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A Case For Rick Perry or Mitt Romney

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Many point to the fact that different Republican candidates have captured our fancy over the past few months as a sign of weakness. In fact, it's a sign of strength. Everyone is calling the field weak. Maybe it's that there are a lot of facets to being President and actually we know that each and everyone of the candidates on the dais are better than the current occupant of the oval office. Republicans just want to let them macerate and pick the best one. The field may be stronger than the congescenti think.

I haven't picked a horse to back, but I know who I am a bit sour on for this run. Ace has laid out a compelling case for Perry. No matter who the Republicans pick, the Democratic media will accentuate his/her negative. No VP candidate will make up for that negative. Sarah Palin was picked to energize the type of conservative voter that has contributed to Rick Santorum's recent rise in Iowa. Even her magnetic personality wasn't enough to save McCain.

Ace writes, "the election will actually turn on... Jobs." I don't disagree, this election is going to be all about economics vs Obamanomics. However, because of the American Idol format of the average person's information gathering, one sound bite can make you look stupid.

At Red State, he shows some interesting facts about Perry,

-67 tax cuts for a total taxpayer savings of \$14 billion.

-Fewer government employees per capita than when he took office.

-Perry has consistently scored a solid "B" rating from the Cato Institute on spending.

These are good stats. Romney can't say that about his time in Massachusetts. Former Utah governor Jon Huntsman is the only other candidate with good economic stats. Huntsman blew it by insulting the Republican base and being positive on global warming. The other candidates were never executive office holders, so we don't know how they lead. Obama had never served in an executive role either, anywhere. Leadership skill isn't an arrow in the Obama quiver.

Again, I worry about debate gaffes, and Perry's ability to respond to the lies Obama will spin. Perry isn't a slow thinker. He is a considerate thinker. Some very great leaders that I have known in my time take a while to consider issues before they act on them. That's often a very good quality. Being able to quip hyper quickly isn't necessarily a sign of leadership even though at the time that person seems like the smartest person in the room.

The one knock on Perry is that his poor debate performances and periodic campaign trail gaffes will open him to the same vulnerabilities in office as President Bush: an inability to respond to criticism or explain his own policies. That's a fair concern, but it should not be overstated. First, Perry's reputation in Texas is very different from Bush's. Bush was all about bipartisan bonhomie; Perry has left the state littered with the political corpses of people who stood in his way. Remember Jim Hightower, the left-wing talker who coined the phrase "the only things in the middle of the road are yellow lines and dead armadillos"? Perry ended his political career 21 years ago. Maybe Perry's not Demosthenes, but he knows how build a team that gets his message out and go after his foes.

Second, debating skill takes on outsize importance in the primaries, when candidates have to stand out on a stage crowded with 7 or 8 people who all agree with each other 80-90% of the time. All Rick Perry needs to do is step onstage and everyone will know how he's different from Barack Obama.

We saw what the media did to Sarah Palin. They were so afraid of her that they trashed her so badly that she is unelectable with the mainstream right now. In the next election cycle, who ever the candidate is should expect to be treated even more harshly. The race card will be played over and over. I can hear stories featuring people saying that you are a racist if you don't back Obama.

This is going to be one of the less civil campaigns in American history. Civility went out the window a long time ago. The tell for you was when Obama called for a more civil tone at the Giffords service. Immediately, the far left went the other way. That's all in the rear view mirror now. The only important thing to the hard lefties is re-election of Obama. They know the House is lost, and the Senate is probably lost. Desperate people do desperate things. The left is desperate.

Our economic and foreign policy environment calls for extremely thoughtful and decisive leadership. It requires a person that is deeply in touch with what they truly believe. Perry strikes me as that person. Romney has beliefs too-but Romney is more consensus and

data driven. As long as he is taking advice from the right people, and looking at the data with the right frame of reference, Romney will be okay too.

Clearly, I am still ruminating about the candidates. The Florida primary will be a big key to me. It's easy to talk to the first three states because there are a lot of cultural and geographic quirks that make each state easy to relate to. People in Des Moines think a lot like Iowa City people.

None of the states are very populated.

Florida is a different animal. Miami is a lot like New York, and the panhandle is more like Mississippi. Young people, old people. The economic crisis in real estate hit them hard.

Let's see how the votes go there.