



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on March 25, 2012

Santorum Trounces Romney in Louisiana

In his victory speech, Santorum [claimed](#) that he was following in the footsteps of Ronald Reagan's 1976 campaign. "Ronald Reagan fought that battle in 1976 and he did something that had not been done since: as someone as a conservative running against the establishment, he won 11 states. Well tonight, thanks to the great people of Louisiana, we have won our 11th state in this primary fight," Santorum said in his victory speech. Of course, Reagan lost the nomination to Gerald Ford in 1976, who then lost the general race to Jimmy Carter.



CNN [trumpeted](#) in its headline on the Santorum victory that "Santorum's Louisiana win does little to change the game of delegate math." The story emphasized that Romney remains far ahead in delegate counts, and had been expected to lose Louisiana. Indeed, Romney has failed to win a single deep South state in the primary season.

Texas Congressman Ron Paul [ran](#) a distant fourth with just six percent of the vote, but Paul may end up at the Tampa GOP national convention with more delegates than his numbers tell. Paul's people have been [dominating caucus votes](#) in Missouri, according to the March 24 *St. Louis Dispatch*. "Paul's supporters cast a majority vote with 158 ballots. The Santorum slate had 74 votes, while Romney's backers mustered 50 votes." Santorum had won the non-binding statewide primary in February, but may lose the delegate race in that state.

Meanwhile, the Santorum campaign lost no time continuing to pound away at the Romney campaign for its Etch A Sketch comment March 21. Santorum National Communications Director Hogan Gidley said in a [press release](#) after the results that "There is no other way to interpret tonight's results but as vindication for Rick Santorum's consistent, conservative message of strengthening our nation based on our founding values. Louisiana voters overwhelmingly rejected Mitt Romney's push to press the reset button, because they know that we need a clear contrast to President Obama's disastrous policies."

Senior Romney Advisor Eric Fehrstrom had [told](#) CNN March 21 that Romney would change his political tactics in the general election:

Question: Is there a concern that the pressure from Santorum and Gingrich might force the governor to tack so far to the right that it would hurt him with moderate voters in the general election?

Fehrstrom: I think you hit a reset button for the fall campaign. Everything changes. It's almost like an [Etch A Sketch](#). We start all over again.

The Fehrstrom comment went viral, with all of Romney's opponents' campaigns pouncing and bringing Etch A Sketch toys to rallies. "I thought it was pretty clear with that Etch A Sketch comment I was



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referring to the race, and not the candidate, but such is politics,” Fehrnstrom [explained](#) later, to little avail.

“You just can't make that kind of stuff up,” Ron Paul campaign chairman John Tate crowed in an email blast to supporters. “But I think comparing this race to an Etch A Sketch is appropriate.” The Paul campaign has released an [Etch A Sketch television advertisement](#).

Santorum publicly [speculated](#) March 23 that an Etch A Sketch candidate might be worse than having Obama reelected. “You win by giving people a choice. You win by giving people the opportunity to see a different vision for our country, not someone who’s just going to be a little different than the person in there. If they’re going to be a little different, we might as well stay with what we have instead of taking a risk of what may be the Etch A Sketch candidate for the future.”

The Romney campaign pounced back, [suggesting](#) Santorum wasn't being a loyal Republican for his comments. “I was disappointed to hear that Rick Santorum would rather have Barack Obama as president than a Republican. This election is more important than any one person. It is about the future of America. Any of the Republicans running would be better than President Obama and his record of failure.”

Yet Romney has been dogged by claims he is little different ideologically from President Obama. Indeed, the President himself has repeatedly suggested he was inspired by Massachusetts' Romneycare to create Obamacare, a claim Obama reiterated in a March 22 [interview](#) with Marketplace.org. In that interview, Obama said: “We designed a program that actually previously had support of Republicans — including the person who may end up being the Republican standard bearer and is now pretending like he came up with something different.”

Photo of Rick Santorum: AP Images



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