



LIVE: Illinois Primary Republican Results, Mitt Romney Looks to Sweep the State

Jake Horowitz *March 20, 2012*

The March 20 Illinois primary is shaping up as the next big battleground in the GOP presidential nomination fight, and Mitt Romney, Rick Santorum, Newt Gingrich, and Ron Paul are all campaigning in President Barack Obama's home state this week to curry favor with Republican voters.

PolicyMic is covering the primary live, and will be regularly updating this page as new information becomes available. Stay tuned.

UPDATE: Tuesday: Polls in Illinois open Tuesday morning at 6 a.m. They will close at 7 p.m. local time. The first results should be available starting at 8 p.m. EST. Low turnout is expected.

Romney Leading Big: Two polls Monday [showed frontrunner Mitt Romney](#) with a double-digit lead.

Monday: No Excitement in Illinois? As [PolicyMicer Michelle Pantoja reports](#), many Illinois voters aren't exactly enthused about Tuesday's vote: "Although the IL primaries are fast approaching, there has not been much buzz about the election. My friends are only aware of the primaries because I can't stop talking about it. Most candidates are running unopposed; thus, it creates less interest overall. The only race that is creating a lot excitement and buzz is for state representative for the 21st district. Rudy Lozano Jr and Silvana Tabares are two up-and-coming Latinos who both grew up in the southwest Chicago and both believed they are the best choice. "The weather is amazing so that is not going to prevent voters from going out to vote. I have not been "bombarded" by advertisements. I have only witnessed a pro-Santorum ad and a anti-Santorum ad by Romney's Super PAC."

Economy and Values on Voters' Minds: [PolicyMicer Tommy Smithburg](#) reports: "As a candidate for the 42nd Ward Republican Committeeman

position in downtown Chicago, I've had the pleasure of getting to know several voters in the last few months. A topic that always seems to come up is who to support for president.

"Recently, it seems as though voters have narrowed down their choices into the following categories. First, our economy needs a turn-around expert at the helm and Mitt Romney is the only candidate who can get the job done, and second, our country needs to restore family values first and foremost and Rick Santorum would be the man to do that. Regardless, one thing is for sure, Republicans all agree that we're all on the same team and we'll support whoever the nominee is to change the residency of the White House."

11:05 a.m. [NY Times reports](#): "Opening a two-day campaign swing across Illinois heading into Tuesday's critical primary, Romney and his wife, Ann, made a populist play for the support of women, a demographic his strategists see as key to beating rival Rick Santorum in Illinois and in the primaries to come." Will women be an influential factor in Illinois?

11:00 a.m. Romney is [headed for a blowout victory](#). He leads with 45% to 30% for Rick Santorum, 12% for Newt Gingrich, and 10% for Ron Paul. But, a [Chicago Tribune/WGN-TV poll](#) showed Romney ahead of Santorum, only by 4 percentage points, within the margin of sampling error.

Expect Romney to Win Urban Areas, Santorum to Take Rural Illinois: [From PolicyMic pundit Chris Miller](#): Illinois doesn't often play a role in Republican presidential primaries, but both Mitt Romney and Rick Santorum have visited Chicago and locations in southern Illinois where there is a higher density of conservative and evangelical voters. Romney is expected to do well in urban and suburban areas, holding the trend nationally, but Santorum is expected to do better with southern and rural voters. Though Romney is expected to carry Illinois on the strength of urban votes, don't look for this to be repeated in President Obama's home state in the general election.

Illinois remains solidly under Democratic control, with redistricting maps redrawn heavily in Democrats' favor. Primary fights among Democrats to watch will be the 8th District between military veteran Tammy Duckworth and businessman Raja Krishnamoorthi. There's a close 4-way fight among Democrats for the 10th District between Vivek Bavda, Brad Schneider, Ilya Sheyman, and military veteran John Tree. Two downstate races will be interesting. The 13th looks tough between Democrats Dr. David Gill and veteran Matt Goetten. The 12th District is an open seat with the incumbent retiring. Brad Harriman goes up against Ken Wiezer in the Dem race, as the GOP 3-way features Jason Plummer, Rodger Cook, and Theresa Kormos.

A First Person Account of a Romney Campaign Event: *PolicyMicer* [Larry Tidrick](#) was part of a Mitt Romney campaign event last week in Rosemont, Ill.

The event, hosted at Pancake Eggcetra consisted of Romney showing up, giving an interview to *Fox and Friends*, then, going around to the breakfast booths talking to people.

Below is an account of the event:

Meg and I, and two other strangers, sat in a restaurant booth yesterday in Rosemont, Illinois, with Mitt Romney for a few minutes.

I decided he didn't want any unsolicited advice from a stranger, and, I didn't want to say something that would be overhead by the media, so we chit-chatted a bit, and, he left for Puerto Rico. I told him to have a safe trip.

Had I said something meaningful, I would have mentioned that I thought he should be able to freely discuss being a Mormon in this United States without being considered weird, as certainly the Founding Generation would have permitted. I might have also said that he seems to have educated himself on the Constitution, but, first, needed to win this election. I would have also referred him to Jerry Taylor at the Cato Institute to get a better explanation for the increase in retail gas prices. The price of Brent Crude Oil is not at all determined by retail demand in the states, and wouldn't be affected by any increased production in the States. But, of course we still need to be producing oil here as oil is fungible. I might have also said that he had listened well to GOP rival Ron Paul.

Yes, I know: you just can't believe that I didn't open my big mouth and say, at least, all of the above. For me: unbelievable restraint. I just didn't want him to 'become news,' due to some crackpot in Rosemont, Illinois.

In person I would describe him as extremely perceptive, mentally very quick, conventionally friendly, extremely good looking, and extremely well bred. Truly upper class and not at all a "man of the people."

Being nearly as rich as George Washington, he exudes much of the same personality.

During a TV Intermission for an interview with Fox and Friends, he said 'they are going to ask me awkward and meaningless questions and I am going to do my best to avoid answering them.'

I would call him a man who has learned that, when in the public eye, most people are not to be trusted, and the best you can do for yourself is to not do damage.

All of this raises a question to me: Who gets elected in this day and age — the most qualified, or, the one who has best learned the things to say which will move him along the path to election? Romney has learned the latter. Time will tell if he is, also, the former.

I'd bet on him.

And, yes, I got a signed autograph on a placemat.

I hope I get an invitation to both inaugurals.

Sunday 4:30 p.m. Three-quarters of the state's Republican vote is traditionally cast in the Chicago area. Downstate Republicans are typically more conservative than their suburban counterparts.

4:20 p.m. According to the Chicago Tribune, Rick Santorum vows an Illinois win would assure nomination ... Romney pounds Obama, claims conservative mantle.

Saturday 3:30 p.m: Rick Santorum held rallies in southern Illinois, seeking to play up his social values in the state's coal country. Meanwhile, Mitt Romney held a town hall in Collinsville, an Illinois suburb of St. Louis. Romney needs his supporters (mostly from Chicago's suburbs) to come out to vote on Tuesday.

Friday 5 p.m. Santorum Faces 7-to-1 Spending Disadvantage Against Romney: [According to ABC News](#), the closing days of the Illinois primary have brought an onslaught of TV and radio advertising from Romney and his Super PAC — most of it aimed squarely at squashing Santorum's hopes of pulling off an upset in next Tuesday's primary.

On Friday the campaign [released a new TV commercial](#) calling Santorum's economic know-how into question. "He's never run a business or a state," the ad's narrator says, calling the former Pennsylvania senator "another economic lightweight."



To help get that ad and others on the air, Romney's campaign chipped in an additional \$100,000 on Thursday on top of their already \$900,000-plus ad buy in the state, according to GOP media trackers.

Even more firepower is coming from the pro-Romney super PAC, Restore Our Future, which has purchased roughly \$2.5 million worth of airtime ahead of the primary

Thursday 5 p.m. Ron Paul Stumps at University of Illinois, Biggest Crowd Ever:

Paul spoke to a capacity crowd (estimated at 5,000 people) at UI. Video below.

According [to CBS News](#), Paul said at the rally that recent shifts by some of his rivals on the war in Afghanistan a sign that he's "winning the fight" with his signature hands-off foreign policy.

Paul won standing ovations -- his largest turnout ever -- for his calls to "bring our troops home!" He also told the crowd, made up mostly of college students, that "the other candidates on our side are saying we need to fight more wars."

Asked by National Journal/CBS News about recent comments by Gingrich and Santorum that the U.S. should review its commitment in Afghanistan and possibly back off, Paul replied, "It's about time."

"But they're what we call chicken hawks. And they talk a lot, they push the wars, they themselves haven't gone, and they don't serve, and yet they... promote the wars," he said.

"Sure the politics are changing, and that's great. We're changing people's minds. The American people are sick and tired of it," Paul said. "And like I mentioned in my speech, I spent five years trying to prevent the war in Iraq. So if they want to come on board now, fine and dandy. That means we're winning the fight."



Illinois Will Go to Santorum or Romney? Newt Gingrich [told](#) reporters on Thursday, that he believes the race in Illinois “largely will be Romney and Santorum.”

Monday 12 p.m. Santorum will be in Illinois on Friday, Saturday, and Monday. Paul hits the University of Illinois campus in Champaign-Urbana on Wednesday.

Gingrich will be in Chicago's northwest suburbs on Wednesday and Thursday.

11:50 a.m. Roney's campaign is led by Illinois State Treasurer Dan Rutherford, who [said over the weekend](#) that he is focused like a "laser beam" on turning out "Romney type of supporters in Illinois. Romney is not scheduled to arrive in Illinois until March 19.

The Romney super PAC Restore Our Future is estimated to spend \$1 million in Illinois television spots.

11:30 a.m. President Obama will head to Chicago on Friday for a high-paying fundraiser at the Palmer House Hilton.

THE BACKGROUND: The Illinois primary is quickly shaping up to be significant in the ongoing battle for the Republican nomination. With the next few contests in Mississippi and Alabama, states that Santorum or Gingrich are expected to win, Mitt Romney is eyeing Illinois' 54 delegates to recapture momentum and move closer to clinching the nomination.

Meanwhile, Santorum will look to ride his projected victories in either Mississippi or Alabama up to Illinois, where he is hoping to prove he has appeal for moderate GOP voters.

Polls show the race is tightening. Romney has long considered Illinois to be an easy victory, but [a new Chicago Tribune/WGN-TV poll](#) shows Romney only slightly ahead of Santorum, 35 percent to 31 percent, within the poll's margin of error. Another 16 percent were undecided and 46 percent of voters said they could still change their minds.

Much like Ohio, Santorum holds a 35 to 29 percent advantage in the 96 counties outside the Chicago area.

A super PAC supporting Romney has already been running ads against Santorum. Romney is scheduled to campaign in the state for two days, while Santorum will spend three days campaigning there.

Romney has received endorsements from Sen. Mark Kirk, Reps. Robert Dold, Judy Biggert, and Aaron Schock.

There are [two parts](#) to the Illinois primary: First, people vote for their favorite candidate, then they pick the delegates who will support the candidates at the Republican convention. In addition to the 54 delegates, 15 others will be chosen by party leaders later. Santorum did not manage to come up with delegate candidates in four districts, so the best he could do is win 44 delegates on the election.

In 2008, Sen. John McCain won the primary with 47.5 percent of the vote. Romney finished in second with 28.6 percent of the vote.

Illinois hasn't played a big role in the nomination fight since 1988, when Vice President George H.W. Bush drove Sen. Bob Dole out of the race with a primary win there. That was the last time that the state supported a Republican for president.

If Romney can come away with a strong victory in Obama's home state, it will help boost his campaign narrative that he is the only candidate who can defeat Obama.