



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 24, 2011

## Reluctant Daniels Out, Feisty Pawlenty in 2012 Race

On May 14, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, Republican winner of the 2008 Iowa Caucuses, announced on his Fox News show that he will not be competing for the prize in 2012.

The Daniels announcement came as a disappointment to many Republicans who thought the fiscally conservative governor and former director of the Office of Management and Budget for the first two years of the George W. Bush administration would have been a substantive candidate and a formidable foe to President Barack Obama in next year's balloting. But the Hoosier Governor cited family considerations in announcing his decision in an e-mail to his supporters in the early hours of Sunday morning.



"In the end, I was able to resolve every competing consideration but one," the two-term Governor said. "The interests and wishes of my family, is the most important consideration of all. If I have disappointed you, I will always be sorry."

In announcing his candidacy on Monday, Pawlenty pulled few if any punches as he laid the blame for the nation's stagnant economy and soaring deficits squarely on Obama. "If we want a new and better direction, we need a new and better President," the Minnesotan said as he officially kicked off his campaign with a speech in Des Moines, Iowa.

"President Obama's policies have failed. But more than that, he won't even tell us the truth about what it's really going to take to get out of the mess we're in." Pawlenty promised to take on agricultural interests close to home as well Wall Street recipients of government bailouts. Declaring "a time for truth," Pawlenty said, "That's why later this week, I'm going to New York City to tell Wall Street that if I'm elected, the era of bailouts, handouts, and carve outs will be over. No more subsidies, no more special treatment. No more Fannie and Freddie, no more TARP, and no more 'too big to fail.'" The savings needed to get the country back on sound fiscal footing "are not in the billions, but in the trillions of dollars," he said. "And the cuts we need to make the cuts we must make can't just be to somebody else's programs."

He will also go to the nation's capital this week, Pawlenty said, "to remind the federal bureaucracy that government exists to serve its citizens, not its employees. The truth is, people getting paid by the taxpayers shouldn't get a better deal than the taxpayers themselves." But Pawlenty promised to tell the truth not only to Washington and Wall Street, but to Iowans as well.

"The truth about federal energy subsidies, including federal subsidies for ethanol, is that they have to be phased out," he said. "We need to do it gradually. We need to do it fairly. But we need to do it." Pawlenty's campaign against the ethanol program may at least partially offset whatever advantage he



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may have in Iowa from having been Governor of a neighbor state. The program has been popular in the Hawkeye State, where it has significantly increased the sale of corn. Arizona Sen. John McCain, an outspoken opponent of ethanol subsidies, skipped the Iowa caucuses during his campaign for the presidential nomination in 2000 and did not fare well there in 2008, finishing fourth behind Huckabee, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, and former Tennessee Senator Fred Thompson.

Pawlenty also declared himself ready to take hold of what has long been considered the politically lethal “third rail” of Social Security and Medicare reform. “Our national debt, combined with Obamacare, have placed Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid in real peril,” he said. “I’ll tell young people the truth that over time and for them only, we’re going to gradually raise their Social Security retirement age. And, I’ll also tell the truth to wealthy seniors that we will means test Social Security’s annual cost-of-living adjustment.” For Medicare he proposes “pay for performance” incentives that will “reward good doctors and wise consumers. And, we need to block grant Medicaid to the states. There, innovative reformers closest to the patients can solve problems and save money,” Pawlenty said.

“America is facing a crushing debt crisis the likes of which we’ve never seen before,” Pawlenty said. “We need to cut spending, and we need to cut it ... big time. The hard truth is that there are no longer any sacred programs.” Yet the former Midwestern governor made no mention of military spending or of Iraq, Afghanistan, or any of America’s other overseas commitments. Instead he hammered away at the Obama record on joblessness and deficits.

“Barack Obama promised that spending \$800 billion dollars on a pork-filled stimulus bill would keep unemployment under 8 percent,” the candidate said. “He promised that bailouts for well-connected businesses were a good deal for the country. He promised that a federal takeover of health care would keep costs under control. And hard as it is to believe, he even promised the deficit would be cut in half in his first term.” Like other GOP hopefuls, Pawlenty plans to use Obama’s rhetoric from the 2008 campaign against him.

“Fluffy promises of hope and change don’t buy our groceries, make our mortgage payments, put gas in our cars, or pay for our children’s clothes,” he said.

Photo of Mitch Daniels: AP Images



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