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# Pawlenty: In my campaign I'll tell hard truths

**Minn. Gov. wants to get fed gov't under control, will look Americans in the eye about entitlement cuts; Says tax hikes not needed to fight deficit**

By David S Morgan



Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty, Republican candidate for president, on 'The Early Show,' Monday, May 23, 2011.

(CBS)

(CBS News)

By throwing his hat into the ring, former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty said he is running for the Republican nomination for president because President Obama refuses to tackle the serious economic problems facing the country.

Last night Pawlenty [released a video online](#) officially announcing his presidential run: "We need a president who understands that our problems are deep and who has the courage to face them. President Obama doesn't. I do."

Tim Pawlenty makes GOP 2012 bid official

Appearing on CBS' "The Early Show" Monday, Pawlenty was asked why he wanted the job of President of the United States.

"Well, I love this country and it's in big trouble. It's a federal government that's out of control. The spending is out of control. The debt and the deficit has to be tackled. We've got to get this economy growing.

"I did that in Minnesota; I was one of the few governors in the country to get [an "A" grade from the Cato Institute on fiscal management](#). I know how to balance budgets. I know how to tackle spending. I know how to get economies growing. And my state, we led the way back under very difficult circumstances. It's a very liberal state. If you can do it there, you can do it anywhere.

"So I'm running for president to get this spending and out-of-control federal government back in control and to grow this economy, and I can do it," he told anchor Erica Hill.

In [an op-ed in Monday's edition of USA Today](#), Pawlenty writes that it is long past time a president - or

a presidential aspirant - to be straight with the American people. "So here it is: Government money isn't 'free.' Either you and I pay for it in taxes, or our children pay for it in debt. The reforms we need are not in the billions, but in the trillions of dollars. And the cuts we must make cannot just be in other people's favorite programs."

When asked by Hill where he will focus on making a difference in cutting the federal budget, Pawlenty said, "Well, we're going to have to look the American people in the eye and tell them the truth. That's what I'll be talking about today and throughout this campaign. And it starts with making sure that you're willing to have the courage, and do have the courage, to not only say it but to do it.

"If you look at federal spending, we're going to have to tackle entitlements as one part of bringing spending under control. So we have to look the American people in the eye and say to younger people, the next generation, 'We're going to have to gradually raise the retirement age and Social Security over time.' We're going to have to look wealthy seniors in the eye and say, 'You know what? For the cost of living adjustment - not the whole program but at least the cost of living adjustment - we're going to have to means test that, so if you're wealthy, you may not get as big of a cost of living adjustment.'

"Those and many others like it are the kinds of things that we have to say, but we also have to do."

Pawlenty attacked President Obama, saying he "won't even tackle in any detail at all those kinds of reforms - or any reforms. He's been absent in this regard.

"We need a leader who's going to get this deficit and spending under control," Pawlenty said. "He won't do it. I will."

"What about raising taxes?" asked Hill. "You say government money isn't free. At some point do you have to look at raising taxes, and do people have to pay more for what's needed in this country?"

"Well, I don't think you can make an argument that America is undertaxed," Pawlenty responded. "If you compare our tax structure to the rest of the world competitively, we're a highly-taxed country.

"We need to do those things that shrink government so we can grow our economy. And if you talk to the job providers in this country, and I talk to them every day, they say, 'Get the government off my back.' They don't say, 'Put more burdens on me.' They say, 'Put fewer burdens, lighter burdens on me.' That's the secret to getting the jobs and the economy going. That's what's going to bring quality of life opportunities back to most American families."

"But if you lower taxes too much on businesses, of course you need something coming in," Hill said.

"Of course you need revenue," Pawlenty said. "But our economy continues to grow. And if you don't raise any tax rates at all, if the economy is growing, you'll receive *more* revenue."

"In fact, if you look back at the history of this country, every time there's been a tax-cutting president - John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan - it's actually stimulated economic growth, not put it in reverse. And so, we can look to both Kennedy and Reagan and others for that lesson, and I think history proves it out. Cutting taxes helps ignite the economy and grow jobs."

"But we also got to get our spending under control. We don't have a revenue problem, we have a spending problem. And the spending in this country, and the federal government, is out of control, and we have a president who's unwilling or unable to look the American people in the eye and say that and actually do something about it to bring it under control. Like I said, that's why I'm running. I'll get it done."

The former Minnesota governor is respected by conservatives for most of his political positions but is not a nationally known figure. That's why Iowa can prove so important, says CBS News political correspondent Jan Crawford. The state's role as the first contest in the primary season can launch a candidate from relative obscurity to campaign contender.

Pawlenty's bid comes on the heels of two other political announcements this weekend, when Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels said he has decided against entering the race, citing family reasons, while businessman and Tea Party favorite Herman Cain announced he will run.

[GOP's Mitch Daniels skips run for president](#)  
[Herman Cain enters 2012 GOP race](#)

One advantage Pawlenty has in Iowa is coming from the neighboring state of Minnesota, but those Iowa caucuses are very much up for grabs. Later this week Rep. Michele Bachmann - also from Minnesota - is going to test the waters in the Hawkeye State with a speech Thursday night. And on Friday, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney will make his first appearance in Iowa since announcing his exploratory committee.

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