

Mitch Daniels's error

By Jennifer Rubin

Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels made a cardinal error in presidential campaigning: he has raised his visibility and made some gaffes without the national staff to help him respond to a flood of criticism. Social conservatives are miffed over his suggestion last year of a "truce" on social issues. National security hawks are concerned that he is sounding more Robert Taft (Midwest isolationist) than Ronald Reagan internationalist. And now the Weekly Standard is [highlighting](#) a Cato report that will worry economic conservatives, the one group from which he was thought to have strong support. The Weekly Standard reports that Chris Edwards, who filled out the governor's fiscal report card, told John McCormack:

"He's kind of a more of a 'trains run on time' kind of guy, like a balanced budget kind of guy. He wants the government to be efficient but he doesn't necessarily want it to be smaller. Other than his property tax cut, he hasn't cut state level taxes at all. He hasn't really even proposed to cut them. Indiana has an above-average business tax. He should have proposed to cut it like Pawlenty, like Sanford proposed in South Carolina. I get a sense from some of the things he's done that his political instincts aren't quite where they should be in a terms of limited government point of view. "

John also points out that "[Tim] Pawlenty's grades from Cato were slightly better than Daniels's during the years that both were in office."

Daniels's critics are more numerous than his potential campaign staff (i.e. his small D.C. office that has been booking him at events and setting him up with fundraisers). He is, I am told by admirers, an excellent manager, but in this case he seems oddly naive to the requirements of mounting a national campaign. And, by the way, who is he going to get to staff an effort? Mitt Romney and Pawlenty are staffed and ready to go. This reflects, perhaps, his own ambivalence about running. But frankly, unless he gets his act together and starts pushing back on the array of criticism, he's not going to be able to run a successful effort.

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