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Tim Pawlenty: I'll Cut Anything To Balance The Budget, Except Defense

Evan Morris-Santoro | May 25, 2011, 5:41PM [Recommend](#) 182

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Tim Pawlenty is big on sacred cows these days. Since formally declaring his White House run in Iowa Monday, Pawlenty has been criss-crossing the country jumping on third rails with both feet. But on Wednesday in Washington, he said that even his political courage has its limits.

No more ethanol subsidies, Pawlenty told the corn-producing caucus-goers in Iowa. Get ready for some undefined future plan about entitlements that includes changes to Social Security, he told a crowd in Florida. And soon he's headed to Wall Street to, as he told Wednesday's audience at the CATO Institute in Washington, tell them how he plans to "clean up the mess."

"There are no sacred cows," he said more than once during his remarks.

All government spending will be on the table in a Pawlenty administration, he said. Except one massive chunk: the Department of Defense. Pawlenty's speech at CATO was billed as a journey through the fearless choices he made as governor of Minnesota to tackle the state's budget problems. For about a half hour, he told tales of standing up to public workers unions and other powerful constituencies whom other politicians dare not

mess with. But when he was asked to tell the hard truth about defense spending, Pawlenty said keeping that budget line at least as big as it is now would be "right at the top" of his prioritized budget plan should he become president.

"I'm not one who's going to stand before you and tell you that we should cut the defense budget," Pawlenty said.

Pawlenty said that America should be able to "draw down our presence in Iraq and Afghanistan in the not too distant future." But when it comes to the thousands of troops stationed all over the globe (and the hefty price tag that goes with them), Pawlenty is strictly a status quo kind of guy.

"We need to make sure we have a presence as the United States of America in areas that could affect our national security interests and the security interests of our friends and allies," Pawlenty said.

Pawlenty said he'd look for ways to make the DoD "more efficient," including shutting down some projects and programs. But any money saved from that effort will not go toward paying down the nation's massive debt, if Pawlenty has his way. They'd be plowed right back into the defense infrastructure in a Pawlenty White House, he said.

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	Barack Obama Job Approval	51.0% Approve	44.4% Disapprove	+6.6 Spread
	Congressional Generic Ballot	42.0% DEM	41.3% GOP	+0.7 Spread

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"There are no sacred cows," he said more than once during his remarks.

Except defense spending and tax cuts, which are the actual cause of the