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Posted at 10:54 AM ET, 05/20/2011

Tim Pawlenty to announce for president Monday

By Chris Cillizza



Former Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty will formally enter the presidential race Monday in Iowa. (AP Photo/Jim Mone)

Former Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty will formally enter the 2012 Republican presidential race on Monday in Iowa, an aide to his campaign confirmed Friday.

Pawlenty is scheduled to be in Des Moines Monday, part of a week that will take him to Florida for a Facebook town hall and Washington, D.C. for an appearance at the Cato Institute.

Pawlenty's decision to announce his candidacy is not surprising — he has been aggressively running a national campaign for months.

But his decision to do so in Iowa is interesting, reinforcing the import of that state's first-in-the-nation

caucuses for his chances in the race.

Pawlenty, who spent eight years as governor before stepping aside in 2010, remains a largely unknown figure to most Republican voters.

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But, he has spent the last year — or more — putting the pieces in place for a presidential run and has attracted considerable staff talent and shown some adeptness in terms of fundraising.

Pawlenty is regarded by many Republican political observers as the most credible candidate in the field in the event frontrunning former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney stumbles badly in the contest.

Pawlenty has focused heavily on Iowa in hopes of building momentum there that will carry him to the nomination.

Pawlenty's hand was strengthened in the Hawkeye State when former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee decided not to run for president although he could well face a stiff challenge for supremacy in the Hawkeye State from Minnesota Rep. Michele Bachmann.

On Friday, Pawlenty rolled out an impressive team of Iowa advisers that includes: former state party chairman Chuck Larson, Jr., former Republican National Committee Midwest political director Karen Slifka, former Iowa for Tax Relief president Ed Failor Jr. and Eric Woolson who managed Huckabee's 2008 Iowa campaign.

The challenge for Pawlenty over the coming months is to build on the largely behind-the-scenes successes he has experienced in the race to date.

By Chris Cillizza | 10:54 AM ET, 05/20/2011

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