



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on February 29, 2012

Romney Wins Arizona, Michigan

Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney only narrowly defeated former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, 41-38 percent, in Romney's home state of Michigan, but handily won the primary contest in Arizona February 28. Santorum placed second in both contests, with Ron Paul finishing a distant third (though double his vote of 2008) in Michigan and Newt Gingrich placed fourth with only single digits. Gingrich won 16 percent in Arizona, enough to best Paul's fourth place eight percent vote.



The tight race for the win in the Michigan primary caused concern for the Romney campaign, as his rivals — particularly Newt Gingrich — had opined that Romney would have to win his “home state” of Michigan in order to keep his campaign viable. “All I know is we came to Mitt Romney's home state, got outspent by millions and millions of dollars, and at least according to the polls, it's very competitive,” John Brubaker, a senior strategist for Santorum, [told](#) the *Detroit Free Press* after the primary.

Mitt Romney did grow up in Michigan, a state where his [father](#) served as Governor from 1962-69. Romney's rivals have tried to multiply Romney's “home” states in order to excuse electoral losses in recent months, adding Massachusetts (where Mitt Romney served as Governor), New Hampshire (where Romney has a summer home), Maine (which shares some media markets with Massachusetts), Utah (where Romney worked to save the Olympics), and just about any other state with a large population of Mormons.

According to Democrats, Romney's real electoral trouble in Michigan is attributable to backlash against his November 19, 2008 op-ed in the *New York Times* entitled “Let Detroit Go Bankrupt.” The Romney op-ed [column](#) was a plea to avoid the taxpayer bailout of General Motors and Chrysler, and Ford during the depths of the recession. Romney claimed he did not write the headline for the column, and that the left-wing *New York Times* placed the incendiary headline above his sober words to encourage a managed bankruptcy for insolvent auto manufacturers:

If General Motors, Ford and Chrysler get the bailout that their chief executives asked for yesterday, you can kiss the American automotive industry goodbye. It won't go overnight, but its demise will be virtually guaranteed.

Without that bailout, Detroit will need to drastically restructure itself. With it, the automakers will stay the course — the suicidal course of declining market shares, insurmountable labor and retiree burdens, technology atrophy, product inferiority and never-ending job losses. Detroit needs a turnaround, not a check.

Mitt Romney — whose father George Romney had been the CEO of American Motors in the 1950s — argued in the 2008 column that unmanageable union contracts and poor management made the companies impossible to turn profitable without renegotiating of labor contracts and new management in bankruptcy. Romney did not argue against bailouts in principle. He had publicly favored the



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taxpayer bailout of huge Wall Street banks under the \$700 billion TARP program just weeks earlier, a fact that Rick Santorum highlighted as elitist and smacking of favoritism in campaign advertisements and events.

Democrats have [pounced upon](#) the auto industry issue, charging that Romney was wrong and that General Motors is once again the largest auto manufacturer in the world. President Obama even attended a United Auto Workers (UAW) conference in Washington, D.C. February 28 where he [touted](#) the alleged success of his bailout of General Motors and Chrysler (Ford didn't need a bailout):

President Obama: And I want you to know, you know why I knew this rescue would succeed?

Audience member: How did you do it? [Laughter.]

President Obama: You want to know? It wasn't because of anything the government did. It wasn't just because of anything management did. It was because I believed in you. I placed my bet on the American worker.

Obama's remarks, timed for the day of the Michigan primary, were almost certainly planned as an attack on the person he thought would be his most likely rival in November. Of course, the American auto industry bailout did not "succeed" in any true market sense. The taxpayers lost tens of billions of dollars in a General Motors bailout that will likely never be recovered and Chrysler was sold off to Italian auto manufacturer Fiat. Much of the stock in General Motors was simply turned over to a [UAW-created health care trust](#) by White House negotiators. The UAW is a top [donor to Democratic Party politicians](#) nationally.

The Michigan primary was also the site of an interesting effort by some Democratic voters to back Santorum as a slight to Romney. "The idea is to help Obama get re-elected," Michigan Democrat Bruce Fealk [told](#) CNN.com. "We want Mitt Romney to go bankrupt in Michigan." It's unclear from exit polling whether the number of Democrats voting in the GOP primary was significantly higher than usual, however.

Romney will take all of Arizona's 29 [delegates](#) in the winner-take-all primary. The Michigan primary divides delegates among the highest vote totals in individual congressional districts, so Romney and Santorum will split most of the delegates from Michigan.



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