

Previous

## Campaign 2012: Hello Tim Pawlenty, GOP Presidential Candidate

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Tim Pawlenty speaks during the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition's Spring Event on March 8, 2011. (Brian Frank/courtesy Reuters)

Only one Big Ten university has ever graduated an American president—The University of Michigan, which was Gerald Ford's alma mater. Ford was *appointed* president, so it remains the case that no Big Ten university has ever graduated someone who was *elected* president. The University of Minnesota has come close, not once but twice. Hubert Humphrey (Class of 1939) and Walter Mondale (Class of 1951) both became the Democratic Party's presidential nominee. A Minnesota graduate who hopes that the third time is the charm is Tim Pawlenty (Class of 1983). Today the former Minnesota governor threw his hat in the ring for 2012, announcing that he is creating a presidential exploratory committee. And he did it in hi-tech, twenty-first century way—with a web video posted on Facebook.

### **The Basics.**

Full Name: Timothy James Pawlenty

Date of Birth: November 27, 1960

Place of Birth: St. Paul, Minnesota

Religion: Evangelical Christian

Marital Status: Married

Children: Anna Pawlenty 17, Mara Pawlenty 14

Alma Mater: BA University of Minnesota, JD University of Minnesota

Political Offices Held: Governor of Minnesota from 2003-2011, Minnesota State House majority leader 1999-2002, Minnesota State House of Representatives 1992-2002, Eagan City Council

**What Supporters Say.** Pawlenty has impressed a lot of people during his political career. At a pancake breakfast back in January, Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio) encouraged Pawlenty to run:

You know, I am not endorsing anyone, but I am happy to introduce any candidate who comes here to people like you. But I hope Tim Pawlenty will run because he has a great record and a great message.

Back in July 2008, when Sarah Palin was still an obscure governor, Pawlenty was a favorite for the vice presidential slot for Sen. John McCain's ticket. Back then, on a visit to Minnesota, McCain called Pawlenty:

One of the great governors of this United States of America, a great friend and a great leader.

Jim Kirkpatrick, chair of Iowa's Fayette County Republican Party, announced his support for Pawlenty early on:

Here's a good Midwesterner, down to earth, who likes the people. He did very well in Minnesota. He got a lot of independents and Blue Dog Democrats to vote for him. Very Reagan-esque...[Pawlenty is] head and shoulders above anyone else.

**What Critics Say.** Pawlenty has more than a few folks who won't be donating to his presidential campaign. Tim Penny, a former Democratic congressman who ran against Pawlenty for governor in 2002 as the Independence Party's candidate, complained in 2008 that Pawlenty's political sensitivities make him too cautious to be a visionary leader:

He's done popular stuff, easy stuff, symbolic stuff. I can't think of a single issue in which he has been leading public opinion. What you find here is an unremarkable record.

At the 2010 Conservative Political Action Conference, Pawlenty alluded to Tiger Woods's marital scandal and suggested that conservatives reject Democrats the same way Woods's wife did, by taking "a 9-iron" to "smash the window out of big government in this country." Chief spokesman for the Democratic National Committee Brad Woodhouse said that with his remarks, Pawlenty took

a 9-iron to his own credibility. The American people don't need more empty sound bites and red-meat one-liners for the extreme right wing. Pawlenty proved today that the only thing he is serious about is pandering to the radical right wing.

**Stories You Will Hear More About.** Pawlenty will talk a lot about his blue-collar roots and triumph over adversity. His father was a truck driver, and he lost his mother to cancer when he was sixteen. During his teenage years he worked in a grocery store. He eventually became the first in his family to graduate from college. A successful lawyer and politician, Pawlenty lives in a four bedroom house in the affluent Minneapolis suburb of Eagan. The Pawlenty residence is not quite as luxurious, however, as Mitt Romney's \$10 million summer house and Jon Huntsman's new \$3.6 million pad in Washington, DC.

Pawlenty married his wife, Mary Elizabeth Anderson, in 1987. The couple met in law school. In 2010, Pawlenty opened most of his speeches by telling the audience about his "red-hot, smoking wife." Mary Pawlenty is an evangelical Christian; her husband converted from Catholicism when they married. In addition to working as a district judge in Dakota County, Mrs. Pawlenty has served twice as president of the National Association of Evangelicals, an organization that represents more than 45,000 local churches. At a church reception before Tim Pawlenty was sworn in as governor in 2003, Mary Pawlenty told the guests:

I believe the God of government has brought Tim Pawlenty to the governor's office in St. Paul for peace and good in the lives of all Minnesotans.

As governor, Pawlenty supported President Bush's faith-based initiatives. In 2005, he brought Bush's approach to his own state, creating a council to mirror the White House's Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives. In the same year, Pawlenty instituted a National Day of Prayer service at the Minnesota state capitol. He is already tapping into the evangelical community for its support in a presidential bid. He recently told an audience of evangelicals:

The constitution was designed to protect people of faith from government, not to protect government from people of faith.

Pawlenty relaxes by watching hockey fights. He loves "watching two guys, gloves down, helmets off, pounding each other while the ref stands back and lets it happen." He says that although hockey fighting "seems barbaric," he has "learned lessons that have

applied, surprisingly, to my career in politics.” He writes in his book, *Courage to Stand*:

Occasionally, if I really need a good mental break and I can't get out on the ice for one of those old-timers' games, I'll sit at the computer when I'm home at night and pop over to hockeyfights.com to watch a few of the latest videos.

Pawlenty even takes to the ice himself sometimes—and yes, his jersey does say “T-Paw.”

**Pawlenty in His Own Words.** Pawlenty sees himself as a candidate for all Republicans and not just some. As he told the *New York Times*:

I want to be every person's candidate—that's my goal. The notion that you can't do more than one thing at a time, I think, is a flawed premise.

That is a great strategy for the general election. It could be a disadvantage during the nomination campaign where the other major candidates are targeting groups they consider to be their base.

**The Campaign Book.** Pawlenty's contribution to the genre is *Courage to Stand: An American Story*. The Christian publisher Tyndale House published it this past January. Pawlenty recounts how he went from being a young boy helping his father earn money to support the family to becoming a potential vice presidential contender in 2008.

**Foreign Policy Views.** Until late last week, Pawlenty had been vocal about his foreign policy views. He has been particularly critical of President Obama's handling of Libya. Three weeks ago, he slammed the White House's early response to the revolt against Qaddafi:

A known psychopath is gunning down his own people in the streets of Libya, and the leader of the free world is muted for the better part of a week.

On March 10, he attacked Obama's “incoherent response” to the Libyan crisis and dismissed the need to build an international coalition:

I'm not overly concerned about our popularity ratings in Europe or the Middle East...What I am concerned about is, is this nation secure?

Pawlenty likes to tout his own foreign policy experience. He told a voter at a March appearance in New Hampshire:

For a governor, I've got an unusual amount of foreign policy or international security experience. I've been to Iraq five times. I've been to Afghanistan three times. I've been all over the Middle East, including Israel, Turkey, Jordan, Kuwait and other places.

In his remarks to the 2011 Conservative Political Action Conference, Pawlenty advocated a more muscular foreign policy:

So when the United States of America projects its national security interests here and around the world, we need to do it with strength! We need to make sure that there is no equivocation, no uncertainty, no daylight between us and our allies around the world.

The current administration doesn't seem to understand this principle. We undermine Israel, the U.K., Poland, the Czech Republic, and Colombia, among other friends. Meanwhile, we appease Iran, Russia, and adversaries in the Middle East, including Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.

Mr. President, with bullies, might makes right. Strength — makes them submit. Get tough on our enemies — not on our friends. And, Mr. President, stop apologizing for our country.

The bullies, terrorists and tyrants of the world have lots to apologize for. America does not.

Does this mean that Pawlenty supports Obama's decision to intervene in Libya? It's hard to tell. A Google search of "Pawlenty Libya Obama No-Fly Zone" does not turn up any Pawlenty statements on Libya within the last week.

What about America's ongoing involvement in Afghanistan? Pawlenty has called for U.S. "strategic patience" and criticized Obama's July 2011 draw-down date.

**Target Audience.** Pawlenty is looking to win over Republicans across the spectrum. He touts his credentials as a fiscal conservative, always a plus with Republican voters. He can point to the fact that in 2010 he was one of only four governors in the nation to earn an "A" on the CATO Institute's Fiscal Policy Report Card on America's Governors. At the CPAC convention, Pawlenty said that dealing with the budget deficit is "a matter of sixth-grade math" and warned:

Just because we followed Greece into democracy does not mean we have to follow them into bankruptcy.

He also hopes that his ties to the evangelical community will bear fruit. Being married only once and for twenty-four years now should help him with social conservatives turned off by Newt Gingrich's multiple marriages. Despite not energizing Tea Partiers in the way that Palin, Gingrich, and Michele Bachman have, Pawlenty still seeks to win Tea Party votes. He has logged many hours at Tea Party rallies, and he has a video that showcases his commitment to the Tea Party as an important force for change.



[Click here to view this video on YouTube.](#)

**Major Strengths.** Pawlenty hopes that his winning record in democratic-leaning Minnesota will impress Republicans who want to win in 2012 rather than just make a statement. Although he won his second term in 2006 only narrowly, the politically relevant fact is that he won. He did so in a year in which voters kicked other republicans out of offices across the country, including in Minnesota, where Democrats picked up seats in both the State House and State Senate.

Back in the 2008 veepstakes, the *New York Times* noted that one of Pawlenty's best assets is his "direct, everyman appeal." He has said he wants Republicans "to be the party of Sam's Club, not just the country club."

**Major Weaknesses.** Most Republicans do not know who Pawlenty is, and he lacks the personal charisma that gives Palin, Gingrich, and Bachmann their ardent fan bases. *Time* magazine warns:

Pawlenty's problem is that few voters outside of Minnesota know about him, and even fewer Republican activists find themselves bedazzled by his mild-mannered Midwestern charms. Despite numerous visits to Iowa and New Hampshire and a heavily promoted publicity jaunt for his book *Courage to Stand*, Pawlenty lacks the visibility of some of his opponents, including Palin and Romney. Fewer than 40% of Americans recognized his name in a January Gallup poll, and only 13% held a favorable view of the Republican.

While his working-class story should appeal to voters, Pawlenty, like most politicians, no longer leads a working-class life. A *Weekly Standard* profile of Pawlenty explains:

With his somewhat boyish looks and regular-guy demeanor, Pawlenty doesn't seem the most likely person to command the role of chief executive. He also runs the risk of overplaying the working class shtick after his nearly 25 years as a lawyer and politician.

Pawlenty also must mollify Republicans angry that he supported legislation to reduce carbon emissions in Minnesota. However, Pawlenty's bare-faced response ("I made a mistake") might play well with voters who crave honesty in politics.

**Pawlenty in Depth.** ABC News's *Nightline* profiled Tim Pawlenty when he completed his term as governor and discussed his chances in a race against the formidable Sarah Palin, whom he dubs "a force of nature:"



[Click here to view this video on YouTube.com.](#)

The *New York Times* recently covered Pawlenty's appeal to the Republican base. The *Weekly Standard* evaluates the chances for a "T-Paw party" and decides that Pawlenty is "low-key and likeable." To decide if you agree with those who say that Pawlenty has no pizzazz, check out his interview with Jon Stewart.

**Odds for Winning the Nomination.** A February 2011 Gallup poll showed that Pawlenty has only 3 percent of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents behind him now. 1800 Sports gives Pawlenty +1000 betting odds.

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