



## **John DiStaso's Granite Status: Keough with 'T-Paw': Tea Party trouble for Perry?**

**Dublin investor Bruce Keough, the head of Mitt Romney's New Hampshire Steering Committee in 2008, said in May he wouldn't be with Romney this time around. Today, the Tim Pawlenty campaign will announce Keough as a member of its New Hampshire Steering Committee and national policy committee.**

### **JOHN DiSTASO**

**BRUCE SIGNS ON.** Dublin investor Bruce Keough made waves nationally in early May when he told Mother Jones that after heading Mitt Romney's New Hampshire Steering Committee during the 2008 campaign, he wouldn't be with Romney this time around.

Keough, a former state senator who ran unsuccessfully for governor in 2002, a former state university system board of trustees chairman and long-time party activist, said he was troubled by what he viewed as Romney's inability to take firm, consistent positions.

At the time, he said he was interested in other potential candidates, including Mitch Daniels and Tim Pawlenty.

Daniels never did get into the race and Keough has become increasingly impressed with the former Minnesota governor.

That's why today, the Pawlenty campaign will announce Keough as a member of its New Hampshire Steering Committee and national policy committee.

Keough is taking his talents to the Pawlenty campaign at a key time. The candidate is struggling in New Hampshire, unable to get out of the low single-digits in polls.

And, banking big time on the August GOP straw poll in Ames, Iowa, Pawlenty has not been seen in these parts since the June 13 GOP debate at Saint Anselm College.

Keough said we'll see much more of Pawlenty after the straw poll, and, in the end, "his hard work will pay off."

"Right now," said Keough, "we have a front-runner, but most people are really not questioning the depth of their support for him. But I think that given Mitt Romney's handicaps as a potential nominee, people will raise those questions in the coming weeks and months."

Keough said that while he likes and respects Romney, he's not convinced that Romney

can separate himself from President Barack Obama on health care.

“If the general election debate ends up being a very esoteric parsing of why an individual mandate in Massachusetts was OK but a mandate at the federal level is not, I don't think that's a winning argument for us,” he said. “I just don't think he's our strongest choice.”

Keough said he likes Pawlenty's “personal story.”

“Life has not always been easy for him, and if our next President is going to call on the nation to dig deep and sacrifice and get the country back on sound financial footing, it will help if that message is coming from someone who's lived that and understands what that means.”

Keough is also impressed by the good grades Pawlenty received as governor from the Cato Institute.

Pawlenty spokesman Rich Killion said, “We're obviously thrilled to have Bruce on the team. He's a strong fiscal conservative who understands the depth and magnitude of the fiscal challenges facing our nation.”

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RAUSCH WITH MITT. When Romney appears in Derry this evening for a town hall meeting at the Adams Opera House, he'll be introduced by his latest big-name supporter.

We've learned that state Sen. Jim Rausch, R-Derry, is endorsing Romney. He's the third state senator to do so, joining Senate Majority Leader Jeb Bradley and Sen. Jack Barnes.

All the other GOP senators are uncommitted, with the exception of Sen. Jim Forsythe, who is chairing Ron Paul's New Hampshire campaign.

Rausch called Romney the “most qualified candidate” and “the only Republican who can beat Barack Obama in 2012.”

Rausch is a freshman senator who served five terms in the House, backing Romney in 2008. He owns the Salem Animal Hospital.

Romney's town hall will be held after he addresses the Portsmouth Rotary Club at the Redhook Ale Brewery and then tours RSA Realty in Rochester with the owner, former state Rep. Packy Campbell.

Tomorrow, Romney will head north to Berlin for a stop at the Northland Restaurant and Dairy Bar at noon to meet with community leaders. He will also stop at the New Hampshire Motor Speedway on Sunday for the Lenox Industrial Tools 301 NASCAR

race.

Romney this week was also officially endorsed by three county attorneys who had already made their support for him known: Peter Heed of Cheshire County, Jim Reams of Rockingham County and Scott Murray of Merrimack County.

Murray was a John McCain supporter in 2008, when he was serving as Concord City Attorney.

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YOU'RE BREAKING UP. Manchester's Ovide Lamontagne continues to gain national attention. And this time, all he did to get it was take a telephone call.

Since the call was from the Next Big Thing in GOP presidential politics, Texas Gov. Rick Perry, it went viral in the national political media.

Lamontagne told us earlier this week that the call came to his cell phone on Saturday afternoon as he was a passenger in a vehicle heading north to Executive Councilor Ray Burton's annual fundraising picnic at his home in Bath.

At one point, Lamontagne said, the call got dropped, but Perry “was kind enough to call me right back.”

He said the two spoke for “a good half an hour.

“It was a call about what's happening in New Hampshire. He asked about my sense of where the voters are about the race.

“I've told him what I've been saying all along,” Lamontagne said. “My view is that this is still a wide open race and there is an opportunity for someone of a national stature — and I think he qualifies as that — to get into the race.

“We had a good conversation about issues. He gave me the impression that he is closing in on making a decision,” Lamontagne told the Status. Lamontagne also said that he is doing “final due diligence.”

Perry also reportedly called Senate President Peter Bragdon, and we've learned that he called Speaker of the House Bill O'Brien.

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NOT UNIVERSALLY LOVED. Perry may be the “hot” non-candidate nationally right now, but apparently he is not a universal Tea Party favorite.

The website of the New Hampshire Tea Party Coalition, which coordinates activities and shares information among nearly 50 local Tea Party and liberty groups in the state, has a negative post about Perry at the top of its web log.

Jane Aitken of Bedford, who administers the site, said she posted the piece about support for the Texas DREAM Act, which gives residential college tuition rates to illegal immigrants. She said it should not be taken as a non-endorsement of Perry since the coalition does not endorse. She said it is simply informational.

Still, the same post links to stories about Perry's stint as Al Gore's state chairman in 1988 (he is a former Democrat), Perry's 2007 executive order that all 11- and 12-year-old girls receive the sexually transmitted disease vaccine Gardasil, Perry's interest in a “trans-Texas highway” and a negative story on “14 reasons Rick Perry would be a really bad President.”

“I just try to get information out there,” Aitken said. “I'm in contact with other state Tea Parties and they sent me that information.”

She said, however, that Perry is “apparently not good on immigration” in part because he has opposed a Texas version of the Arizona immigration law.

Some state Tea Party activists are wary of Perry, judging by emails being circulated.

One by Sue Polidura of the Seacoast Freedom Network links to a story about Perry's opposition to so-called “restrain the TSA” legislation in Texas.

Another, by activist Robert Morrow, contains a laundry list of criticisms about Perry and was sent to dozens of Republicans, including O'Brien, Bragdon and the state GOP executive committee.

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SEMPRINI'S SHOW. Seacoast businessman and former state Republican chairman Wayne Semprini wanted it this way four years ago when Rudy Giuliani was a candidate for governor.

Semprini wanted more say over organizing the Giuliani schedule, but never got it from the former New York City mayor's Big Apple handlers.

And Giuliani, by his own admission, ran a poor campaign here and ultimately finished fourth. That, of course, pretty much finished off his campaign.

This time, as Giuliani weighs whether to run again, Semprini has been more involved in setting up the content of Giuliani's visits to the state.

The visit that kicks off today, Semprini says, is especially important because it will go a long way in helping Giuliani make his decision.

Earlier this week, Giuliani spokesman Alicia Preston was widely quoted as saying that the visit will be a "key factor" in the decision and that the decision will be made "very soon" after the visit.

Semprini said it is an important visit in the decision-making process. But he said he has no idea how soon after the visit Giuliani will decide.

But in the meantime, Semprini said, "I'm trying to take him to meet with key people to include everything from health care to gun-owners rights. He'll meet people ranging from the most conservative gun owners to students and faculty at the most liberal educational institution in the state.

"We're covering it all."

His first stop today will be at Exeter Hospital for a private meeting with medical staff and administrators "to discuss how 'Obamacare' is affecting really well-run New Hampshire hospitals," Semprini said.

Giuliani will then go to One Liberty Lane in Hampton to meet with business executive Paul Montrone and members of the Montrone-founded non-partisan Live Free or Die Alliance.

Then he'll speak to the Seacoast Federation of Republican Women, also at the One Liberty Lane complex, followed by a 2 p.m. event at Semprini's New Castle home, where those invited include law enforcement officials, legislators and "civic leaders."

Semprini expects the discussion to include fighting crime and cutting government regulations, two areas he says are in Giuliani's "wheelhouse."

He will be at Manchester Harley Davidson at about 6 p.m., where owner Steve Tallarico, described by Semprini as a Giuliani "supporter," will have gathered bikers and gun owners, two groups Semprini believes are strong coalitions that will be receptive to Giuliani.

"Frankly, I'm tired of people telling me that Rudy is bad on guns," Semprini said. "The fact is that the issues he was dealing with in New York City are a lot different than my right to bear arms and defend myself.

"I've never heard or read anything factual to indicate that he wants to take people's guns

away but that perception is out there and my goal is for that perception to be dead after (tonight),” he said.

Tomorrow, Giuliani will go to Dartmouth College to speak to two government classes and attend a luncheon with invited students and faculty members.

He'll then attend a reception at the Hopkins Center being organized by activists Jim Rubens, who backed Giuliani in 2007, and Lud Flower, as well as Prof. Gregory Slayton.

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STILL WITH TPAW. Slayton, by the way, clarified in an interview that he remains a Pawlenty supporter, but said he has been a friend of Giuliani for more than 20 years.

Slayton said that since Giuliani “reached out to me,” and since the former mayor is not a candidate, Slayton saw no conflict in setting up the event at the “Top of the Hop,” which, he said, is expected to attract about 150 people. That will be preceded by a VIP reception with top university officials.

Overall, said Semprini, “I’m hearing loud and clear that there is no great enthusiasm for the current field and I want to make sure that what happens here (today and tomorrow) is part of the decision process.”

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ROMNEY LEADS. Romney's visit comes on the heels of the release last week of a new WMUR poll, conducted by the University of New Hampshire Survey Center, which showed him continuing to lead the field in New Hampshire with 35 percent, followed by Michele Bachmann with 12 percent.

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PAUL RETURNS TOMORROW. Texas U.S. Rep. Ron Paul will return tomorrow for a day of private meetings, followed by a nine-stop public schedule in Derry, Windham and Salem, set for Saturday.

He'll begin in Derry on Saturday with breakfast at MaryAnn's Diner at 8:30 a.m., followed by stops at Derry Feed at 9:45 a.m., Al's Gun and Reel at 10 a.m. and Rockingham Acres at 10:30 a.m.

In Windham, he will stop at Windham Farms at 11 a.m. and Village Bean at 11:20 a.m.

He'll speak to conservative activists at 2 p.m. at the Nesmith Library, followed by Salem stops at Mike's Red Barn at 4 p.m. and Chocolate Moose at 4:20 p.m.

Paul intends to focus on “the economy, the recovery and the looming debt-ceiling betrayal in Washington” during the visit, according to his campaign.

Paul won a straw poll hosted by the Coalition of New Hampshire Taxpayers at its annual picnic in Hillsborough on Saturday.

The group said about 250 people attended, including Michigan U.S. Rep. Thaddeus McCotter, the latest entry into the GOP presidential field.

CNHT said Paul topped the straw poll with 63 votes, followed by Rick Santorum with 20, Bachmann and Herman Cain with 17 each, Romney with 14, Tim Pawlenty with 12, Gary Johnson with 11, McCotter with 3 and Jon Huntsman with 1.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who was not on the ballot, received one write-in vote.

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**GREAT CATCH FOR PAUL.** The Granite Status first reported on UnionLeader.com yesterday that Chris Wood, a well-respected veteran New Hampshire political consultant, has been hired by Paul's campaign to handle the organization of coalitions in the first-primary state.

Wood, who has long worked for various conservative causes and Republican campaigns, “will help the Paul campaign reach beyond the existing grassroots organization in New Hampshire, opening doors to the traditional conservative coalitions that have shaped the New Hampshire GOP,” said Paul campaign spokesman Kate Schackai.

Wood over the past 25 years has worked for, or been involved in, many campaigns in New Hampshire, including those of Craig Benson (governor), Chuck Douglas (Congress), Peter Bragdon (state Senate) and Ray Wieczorek (Executive Council).

He has been the executive director of New England Citizens for Right to Work, director of Granite State Taxpayers and Coalition of New Hampshire Taxpayers, grassroots director for New Hampshire Citizens for a Sound Economy and a consultant for the National Rifle Association.

In past presidential primaries, Wood was Pat Buchanan's statewide volunteer coordinator in 1992, and in 2000, he was the Steve Forbes' deputy state campaign manager.

During the 2008 cycle, he was the political director for Fred Thompson's campaign.

Wood is the founder of the Concord-based political consulting firm Whitefield and Burke, LLC. An associate in the firm is Jared Chicoine, Ron Paul's state campaign director.

Wood said Paul “is the only candidate who foresaw the economic crisis and now has a clear vision of how to restore America. While other politicians wait and see where the wind blows, Paul stays true to his message of sound money, freedom and prosperity.”

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**TAKING SHAPE.** The New Hampshire presidential campaign of Republican Michigan U.S. Rep. Thad McCotter is beginning to take shape.

We've learned that conservative Dover attorney and radio talk show host Chris Buck will head up McCotter's first-primary state effort.

Since it's “not a title-driven campaign,” Buck said, he won't have a specific title, but his job will be essentially that of a state director.

“I'll be in charge of day-to-day operations here in New Hampshire and will be looking to hire additional staff very shortly,” Buck said.

Buck, 31, started the Dover Republican Committee earlier this year, and as committee chairman, organized several successful events, including those that featured Michele Bachmann and Ron Paul.

Buck said the committee recently voted to allow him to continue as chairman at least in the early start-up phase of the McCotter campaign.

“We will welcome any Republican candidate to the Dover Republican Committee,” he said, with future presidential events to be handled by committee vice-chairman and state Rep. Michael Weeden.

Buck said his post with the McCotter campaign was finalized after he drove McCotter to various stops during his visit to the state last weekend.

“We really hit it off and I really like his ability to respond to the voters with substantive answers. He's very good on policy. He really knows his stuff.”

McCotter, 45, a five-term House member and former chairman of the House Republican Policy Committee, is known as a straight-talking, guitar-playing, out-of-mold fiscal conservative.



He announced his candidacy at a rock music festival in his home state during the July 4 holiday weekend.

McCotter is also little-known outside of his home state and the Beltway, but Buck is unfazed by that.

“One thing you can be sure of is that Congressman McCotter will make waves,” he said. “His approach is that it's all about the message.

“He's not motivated by trying to win a popularity contest. He has real solutions to problems and I think he's going to resonate extremely well with the voters in New Hampshire, who, like GOP voters nationally, are not enamored by the current crop of candidates.”

Buck said McCotter “is the true anti-Obama. Obama is all fluff while McCotter, while soft-spoken and intellectual, has real answers to our problems.”

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**WORKING THE GRASSROOTS.** Rick Santorum continues to work to build a grassroots-oriented campaign in the first-in-the-nation state.

Santorum this week announced the backing of three first-term state legislators and two other conservative activists:

-- Rep. Jason Antosz, R-Epping, a member of the New Hampshire State Firemen's Association, the National Rifle Association and the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance.

-- Rep. Lenette Peterson, R-Merrimack, a Second Amendment advocate and member of the House Republican Alliance.

-- Rep. Matt Swank, R-Manchester, a local small business owner.

-- Ted Maravelias of Windham, a long-time conservative activist and former deputy state director of Americans for Prosperity.

-- Greg Spero of Atkinson, a conservative activist and local library trustee.

Santorum plans to return to New Hampshire next week, according to his campaign.

He will headline a fundraiser for the House Republican Victory PAC on July 18 after attending the Grafton County Republican Committee and House Republican Victory PAC golf tournament in Campton.

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FUND-RAISING NUMBERS. While we were away last week, congressional hopefuls announced second quarter fund-raising numbers.

In the 2nd Congressional District, Democrat Ann McLane Kuster said she raised more than \$365,000, while Republican incumbent Charlie Bass told supporters he raised \$303,000.

In the 1st District, Republican Rep. Frank Guinta said he raised \$302,887, while Democrat Joanne Dowdell raised \$105,000 for her bid.

Democratic former Rep. Carol Shea-Porter, who wants a rematch with Guinta, told us yesterday that she out-raised Dowdell by a few thousand dollars and will release her numbers today.

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RECENT POLLING. A WMUR Granite State Poll conducted by the UNH Survey Center this week showed Guinta and Bass “under water” in their favorability ratings.

Guinta was viewed favorably by 24 percent, unfavorably by 30 percent, while 34 percent didn't know enough about him to say.

Bass was viewed favorably by 28 percent, unfavorably by 39 percent and 21 percent didn't know enough about him to say.

Sen. Jeanne Shaheen's favorables/unfavorables were 52/33 percent while Sen. Kelly Ayotte's were 45/25.

A separate poll by Public Policy Polling showed Gov. John Lynch's job approval/disapproval rating at 57/33 percent.

He also led against four hypothetical opponents, beating John E. Sununu by 51 to 40 percent, Lamontagne by 54 to 36 percent, Bradley by 54 to 35 percent and John Stephen by 55 to 34.

But if Lynch decides not to seek reelection, PPP found that all four Republicans would defeat three potential Democratic candidates, Maggie Hassan, Steve Marchand, and Mark Connolly, although all the margins were within single digits.

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YOUNG REPUBLICANS EVENT. The New Hampshire Young Republicans' Aug. 20 Lobster Bake at New Castle's Great Island Commons has so far attracted McCotter, Herman Cain and Gary Johnson. Also slated to attend is Fox News contributor S.E. Cupp.

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CORNERSTONE, O'BRIEN EVENTS. State House Republicans are planning a 60th birthday party/fund-raiser for speaker O'Brien next Wednesday, July 20, at the Milford home of state Rep. Steve Stepanek. The following night, Cornerstone Action will hold a fundraiser featuring Guinta at the home of Siobhan Tautkus in Manchester.

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