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OTHER GOP CANDIDATES CANNOT AFFORD TO ALIENATE PAUL SUPPORTERS

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So what's going on in the world today? Here is an interesting story from SHNS today, entitled "Other GOP candidates cannot afford to alienate Paul supporters". An excerpt of the article follows:

WASHINGTON – GOP presidential candidate Ron Paul's antiwar stand is considered so out of sync with his party that rival Rick Santorum put him in league with liberal Democrat Dennis Kucinich and to the left of President Barack Obama.

But to his supporters, Paul is returning the GOP to its cautious foreign policy roots, articulated in President Dwight Eisenhower's 1961 warning about "the military-industrial complex."

In their view, the Republican Party lost its way starting with the Reagan military build-up in the 1980s and reaching a crescendo with former President George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq in 2003.

"George Bush was the worst thing that ever happened to the Republican Party," said Paul supporter Robert Nadeau, owner of Nadeau Family Vintners in Paso Robles, Calif. "When I look at the Republican Party going back to World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, the Republican candidates were the end-the-war candidates."

Trillion-dollar deficits at home and a war in Iraq that is estimated to have cost at least that much are creating dissonance among Tea Party, evangelical Christian and traditional Republicans in conservative regions of the nation.

For some voters who once supported Sen. John McCain and George W. Bush, the small-government, antiwar message from Paul is compelling.

Establishment Republicans give Paul zero chance of winning the GOP nomination, but the party's neoconservative wing is alarmed enough about his message that former Bush speechwriter Michael Gerson accused Paul's supporters of trying to "erase 158 years of Republican Party history," including Abraham Lincoln.

“He really is not resonating with establishment Republicans,” who consider Paul’s opposition to sanctions on Iran as “extremely dangerous,” said GOP analyst Ford O’Connell.

Still, Paul won a strong second place in the New Hampshire primary on Tuesday, 22.8 percent, boosted by the state’s open primary that allows independents to vote. Paul doubled his showing in Iowa from four years ago, capturing 21 percent of the vote there.

Analysts say Paul’s appeal is limited to a loyal bloc of diehards.

“He hits a ceiling at 25 percent,” said David Paleologos, director of the Suffolk University Political Research Center. “The only state where he can break above 25 percent is Virginia, and that’s only because he’s one of two candidates on the ballot” along with former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney.

John Dennis, a San Francisco activist for Paul who ran as the Republican challenger to House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, two years ago when she was House speaker, said Paul’s loyal supporters have doubled in the past six months.

“The Republican Party was non-interventionist, but the neoconservatives took that over,” Dennis said. “But our roots are still there because it makes common sense to conservatives not to go to war simply from a fiscal point of view.”

The Paul campaign’s strategy is to collect delegates with an eye toward influencing the party platform. Caucuses in Colorado, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, North Dakota and Washington can allow passionate followers an outsized influence because open balloting is conducted among small local groups, compared with statewide primaries with secret ballots.

Political analysts are skeptical, however, that any of the other GOP contenders would embrace Paul’s libertarian positions, which include not just his antiwar stance but also his opposition to the war on drugs, the Federal Reserve and other issues.

At the same time, the eventual candidate can ill afford to alienate Paul’s followers if he continues to rack up vote shares in the 20 percent range.

Boosting Paul’s visibility is a war-weary public, record deficit spending and a sitting Democratic president who many Democrats believe has continued Bush policies on terrorism, civil liberties and war, said David Boaz, executive vice president of the libertarian Cato Institute.

Paul has “brought together this concept of economic conservatism, social moderation and staying out of unnecessary wars,” Boaz said. “That combination hasn’t been offered by any other Republican presidential candidate in a long time.”