discussion then focused on Bachmann and two candidates who really were invisible at the Ames Straw Poll for the simple reason that they weren't there — Texas Governor Rick Perry, who announced his candidacy Saturday in South Carolina and received 718 write in votes, or 3.62 percent; and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, who was on the ballot, but has done little campaigning in the state whose lead off caucuses early next year will be the first voting for delegates in the 2012 nominating process. Romney, who has been focusing instead on New Hampshire, where the first primary will be held, received just 567 votes, or 3.36 percent on Saturday. Yet the [Times](#) the next day described the results in Iowa as the emergence of a three-way race for the Republican nomination:

The race, at least in the short term, will focus on this trio: Mr. Romney, who is seen as next in line for the nomination, if the traditional rules of Republican presidential politics apply; Mrs. Bachmann, whose insurgent style has captured the imagination of many conservative activists; and Mr. Perry, who has held elective office his entire adult life, but has tapped into passionate small-government, anti-Washington sentiment within the party.

The [Washington Post](#) came to the same conclusion: "A Republican presidential campaign that has been slow to take shape suddenly snapped into focus Sunday, with an unlikely three-person top tier of former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney, Rep. Michele Bachmann (Minn.) and the newest entry, Texas Gov. Rick Perry.... Bachmann was not considered a particularly strong candidate when the year began, but her victory in Saturday's straw poll cemented her status in the upper ranks of the GOP field."

Thus Perry vaulted into "top tier" status the moment he threw his 10-gallon Texas hat into the ring and Romney is the media-anointed frontrunner by virtue of being "next in line" — i.e. he finished second to John McCain in the contest for the nomination the last time around. But even allowing for the fact that Romney is a former and Perry a current governor of a large state, how does Bachmann's edging out of Paul by nine-tenths of a percentage point propel her into top-tier status, while Paul gets scarcely a mention, save by pundits who pronounce him "unelectable"? If the 28.55 percent of the vote Bachmann got at Ames elevates her to the "upper ranks of the GOP field," shouldn't Paul's 27.65 percent do the same?

It is worth noting, too, that Bachmann enjoyed in this contest what might be called a home-field advantage. Not only is she from the neighboring state of Minnesota, she is also a native of Iowa, having been born in Waterloo and having spent her early childhood there. It is a part of her biography that she mentioned repeatedly in speeches and campaign ads. "I tell people: Everything I need to know in life I learned in Iowa," she told a crowd of supporters on Saturday. "I have always been grateful than I'm an Iowan, and I believe it's time we had an Iowan in the White House," Bachmann said,

Paul, a 12-term Congressman from Texas, won more votes than Romney did in winning the Ames poll four years ago. His 4,671 votes are the fourth highest total in the history of the Ames Straw poll. The results suggest his campaign is catching on with voters in a way that it did not four years ago, when he campaigned for the presidency as a little-known candidate who finished well behind the top contenders. But given the experience of the past four years, the retired obstetrician's warnings of an economic collapse, his scathing criticism of the Federal Reserve Board's monetary manipulations, and his outspoken opposition to a growing and costly array of military interventions are capturing the attention



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of a public weary of wars and burdened by a weak economy. And by opposing the Patriot Act, with its unconstitutional authorization of warrantless government searches, and the intrusive searches carried on at airports by the Transportation Safety Administration, Paul has struck a responsive chord with Americans who believe the federal government is abusing privacy rights and individual liberty. As an [Associated Press story](#) on Sunday put it, Paul is "shaping the 2012 Republican primary by giving voice to the party's libertarian wing and reflecting frustration with the United States' international entanglements."

Paul also emphasized his opposition to abortion in a state where social conservatives play a key role in determining the winner of the Iowa caucuses. "I believe in a very limited role for government," he told a cheering crowd at the Ames straw poll on Saturday. "But the prime reason that government exists in a free society is to protect liberty, but also to protect life. And I mean all life. You cannot have relative value for life and deal with that. We cannot play God and make those decisions. All life is precious."

"Dr. Paul is surging in this race, and today's results show the strength of his grassroots support and top notch organization," said campaign chairman Jesse Benton, "These straw poll results, our growing poll numbers and our strong fundraising shows that our message is resonating with Iowans and Americans everywhere."



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