



## Results of the Straw Poll for 2012 GOP Presidential Nominee at the SRLC

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*New Orleans, LA*--Few participants or reporters who attended the Southern Republican Leadership Conference June 16-18 were surprised by Ron Paul's first-placed showing in the straw vote Saturday afternoon. The Texas congressman's campaign team had focused on the conclave, made sure that his supporters registered to vote in the poll, and focused their energies on getting them to vote. As expected, Paul topped the field of twelve Republican presidential hopefuls with 612 votes in the straw poll.

But, as much of the national press is now reporting, the big story to come out of the GOP conclave here was the man who wasn't there and came in second. At home with a cold, represented by his wife, and not mentioned much at all in coverage of the SRLC, former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman came in second to Paul with 382 votes.

Almost immediately, Huntsman skeptics on the right began sounding the old warnings that with so many conservative candidates splitting up their base, Huntsman--viewed skeptically for his past support of cap and trade and relative silence on cultural issues--had to do better than expected. (Two of the best-received speakers at the SRLC, Michele Bachmann and Herman Cain, came in third and fourth with 191 votes and 104 votes respectively; Mitt Romney was fifth with 74 and Newt Gingrich sixth with 69).

But there was a lot more to Huntsman's strategy, which several were likened to the fable of the tortoise who wins the race over the overconfident hare. That he had to cancel his appearance in New Orleans because of illness was enough to dissuade much of the press from noticing his efforts here at the Hilton Hotel. (Romney and Pawlenty were also unable to attend, were largely ignored in news reports, and fared poorly in the straw poll).

Huntsman, however, was represented by wife Mary Kaye and by top officials of his fledgling campaign: media maestro John Weaver, political operative Lanny Wiles, and political trouble-shooter John Yob. Backed up by a platoon of young campaigners, they worked the crowd at the Hilton tirelessly.

"Gov. Huntsman will do well in the South because voters--especially younger voters--are responding to his addressing 'adult issues' such as the debt and getting government spending out of control," Weaver told HUMAN EVENTS Thursday night. He added that his candidate had an all-star group of backers in South Carolina for its early primary next year: Mike Campbell, son of the late and much-loved Gov. Carroll Campbell; former State Attorney General Henry McMaster, father of the states' lawsuit against Obamacare, and veteran Columbia consultant Richard Quinn, who managed John McCain's near-successful race against George W. Bush in the 2000 primary in the Palmetto State.

"And even conservatives who still have questions about some of his issue stands were impressed by Huntsman's fiscal record as governor, which earned very high marks from the Cato Institute and Pew study of states, and by the fact he was ambassador to China," said veteran Massachusetts political consultant Holly Robichaud, who is neutral in the 2012 race. "And while he may have been Obama's ambassador, people who applauded Donald Trump's talk of 'getting tough' economically with China may also think the best person is someone who knows the Chinese and can deal with them in their own language [a reference to Huntsman's fluency in Mandarin Chinese]."

"After New Orleans, you'll be paying a lot more attention to Huntsman," predicted Robichaud.

1. Paul - 612
2. Huntsman - 382
3. Bachman - 191
4. Cain - 104
5. Romney - 74
6. Gingrich - 69
7. Palin - 41
8. Santorum - 30
9. Pawlenty - 18
10. Johnson - 10
11. Roemer - 9

## 12. McCotter - 2

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