

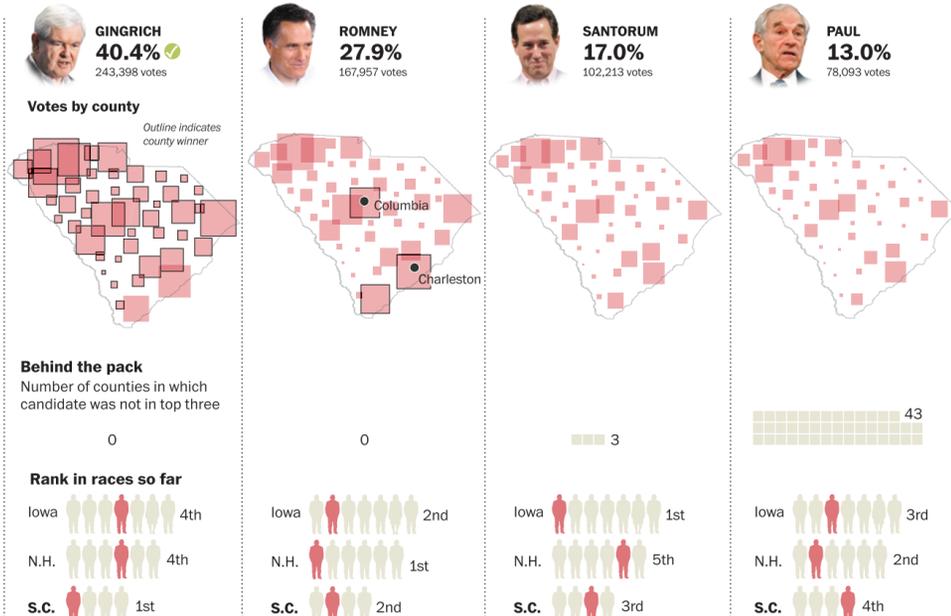
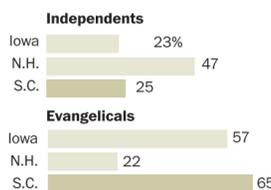
CAMPAIGN  2012

Post-game analysis: South Carolina

Turnout in South Carolina's GOP presidential primary Saturday was higher than in 2008 by more than a third, or 155,000 additional voters. Mitt Romney got 100,000 more votes than in his 2008 loss to John McCain, but still ended well behind Newt Gingrich. Gingrich carried 43 of 46 counties.

By Ted Mellnik, Laura Stanton and Bill Webster

Among GOP primary and caucus voters, based on entrance/exit polls



Sources: Associated Press; Edison Media Research for the National Election Pool, The Washington Post and other media organizations; staff reports

Note: 100 percent reporting; unofficial results

THE WASHINGTON POST

THE TAKE

Romney vs. Gingrich only underscores GOP unease

THE TAKE FROM AI

divides within the party that characterized many primary contests in 2010.

Romney has the breeding and countenance of the establishment, but when he first ran for office he ran away from Ronald Reagan. As a registered independent, he voted for Paul Tsongas in the 1992 Democratic presidential primary. He can seem out of place in a party whose conservative Southern base has been its core personality since the mid-1990s.

Gingrich has captured the anger of the grass roots and channeled the deep dislike of President Obama that gave rise to the tea party. But like Romney, he has limitations playing the role of insurgent, although his rhetoric has long been that of a bombastic outsider.

He has operated in the corridors of power in Washington for two decades. He compromised with President Bill Clinton, and his instincts for realpolitik prompted him to side with the party establishment in one of the early face-offs with the tea party (in a special House election in New York). He may be a onetime rebellious backbencher, but when he became speaker of the House, his colleagues tried to push him from power.

The two men speak to contradictory desires within the party. The grass roots yearn for a fighter who is prepared to take on Obama in the most strident and confrontational way possible — to call him out as a socialist or worse. The applause Gingrich generates at debates with his defiant and indignant performances gives voice to this visceral urge among many conservatives.

But many in the party also know they need the steady competence of a leader who is capable of restraining the worst excesses of the hard-right activists and translating the conservative rhetoric and ideas that unite the party into a governing strategy that can bring the Republicans a White House victory in November and success beyond.

To some Republicans, those who choose not to run for president still seem more suited to the roles that Romney and Gingrich are now assigned. Former Mississippi governor Haley Barbour and Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels would have traveled in the establishment lane, and yet both have the kind of conservative credentials and credibility that Romney lacks.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie can be as pugnacious as Gingrich and has been as rhetorically harsh about Obama's leadership as any prominent Republican in the country. But he is not weighed down with the Gingrich liabilities.

Former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee is another who could have played the role of populist conservative, as he did in 2008, when he showed he could espouse the most conservative of views but with the kind of humor and cheerfulness that softened the edges of his message.

No one can say that a Barbour or Daniels or Huckabee or Christie would have done better than either Romney or Gingrich had they chosen to run. But there is no mistaking the feeling that there is still a mismatch between the character and personality of the Republican Party today and the people who are seeking to lead it into the fall campaign.

There is no perfect answer either to the question of which of the presidential candidates is best suited to lead, although, ironically, Republicans this week can look to Florida for some hint of what the party really wants — an amalgam of former governor Jeb Bush and new Sen. Marco Rubio.

Bush, whose last name virtually disqualified him from seeking the presidency in 2012, might be running away with this nomination battle had he changed his name and entered. He has impeccable credentials as a conservative and served two terms as governor of this critically important swing



Supporters of Mitt Romney cheer at a rally in Ormond Beach, Fla. After Newt Gingrich's victory in South Carolina shattered Romney's seeming lock on the GOP presidential nomination, the Jan. 31 Florida primary looms large.

Florida schedule

● **GOP presidential debate hosted by National Journal, NBC News, the Tampa Bay Times and the Florida Council of 100**
Monday, University of South Florida, Tampa

● **GOP presidential debate hosted by CNN and the Republican Party of Florida**
Thursday, Jacksonville

● **Florida primary**
Tuesday, Jan. 31

Primaries after Florida

● **Saturday, Feb. 4**
Nevada caucuses
Maine caucuses (Feb. 4-11)

● **Tuesday, Feb. 7**
Colorado caucuses
Minnesota caucuses
Missouri primary

state. He is sensitive to the GOP's problems with Latino voters. He is respectful of the Reagan tradition but aware that the times demand something more than nostalgia for a bygone era.

Rubio is the young hope who so captivated the tea party movement as a candidate for the Senate that he drove former governor Charlie Crist not just to the sidelines but out of the party, and who in his first year in office has moved smartly with an eye toward a future that can bridge the gulf between the tea party and the establishment.

Neither has taken sides in the nomination battle, and when there were rumors late Saturday that Bush might be moving toward an endorsement, he quickly reiterated, in an interview with Bloomberg News's Al Hunt, that he would remain neutral as the fiery contest between Gingrich and Romney moves into his state.

Barbour, Daniels, Huckabee, Christie, Bush and Rubio may spark the imaginations of hungry Republicans, but the ideal is always unattainable and politicians are never the same in practice as they are in the speculations of pundits or activists or the elites.

Today, the Romney-Gingrich contest has suddenly captured the attention of the nation, if only because it is so improbable. And the two are dividing up the party along predictable lines.

In South Carolina, Gingrich did better among evangelicals, among those making less than \$100,000, among those who do not have college degrees, among those who see deficit reduction rather than job creation as the higher priority for the next president — a proxy, perhaps, for tea party enthusiasts.

Romney was stronger with those who have college degrees, who are not evangelical Christians, who prize job creation and who make more than \$100,000 a year, although he has lost some of those groups to Gingrich.

Gingrich and Romney have attributes that have made them worthy of this showdown. Romney has, with some exceptions, been disciplined and patient. He acknowledged Sunday he had made a mistake in not releasing his tax returns

more quickly in order to put the issue to rest, but in many other ways he has shown steadiness and intelligence and improvement as a candidate this time.

Gingrich has shown remarkable resilience, having blown up his campaign last spring only to rise again and then see his candidacy plummet under a barrage of negative ads and then, improbably, to prosper again. No one who watched him in Iowa anticipated he would win a double-digit victory in South Carolina.

But the other side of the balance sheet is what makes Republicans wonder what they might be getting, no matter what they get. Romney is gentlemanly and has not shown the rhetorical edge in attacking Obama that many conservatives seem to want. He has moved right in the nomination campaign but at heart is not an ideologically driven politician. Problem solving is his motivator.

Gingrich has plenty of over-the-top rhetoric. Two decades ago, he railed against the "corrupt liberal welfare state." He has updated that to fit the times — hence his label for Obama as "the food stamp president." But he is not a perfect tea party politician. He is not a pure small-government politician. His rivals say his economic and entitlement proposals would blow a big hole in the deficit. Some conservatives still won't forgive him for attacking House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan's Medicare proposal.

Although they have a real opportunity to win the White House in November, Republicans may be a presidential cycle away from fielding a group of candidates who are more in sync with the real identity of the party, who represent the party's future generation and who are more capable of bridging the cultural and stylistic gulfs that exist.

That is why there could be an inevitable letdown once this race is over and the party contemplates its leader for the fall campaign — or deep disaffection among the supporters of the loser. Finding the acceptable compromise has been frustratingly difficult for the Republicans. No one yet satisfies, but someone must. For Gingrich and Romney, this is the time to prove the doubters wrong.

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Campaign 2012

Excerpted from washingtonpost.com/election2012

Gingrich accused of using race

Former House speaker Newt Gingrich's victory in Saturday's Republican primary in South Carolina was fueled in part by comments aimed at driving a wedge between voters on the issue of race, House Assistant Democratic Leader James E. Clyburn (S.C.) said Sunday.

Gingrich's campaign-trail remarks, argued the No. 3 House Democrat and the highest-ranking African American in Congress, are the latest iteration of a GOP tactic that stretches back to Richard Nixon's Southern strategy and Ronald Reagan's criticism of so-called "welfare queens" during his presidential bid.

"Well, sure it resonated — not that it was true," Clyburn said during an appearance on C-SPAN's "Newsmakers" the morning after Gingrich's primary win. "The fact of the matter is we all know the records are very clear: Forty-nine percent of the people who are on welfare are white. We know that. But people think otherwise. We know that there never existed a 'welfare queen.' The admission was made long after Ronald Reagan that they created that out of whole cloth. But it worked."

"So Newt Gingrich, seeing all of this, decided that he would create a 'food stamp king.' And that's what he did, and sure, it resonated. But the fact of the matter is, nobody wants to be on food stamps. Everybody would want a job."

"He went after the media down in Myrtle Beach," Clyburn said of Gingrich. "He put Juan Williams in his place." These little words and phrases that he used — calling President Obama a 'food stamp president' — these are things that were reminiscent of the Southern strategy of Richard Nixon and the 'welfare queen' created by Ronald Reagan. [Gingrich] understands all of that. He played into it very well and did a masterful job of connecting with the Republican voter."

Clyburn also contended that Gingrich won in part because of Mitt Romney's inability to "come clean with the American people, at least in their minds, as to who exactly and what he is."

"His answers to questions seem to be filibusters," Clyburn said of Romney. "He would never talk about that 15 percent tax rate in a way that people could identify with it. He would never talk about his relationship with Bain [Capital] and what it did to Georgetown and Gaffney, two outstanding [South Carolina] communities here where jobs were lost. And people just didn't feel him."

Clyburn — who is 71 and has served in the House for nearly two decades — declined to speculate about his own political future.

"Whatever the future holds, I hope to be prepared to receive it," he said.

— Felicia Sonmez

The Fix

Excerpted from washingtonpost.com/thefix

Christie softens about VP spot

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie said Sunday that he would consider being Mitt Romney's vice presidential running mate if Romney asked him, but he said he was skeptical about ever being on the ticket.

The Republican governor, who previously denied that he was ready to be president but then briefly considered entreaties to run, appears to have softened his resistance to the idea of being vice president.

"I absolutely believe that, come November 2012, I'm going to be governor of New Jersey and not in any other office," Christie said on NBC's "Meet the Press." "But the fact of the matter is, if governor Romney, who's going to be our nominee, picked up the phone and called me to talk about this, I love my country enough and I love my party enough to listen."

Last year, when asked about the idea of being vice president, Christie said, "I don't think there's anybody in America who thinks my personality is best suited to being No. 2."

Christie also suggested Sunday that his previous aversion to the idea of being president was more about having to spend a year campaigning than it was about his readiness to take on the job.

"Everybody's misunderstood what I meant about saying being ready for president," he said. "I meant that, you know, being ready to leave the job that I had and being ready to run for president of the United States, with all that entails. I didn't want to do it, didn't feel ready to do it."

— Aaron Blake