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## Tim Pawlenty: Pro and con

With his announcement Monday that he will seek the presidency, former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty joins the top tier of the Republican primary process. We take a look at him today as the first installation of a Washington Examiner series on the pros and cons of each potential challenger to Barack Obama.

### PROS

**Blue-collar appeal:** Pawlenty is one of five children and the first in his family to get a college degree. His father drove a milk truck and he lost his mother to ovarian cancer when he was 16. Pawlenty worked his way through high school, college and law school before becoming a lawyer in 1986. He wants to rebrand Republicans as "the party of Sam's Club, not the country club."

**Won two elections in a blue state:** Minnesota has not gone for a Republican presidential candidate since the Nixon landslide of 1972. After 10 years in the Minnesota House of Representatives, Pawlenty won a three-way race for governor in 2002. Four years later, in a Democratic wave year, Pawlenty eked out a 1-point victory in another three-way race with 47 percent of the vote.

**Balanced budgets, cut taxes:** Pawlenty cut taxes by almost \$800 million, moving Minnesota out of the top 10 highest-taxed states in the nation. In the meantime, he balanced the budget every year while reducing the rate of spending growth. In 2010, the Cato Institute awarded Pawlenty an "A" on its Fiscal Policy Report Card.

**Can unify the party:** Pawlenty isn't most people's first choice, but he is often their second. Unlike other candidates, T-Paw does not elicit strong opposition from other candidates' supporters. He has a record mostly acceptable to fiscal, social and foreign policy conservatives.

**Top-notch campaign team:** No one has attracted as much top-notch talent to his campaign as Pawlenty has. His campaign manager, his social media consultants, and his Iowa and New Hampshire teams are the best in the field at this moment.

### CONS

**No there there:** Pawlenty has no major conservative legislative accomplishments as governor (no government union-busting budget or school voucher plan), in part because Democrats controlled part or all of the state Legislature during his tenure. He is not a top-tier talent on the stump or on TV. The word "boring" gets thrown about. And many activists are concerned that he

tries too hard to be all things to all people.

**Raised taxes:** His 2003 budget included a 75-cent-a-pack tax increase on cigarettes, which he called a "health impact fee." But interestingly, while the 1998 tobacco settlement allows states to raise taxes on cigarettes, it forbids them from placing fees on cigarettes. This means that Pawlenty rhetorically defended his cigarette tax increase by suggesting that he was instead doing something illegal. This may remind one of the Obama administration, which argues one thing in public about Obamacare (it's not a tax increase) and the opposite in court.

**Energy mandates:** Pawlenty's past support for cap and trade is well known, as is his subsequent apology. Less well known is his Next Generation Energy Act of 2007, which mandated that 25 percent of electricity had to come from renewable energy sources by 2025. It is an even more stringent version of the energy mandate plan that the Obama administration tried to pass in 2010.

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