


MPRnews

Member Supported · Join Now ›

Tuesday, April 19, 2011

 38° in [Twin Cities](#)
([more cities](#))
[Weather Report](#) ›
[Traffic Report](#) ›

Mobile
Newsletters
RSS Feeds
Podcasts



South Carolina political expert: Pawlenty's message would connect here

by [Cathy Wurzer](#), Minnesota Public Radio

April 18, 2011

St. Paul, Minn. — Both former Gov. Tim Pawlenty and U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann are scheduled to appear at a Tea Party tax day rally on the steps of the South Carolina State House today. South Carolina is among the first states to hold presidential primaries, and Pawlenty and Bachmann are each considering a run for the Republican nomination in 2012.

Dave Woodard, who teaches political science at Clemson University, spoke with MPR's Morning Edition about the political landscape in South Carolina.

Cathy Wurzer: What kind of buzz is there in South Carolina right now about Pawlenty or Bachmann?

Dave Woodard: Not much of a buzz at all. Neither one is very well known. But I think there will be a buzz, simply because your former Gov. Tim Pawlenty has a real message that would connect down here.

Wurzer: What about Michele Bachmann? She has a lot of support from tea party members, and that wing of the Republican party seems to be very popular in South Carolina.

Woodard: It is very strong down here, no doubt, and I think she will create quite a stir. But frankly South Carolina voters tend to take this primary pretty seriously, and they usually vote for someone who's more experienced and more establishment. I think [Pawlenty] might have more of a shot because of his gubernatorial experience.

Wurzer: They both appear to be courting the endorsement of Gov. Nikki Haley. How significant would that be?

Woodard: I think it's less significant than that of Sen. Jim DeMint. I think as governor, Nikki Haley kind of burst onto the scene in 2010. I think there's still a wait-and-see attitude about her being governor. However, I'm not going to dismiss the fact that if she were to endorse somebody it would help them. But I still think Jim DeMint would trump that.

Wurzer: Who do you think he would endorse?

Woodard: Don't we wish we all knew. That's the \$64 question. But I do certainly think that the message of Pawlenty and his experience and his rating by the Cato Institute, and the fact that he remained popular in Minnesota despite the fact that he was a Republican in a state that was historically moderate to liberal — All that seems to play pretty well down there, and especially his record of experience.

Wurzer: Who do you think might be a frontrunner in South Carolina at this point?

Woodard: Just because of familiarity, I think Haley Barbour would, and I think probably Mitt Romney. Mitt Romney spent so much time here in 2008 that he has to be considered here. Of course Mike Huckabee did very well in the primary but I don't really know that he's running yet and I don't know if he's been here for himself. He's been here to campaign for others but not himself.

Wurzer: How popular is the tea party wing of the Republican Party?

Woodard: Very popular. Tonight is the GOP county reorganization meeting in the county in which I live. It will be stocked with new faces. People from the tea party will be coming tonight. ... My sense is that while there will be new faces, and they'll win some of the offices, they won't win the top offices. Those are still run sort of by the establishment. So it's fresh faces, it's new energy, but they're not the dominant group that can take over a party yet.

Wurzer: Is that how Michele Bachmann or Sarah Palin could make some inroads?

Woodard: I think it is. We have four freshmen congressmen down here. They're creating kind of a stir in Washington because they haven't voted for the budget compromise and those kinds of things. So if they were to endorse [Bachmann], I think it'd make a difference here. But what I'm hearing out of their camps is that those congressmen themselves are being courted by more establishment candidates. If you studied the South Carolina primary going back to 1980 when it voted for Reagan, it always picks the party nominee, and it's been very critical in some elections like '88 and 2000. The citizens, especially the GOP, takes it real seriously here and they tend to vote for establishment people with a little more recognition or experience.

Wurzer: Are you noticing more political action taking place in South Carolina these days?

Woodard: One of the jokes I tell people is if you have a backyard barbecue, you can probably get a presidential candidate to come. That's really true. It isn't quite as noticeable this year as it has been in the past. But beginning right about now and into the summer, and especially of course into the fall, I think one month last time I think I had breakfast with Mitt Romney five times.

(Interview transcribed by MPR reporter Elizabeth Dunbar.)

[Recommend](#) 2 recommendations. [Sign Up](#) to see what your friends recommend.

Broadcast Dates

Morning Edition, [04/18/2011, 7:20 a.m.](#)

SPONSORS

4/19/2011

South Carolina political expert: Pawlent...

