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Pawlenty both praises and differentiates himself from Ryan

By: [CNN Senior Producer Kevin Bohn](#)

Washington (CNN) - Republican presidential candidate Tim Pawlenty on Wednesday praised House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan but said he would soon propose a different way of reining in entitlement spending.

Ryan's budget bill includes making Medicare into a voucher-like system in which recipients would receive payments from the government to help cover expenses but eliminate the current way in which the government pays a part of the all of the medical costs of recipients.

During a forum at the Cato Institute, which believes in a limited role for government, Pawlenty lauded Ryan and his budget overhaul efforts.

"The leadership and courage of Rep. Ryan of putting that forward should be noted," Pawlenty said.

He also criticized President Barack Obama not for not being bold enough initially on the issue. "He did not have the courage to do what it take to lead the nation in one of the most important and pressing issues," Pawlenty said.

Both in Florida on Tuesday and at a forum Wednesday in Washington, the former two-term Minnesota governor said he would be presenting a detailed budget plan, including how to reform Medicare, soon. As to how his plan will compare to Ryan's, he said, "in general the direction of it is positive, but I am going to have my own plan and so we are going to have some differences from his plan. Some things will be the same. Some things will be different."

As to the differences, he told reporters later, "Our plan will include a series of options that people can choose from. One of which will be to stay in the current program, but we are going to have some other attractive options that I think are going to make a big difference."

Twice Pawlenty refused to answer a reporter's question of whether he would sign or veto Ryan's budget if it was presented to him as president.

The approach taken by Pawlenty came after former House Speaker Newt Gingrich found himself in a storm of controversy by criticizing Ryan's plan on NBC's "Meet the Press" as right-wing social engineering and too radical an approach. After many Republicans called him out, he apologized to Ryan and now says that blueprint is a good place to begin a discussion of the budget problem.

Asked about Tuesday's special congressional election in New York, in which Democrats credited their victory to opposition to the GOP budget bill, Pawlenty said, "Special elections are sometimes not the best barometer of the overall sentiment, but clearly there is some concern about how those issues were presented in New York."

Since announcing his formal candidacy Monday, Pawlenty has been trying to distinguish his campaign by going into the so-called lion's den to specific locations and delivering a tough-love message to bring down the deficit - in Iowa, saying ethanol subsidies should be eliminated; in Florida, saying the

Social Security retirement age needs to be eventually increased; and in Washington, saying federal pay and benefits need to be re-evaluated.

"In many cases public employees are both overpaid and over-benefitted...compared to their private-sector counterparts, and that is just not fair," he said. "We can't have the people who are being paid by the taxpayers getting a better deal than the taxpayers themselves, and these things have to be reconciled." He called for a continuation of the freeze on federal government workers' salaries, excluding the military, and to also include benefits in that initiative in an effort to bring down that level to that of the private sector.

You can follow Kevin Bohn on Twitter @KevinBohnCNN.

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1. **Republican Robber Baron**

Tim is truly a shiester that speaks from both sides of his mouth. He makes even Slick Mitt look credible. Then he claims to have balanced the budget in MN , when in fact he left the state in terrible shape by taking \$ away from critical programs to fund tax breaks for the "job creators".

Typical Republican Establishment creep that endorses "Radical Right-Wing Social Engineering" (Newt's own words). Ryan and his cronies are more of the same proven failures that we already saw during Hoover and Bush.

May 25, 2011 07:33 pm at 7:33 pm |

2. **Rudy NYC**

Ka-Chunk! The Republican messaging machine has been cranked up again. The message is that the Ryan Plan was just a starting point, but we already know and must not forget that the Republican motive is to privatize entitlements, and then cut them off as unnecessary expenditures.

The starting point rhetoric is just a trap to elicit a counter proposal, which will be derided to shreds no matter what it contains. I would open with a proposal reining in waste and fraud through stronger legislation and enforcement.

May 25, 2011 07:41 pm at 7:41 pm |

3. **J**

GO AWAY!!!!!! you will never be potus.

May 25, 2011 07:46 pm at 7:46 pm |

4. **John**

Why Is It you Republican don't listen to what the American People are saying. Are you Republican really that dumb, the American People don't like the Paul Ryan Plan , Now can we make It any clearer for you. Did you learn anything with the vote In NY yesterday. What got to happen to you Idiot a brick got to fall on your head or something. Tim Pawlenty If you had a brain you would be dangerous, But if you did have a brain than that bridge would have fallen. And Minnesota wouldn't be Billions of dollar In dept.

May 25, 2011 07:52 pm at 7:52 pm |

5. **The Greedy Old Pigs have declared class war on America!**

Nice to see Pawlenty drinking the radical right-wing extremist Kool-Aid. He's firmly established now as another faith-based cultist worshipping at the alter of disproved theories like deregulation, tax cuts for the filthy rich and trusting big corporations to look out for average Americans.. Way to dial up the crazy to 11, timmy!

May 25, 2011 08:21 pm at 8:21 pm |

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