

Three Reasons Republicans Can Cheer for T-Paw

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Former Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty has been doing the rounds lately, promoting his new book and signaling quite clearly that he is going to run for president. He's still pretty much an unknown quantity among the mass public, but I think there are a lot of reasons for conservatives to take a close look at him. Here are three.

(1) *He's good on budgets.* This is a huge deal for the Republican Party. For the last ten years, the party has spent way too much, diminishing its brand identity in the political market. The GOP has to get back to being the party of fiscal responsibility, so that means they're going to need somebody who can make the tough choices. [Somebody like Pawlenty](#):

Pawlenty was one of just four governors to earn an "A" on the libertarian Cato Institute's most recent biennial fiscal report card. (Indiana governor Mitch Daniels, beau ideal of the budget hawks, got a "B.") "I actually went into doing this report card sort of thinking [Pawlenty] was mediocre on fiscal policy," says Chris Edwards, who wrote the report. "I think he's been superb about the last five years or so."

(2) *He's from Minnesota.* I don't know exactly why this matters, but history indicates that it does: presidential candidates usually win their home states. Not always -- just ask George McGovern and Al Gore -- but usually. Sometimes, as in the case of Jimmy Carter, regional affect gives them a boost not just in their home state, but in their home region.

This suggests that the GOP needs to look seriously at candidates from the Midwest, preferably states that Democrats have won recently. That is where, once again, the battle for the White House is going to be fought. Minnesota has historically been a Democratic state, but the GOP has made inroads there in recent years. Exurbs like Carver County in metro-Minneapolis have given the Republicans strong hauls, and the GOP has even managed to break through in the Iron Range in the North, which went for John Kerry but not overwhelmingly, and Republican Chip Cravaack beat Democrat Jim Oberstar in the 8th Congressional District, making him the first GOP representative from there since the 1940s.

(3) *He's disarming.* Jon Stewart [recently interviewed](#) Tim Pawlenty on the *Daily Show*, or should I say "interviewed" him. What the comedian really did was talk for what seemed to be forever, trying to get the former governor to admit that conservatives are hypocrites for going along with big government conservatism under Bush while objecting vociferously to big government under Obama. This might be a fair point, but Stewart makes way too much of it. After all, lots of conservatives didn't like "Compassionate Conservatism;" there is a qualitative difference between federal testing of public schoolchildren and huge cap-and-trade/health care bureaucracies; and anyway, liberals have been surprisingly agreeable about Obama's foreign policy. What's more, why would Stewart bother with this? Does he really think T-Paw would admit on his pre-campaign book tour that the voters he wants to nominate him are all a bunch of hypocrites?



So, Stewart comes across as quite pompous, but what is really interesting is that Pawlenty gives him *nothing* on this front. They talk for twenty minutes and Pawlenty doesn't say a bad word about the base. And even though he doesn't cede an inch, at the end Stewart still says, "You know what's crazy? I don't think you and I disagree that much..." Ha!

Maybe T-Paw is the GOP's secret weapon. He really isn't a RINO, but the media thinks he is!

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