

Pawlenty appeals to conservatives

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Washington - Republican presidential candidate Tim Pawlenty called for changes in the Social Security system and cuts to Wall Street subsidies on Wednesday as he took his "hard truth" campaign to Washington.

The former Minnesota governor, who announced on Sunday he was running for the White House, said he favoured a form of means testing - using a person's wealth to partially set benefits - to limit payments to better-off Americans under the government's Social Security pension system for the elderly.

Pawlenty, speaking at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank that mixes conservative economics with liberal views of personal freedoms, said that in tackling the federal budget deficit, "There can be no more ducking, bobbing and weaving".

Trailing in the national polls, Pawlenty says he will not balk at delivering tough messages to voters, including that corporate subsidies and popular programmes like the government's Medicare health insurance programme must be reined in to trim a projected \$1.4-trillion US budget deficit.

Earlier this week, he was praised by many conservatives when he backed scrapping subsidies for the corn-based fuel ethanol - in the corn state of Iowa.

"Clearly within the Republican ranks at this point, all of the candidates are feeling like they have to cozy up to the tea party people," Chris Arterton, a George Washington University political management professor, said of the conservative tea party movement. "He is trying to position himself as outside of Washington."

Pawlenty has sold himself as a budget deficit warrior but Democrats and some other critics in his home state say he only papered over the cracks in the state's budget and Minnesota is back in financial trouble.

Former Republican Minnesota Governor Arne Carlson this week accused Pawlenty of presiding over the biggest tax increase in the state's history - because of increased local property taxes. - Reuters



Republican presidential contender Tim Pawlenty arrives to deliver remarks at the Cato Institute in Washington. Pawlenty called for changes in the Social Security system and cuts to Wall Street subsidies on Wednesday as he took his "hard truth" campaign on the road.

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