



## *General Election Begins After Romney's Sweep*

**By: Christina Bellantoni**

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*Supporters of Mitt Romney celebrate at a primary night rally in Milwaukee. Photo by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images.*

There are a lot of numbers that matter in politics. Here are the ones that matter most on Wednesday:

### **655**

That's how many delegates Mitt Romney has collected after Republicans have had their say in 37 contests nationwide. He's a long way from the 1,144 needed to claim the nomination officially, but for Rick Santorum, with just 278 delegates, the math just isn't there. (Newt Gingrich has 135, Ron Paul has 51.)

### **216**

The days until the general election. Both Romney and President Obama intend to stay focused on the other for each and every one of them.

### **50%**

The percentage of voters who "strongly support" the tea party movement that Romney was able to capture in Wisconsin, a marked shift from earlier contests. He tied Santorum for the most conservative voters.

### **270**

The new magic number Team Romney is going to be worried about. It's going to be all about a path to victory on the Electoral College map. Romney's aides are pondering how much effort to expend on the Pennsylvania primary over the next three weeks, and they get a 2-for-1 benefit since the Keystone State has long been the battleground that got away for the GOP.

Romney's [sweep of Wisconsin, Maryland and Washington, D.C., on Tuesday](#) just solidifies what Mr. Obama's team in Chicago has thought all along: The former Massachusetts governor is the president's sole foe.

Romney easily won in Maryland and Washington, D.C., and defeated Santorum in Wisconsin [by more than 35,000 votes](#).

His victory speech in Milwaukee offered a preview of the general election battle lines. He suggested the president doesn't want America's economy to succeed and said he'd be the one to lift the nation up with conservative principles.

Watch Romney's speech [here](#) or below.

Speaking in Mars, Pa., Santorum might as well have been on another planet.

Looking deflated, the former senator told supporters in his home state that he is much like Ronald Reagan, who was told to exit the race in 1976. Had Reagan won that primary, he would have won the presidency that year, Santorum argued. "Let's not make a mistake" by selecting a moderate nominee, Santorum said.

"We can't have little differences" between the two party nominees, he said. "We have to have clear, contrasting colors." He also said he expects to win the Texas primary in late May, just like Reagan.

You can watch Santorum's full speech [here](#).

Huffington Post's Jon Ward spent Tuesday with some Pennsylvania Tea Party activists, who told him they aren't sure Santorum can even win his home state.

From [the piece](#) we learn that the pro-Romney Restore Our Future super PAC "has already been running a small amount of TV advertising." And Team Romney is attacking Santorum with robocalls. One state senator told Ward he's already gotten eight of them to his home.

The Washington Post's Sandhya Somashekhar also jumped the trail to Pennsylvania and [writes Wednesday](#) that another setback there could tarnish Santorum's political future.

## **CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?**

For his part, Mr. Obama attempted to steal the headline away from the primaries by going after Republicans with blistering rhetoric. He lambasted Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan's budget blueprint and mocked Romney for calling it "marvelous."

On Tuesday's NewsHour, Judy Woodruff moderated a spirited debate over the president's remarks between the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities' Jared Bernstein and the Cato Institute's Daniel Mitchell, who argued the cuts in the GOP plan don't go far enough.

The two sparred in what could be a preview of some of the economic debates ahead this election year.

Watch the segment [here](#) or below.

Ryan, who spent the week with Romney on the campaign trail, raised money off of the attack, Huffington Post's Michael McAuliff [reports](#).

Daily Kos [commissioned](#) Public Policy Polling to survey attitudes about the Ryan budget, and found Republicans don't like it all that much.

## **NEWSHOUR NOTES**

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So that means we'll be asking for your help to deliver key moments in the political cycle and the voices of fellow Americans in as many languages as possible.

Hari Sreenivasan has more details [here](#).

## **2012 LINE ITEMS**

- Dante Chinni's Patchwork Nation analysis of Wisconsin is [here](#).
- Just as the first network called Wisconsin for Romney, Gingrich released a statement. But it had nothing to do with the election; instead, he and Callista were offering condolences for those affected by the Texas tornadoes.
- Here's Gingrich's election night statement that came later: "To defeat President Obama and change Washington, our party must commit itself to a bold, conservative platform. We cannot win on an etch-a-sketch platform that shows no principle or backbone. The Washington establishment wants to declare this race over, but I am committed to carrying the banner of bold conservative colors all the way to Tampa to ensure the Republican Party never abandons the timeless conservative principles of Ronald Reagan and the Contract with America."

- Paul boasted in a press release that his campaign team won [Pollie Awards](#) for his ads.
- The New York Times' Jeremy Peters [reports](#) the Obama campaign's ad buy we posted about Tuesday is \$1.4 million.
- Politico [reports](#) "that 62 percent of Jewish voters prefer Obama over a generic Republican. About a third of American Jews prefer a Republican candidate. Of those that prefer a GOP candidate, 56 percent back Mitt Romney. Among voters who backed Obama in 2008, 86 percent want him reelected -- with 7 percent crossing over to support a generic Republican."
- Team Obama [rolls out](#) "Runway to Win," a project by fashion designers who back the president.