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Pawlenty to Officially Step Into 2012 Fray

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Former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty (R) will announce Monday in Iowa that he is running for president, according to one of his aides.

Pawlenty announced in March that he was exploring a bid for the White House and has already traveled extensively to states with early primaries, including Iowa, and even participated in a debate for presidential candidates in South Carolina earlier this month. But Monday's announcement will make his 2012 campaign official.

Pawlenty has one official event Monday in Iowa — a town hall in downtown Des Moines, where his wife is expected to introduce him.

On Tuesday, Pawlenty is scheduled to be in Florida for a press conference in Coral Gables. Pawlenty will speak to reporters again Wednesday in Washington, D.C., after an event at the Cato Institute.

However, Pawlenty's decision to announce his campaign in Iowa is particularly notable given the state's first-in-the-nation caucuses. It's yet another indication that Pawlenty plans to make the state his first priority in his campaign for the White House.

On Friday, Pawlenty announced that he added four senior consultants to his Iowa team: Chuck Larson, a former chairman of the Iowa Republican Party; Karen Slifka, the former regional political director for the Republican National Committee; Ed Failor Jr., former president of Iowans for Tax Relief; and Eric Woolson, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee's 2008 campaign manager in the Hawkeye State.

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