

COPY

Fred Karger Presidential Exploratory Committee

March 14, 2011

Office of General Counsel
Federal Election Commission
999 E Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20463

Re: MUR 6459

I am in receipt of your letter of March 7, 2011 regarding my complaint (MUR 6459) against the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition's (IFFC) Presidential Forum. Now that the IFFC Forum is over, I would like to submit supplemental evidence to my original complaint that further proves that the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition was not acting in accordance with the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971.

The five potential candidates who attended the IFFC March 7, 2011 Forum were not chosen using "pre-established objective criteria," the event did not meet the broad FEC definition for a debate and the non-profit hosting organization clearly supported certain potential candidates for Federal Office above others.

Large Media and Public Turnout

The Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition held its Presidential Forum on March 7, 2011. An audience of between 1,000 - 2,000 were reported to have attended, plus "150 state, national and international media representatives covered the event." (Attachment 1) The format was not a true debate, but the format was separate speeches where "each of five candidates had 10 minutes to make an impression on an eager audience." (Attachment 2)

The Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition constantly referred to the participants as "candidates." It stated on its own website, "Don't miss the most exciting political event ever held in Iowa's presidential caucus history!" (Attachment 3) Its Press Release continues, "This collection of speakers marks the first event of its kind in the 2012 race." (Attachment 3) "There will be candidate and issue-oriented literature tables for you to browse. There will be opportunities for you to interact with the candidates." (Attachment 3)

Governor Terry Branstad of Iowa opened the evening by telling the audience: "This is the first significant event of the caucus season." He referred to those attending as "valuable" potential supporters." (Attachment 4) In his speech, Gov. Branstad stated, "I want you to know, these people of Faith & Freedom here tonight are people who show up at caucuses." (Attachment 2)

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Steve Scheffler, President of the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition, reiterated that point in his speech, "This is the start of the 2012 presidential caucus process," (Attachment 4). Ralph Reed, National Chairman of the Faith & Freedom Coalition, warmed up the audience with: "Are you ready to begin the process of choosing Barack Obama's successor here in Iowa?" (Attachment 5)

Attendees used this opportunity to evaluate the "candidates." "I thought he (Herman Cain) was a very charismatic, dynamic gentleman," said Kay Quirk, a Republican who drove three hours down from Storm Lake, in northwest Iowa. Quirk said she had "signed up for Cain's emails and would consider caucusing for him." (Attachment 4)

Attacking Other Potential Candidates

The Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition did not act as an unbiased staging organization of an educational forum, but allowed speakers and even Ralph Reed to attack other potential candidates. "One potential candidate who might not have done a fledgling candidacy any good at this event was Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels. His call last month for a truce on social issues was roundly mocked by speakers (Rick) Santorum and Ralph Reed, national chairman of the Faith & Freedom Coalition." (Attachment 2) Along with mocking Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, Mr. Reed's opening call to choose Barack Obama's successor violates the neutrality guidelines of the FEC: "Nonprofit organizations... which do not endorse, support, or oppose political candidates or political parties may stage candidate debates" (Attachment 13).

News Coverage

Press reports generally referred to the IFFC Forum as the kick-off of the 2012 Republican Presidential Primary season:

The Washington Post: "The 2012 Republican Presidential race for conservative Christian hearts and minds and votes got off to an unbelievable start yesterday." (Attachment 6)

Real Clear Politics: "The 2012 presidential nominating season officially began last night as five potential Republican contenders appeared at a forum outside Des Moines hosted by the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition." (Attachment 7)

Salon: "The 2012 Iowa caucus campaign kicked off in a church on Monday night" (Attachment 8)

CBS News: "Organizers cast as the kickoff to the nominating contest in the key first-in-the-nation voting state." (Attachment 9)

The Des Moines Register: "It was the first group appearance of the developing campaign for the Iowa caucuses and an opportunity for a first impression with an active and loyal segment of the Republican caucus electorate." (Attachment 1)

Politico: "The state's first big event of the presidential campaign season, the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition forum" (Attachment 16)

NPR: "The 2012 Republican primary kicked off in earnest. The occasion was an Iowa forum sponsored by Ralston Road's Faith and Freedom Coalition" (Attachment 17)

My Complaint Received Widespread Coverage

News of my complaint received extensive coverage in Iowa and throughout the country, including: Associated Press, Chicago Tribune, Des Moines Register, Sioux City Journal, CBS News, The San Francisco Chronicle, Mother Jones, the Daily Caller, The Atlantic, WHO-TV, KCCI-TV, WHO Talk Radio, KGAN-TV Cedar Rapids and dozens of other television, radio, newspapers, magazines and blogs which covered my initial complaint against the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition, Steve Scheffler and his Iowa Christian Alliance. (Attachment 14).

Objective vs. Subjective Criteria

After my complaint was filed (MUR 6459), Steve Scheffler stated "Potential candidates were invited based on an objective criteria of viability, fundraising ability, and prior electoral success." (Attachment 10) This is vastly different than the reason Mr. Scheffler gave reporters before the complaint was filed on why I was not invited to participate. Originally Mr. Scheffler said: "Karger's focus on gay rights makes him a marginal candidate... He's got one issue and in my opinion that does not make him a serious or legitimate candidate" (Attachment 15).

Mr. Scheffler later claimed he used viability as a measure, which was purely subjective on his part, without some quantitative measure. Since no one has engaged in fundraising for a Presidential race, he could not have used that. He could not have used elective history as he claimed, because not everyone invited had one. So, what were those "objective" criteria and how did he apply them?

Drew Klein, organizational director the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition, told the Des Moines Register, "sexual orientation was not a criteria for the invitations. He declined to specify why Karger wasn't invited." (Attachment 12)

Mr. Scheffler said, "it's nonsense to consider an invitation to the group's event as amounting to an in-kind contribution, because the invitation has no monetary value." (Attachment 11) Mr. Scheffler's assertion that the Presidential Forum had no monetary value is untrue. With 150 reporters attending and a live broadcast on CSPAN, the in-kind contributions to the five speakers was worth millions of dollars.


Please accept my supplemental complaint to the MUR 6459 file. It contains further evidence that the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition's sponsorship and financing of its March 7, 2011 Presidential Forum constitutes illegal contributions to the potential candidates who spoke. They were clearly not chosen using "pre-established objective criteria," the event did not meet the broad FEC definition for a debate and the non-profit

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hosting organization did support and oppose certain candidates for Federal Office above others.

I hope this helps in furthering my original complaint. Thank you very much for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,


Fred Karger
1278 Glenneyre, #20
Laguna Beach, CA 92651

See attached acknowledgment

cc: Distribution

Attachment 1:

Beaumont, Thomas. "GOP Presidential Hopefuls Push Moral Code at Iowa Forum." The Des Moines Register. March 8, 2011.
<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/article/20110308/NEWS09/103080376/Speakers-woo-GOP-faithful-at-Iowa-forum?watchdog>

Attachment 2:

Obradovich, Kathie. "Not in Iowa Tonight? GOP No-Shows Missed Out." The Des Moines Register. March 7, 2011.
<http://blogs.desmoinesregister.com/dmr/index.php/2011/03/07/not-in-iowa-tonight-gop-no-shows-missed-out/>

Attachment 3

"Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition Annual Spring Kick-Off March 7." Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition Press Release. March 6, 2011. <http://ffciowa.com/>

Attachment 4

Haberman, Maggie. "Iowa Blastoff: 2012 Candidates say Social Issues are Job No. 1." Politico. March 7, 2011.
<http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0311/50824.html#ixzz1G2IDahou>

Attachment 5

Crowley, Michael. "Religion, the Economy and "Weird and Kinky" Lifestyles at a GOP 2012 Forum in Iowa." Time Magazine. March 8, 2011.
<http://swampland.blogs.time.com/2011/03/08/social-issues-the-economy-and-weird-and-kinky-lifestyles-at-a-gop-2012-forum-in-iowa/>

Attachment 6

Berlinerblau, Jacques. "Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition: Five Republicans Fight for the Faith(ful) in Iowa." March 8, 2011.
http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/georgetown/2011/03/republicans_fight_for_god_at_the_iowa_faith_and_freedom.html

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CERTIFICATE OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT

State of *California*)

County of *Orange*)

On MAR 14, 2011 before me Mehdi Zahedi a notary public Personally appeared _____

- FRED S. KARGER -

who proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence to be the person(s) whose name(s) is/are subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he//she/they executed the same in his/her/their authorized capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their signature(s) on the instrument the person(s), or the entity upon behalf of which the person(s) acted, executed the instrument.

I certify under PENALTY OF PERJURY under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing paragraph is true and correct.

WITNESS my hand and official seal.

Signature

Mehdi Zahedi

Mehdi Zahedi, notary public



Notary Seal

OPTIONAL

Though the information below is not required by law, it may prove valuable to person(s) relying on the document and could prevent fraudulent removal and reattachment of this form to another document.

Title or type of Document FEC Compliance form

Document Date MAR 14, 2011 Number of pages: 8 (including this page)

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Attachment 7

Bevan, Tom. "Potential 2012 GOP Candidates Convene in Iowa." Real Clear Politics. March 8, 2011.
http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2011/03/08/potential_gop_candidates_convene_in_iowa_109152.html

Attachment 8

Kornacki, Steve. "The Roots of the GOP's Crackup." Salon. March 8, 2011.
http://www.salon.com/news/politics/war_room/2011/03/08/iowa_cattle_call/

Attachment 9:

Montopoli, Brian. "GOP Presidential Contenders Make Case to Iowa Faithful." CBS News. March 8, 2011. http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20040386-503544.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+CBSNewsPCAnswer+%28PC+Answer%3A+CBSNews.com%29

Attachment 10:

Kinkade, Tyler. "Karger files FEC complaint against conservative Iowa group" The Iowa Independent. February 24, 2011. <http://iowaindependent.com/52879/karger-files-fec-complaint-against-conservative-iowa-group>

Attachment 11:

Glover, Mike. "Man Says Iowa Forum Excluded Him Because He's Gay." The Chicago Tribune. February 25, 2011.
<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:lwtLlatLrk4J:www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-ap-ia-kargercomplaint,0,4024339.story+chicago+tribune+%22fred+Karger%22&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=firefox-a&source=www.google.com>

Attachment 12

Clayworth, Jason. "5 Potential GOP Candidates to Converge at Forum." The Des Moines Register. March 5, 2011.
<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/article/20110306/NEWS10/103060328/5-potential-GOP-candidates-to-converge-at-forum?Register%20Staff%20Blogs>

Attachment 13

FEC Section 110.13
http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/cfr_2010/janqtr/11cfr110.13.htm

Attachment 14

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"Candidate exclusion based on 'bigotry,'" Eastern Iowa Government. February 23, 2011. <http://www.easterniowagovernment.com/2011/02/23/candidate-exclusion-based-on-%E2%80%98bigotry%E2%80%99/>

"Fred Karger Responds to Exclusion from Candidate Forum." IowaPolitics.com February 23, 2011. <http://www.sauereads.com/view?v=fred-karger-responds-exclusion-from>

Hayworth, Bret. "Obama DOMA Decision Ensures Gay Marriage as Presidential Campaign Issue." Sioux City Journal. February 23, 2011. http://www.siouxcityjournal.com/app/blogs/politically_speaking/?p=5474

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Beaumont, Tom. "Karger Complains Officially He was Left Out of Forum." The Des Moines Register. February 25, 2011. <http://blogs.desmoinesregister.com/dmr/index.php/2011/02/25/karger-complains-officially-he-was-left-out-of-forum/>

"NOT INVITED: California Businessman Fred Karger says He's Filed a Complaint with the Federal Election Commission." WHO-TV. February 25th, 2011. <http://www.whotv.com/news/who-story-openly-gay-candidate-left-out-20110225.0.5562605.story>

"Karger Files Complaint about Caucus Debate Lineup." KGAN CBS News. February 25, 2011. http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:cVwpPX9cr8YJ:www.kgan.com/template/inews_wire/wires.regional.ia/22df3b9b-www.kgan.com.shtml+KGAN+Fred+Karger&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=firefox-a&source=www.google.com

"Presidential Hopeful Fred Karger Files Complaint with FEC, Says Exclusion from GOP Forum is Because He's Gay." Towleroad. February 26, 2011. <http://www.towleroad.com/2011/02/presidential-hopeful-fred-karger-files-complaint-with-fec-says-exclusion-from-gop-forum-is-because-h.html>

Glover, Mike. "Man says Iowa Forum Excluding him Because He's Gay." San Francisco Chronicle. February 25, 2011. http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2011/02/25/state/n141706S47.DTL&feed=rss.news_politics

Glover, Mike. "Man says Iowa Forum Excluding him Because He's Gay." San Jose Mercury News. February 25, 2011. http://www.mercurynews.com/news/ci_17483683?nclick_check=1

Gieseke, Winston. "Fred Karger Files Complaint with FEC Following Iowa Exclusion." The Advocate. February 26, 2011.

http://www.advocate.com/News/Daily_News/2011/02/26/Fred_Karger_Files_Complaint_with_FEC_Following_Iowa_Exclusion/

Sullivan, Adam. "Republican 2012 Contender: 'I Will Not Be Bullied' by Iowa Conservative Group." Iowa Watch. February 26, 2011. <http://www.iowawatch.org/?p=3297>

Mencimer, Stephanie. "Gay GOP Presidential Contender Shut Out of First Iowa Debate." Mother Jones. March 1, 2011. <http://motherjones.com/mojo/2011/03/gay-gop-presidential-contender-shut-out-first-iowa-debate>

Carey, Amanda. "Upcoming Iowa Presidential Forum Excludes Gay Republican Candidate." The Daily Caller. March 7, 2011. <http://dailycaller.com/2011/03/05/upcoming-iowa-presidential-forum-excludes-gay-republican-candidate/>

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Attachment 15

"A dozen GOP presidential prospects invited to March 7 Iowa forum." Tom Beaumont. The Des Moines Register. January 4, 2011. <http://blogs.desmoinesregister.com/dmr/index.php/2011/01/04/a-dozen-gop-presidential-prospects-invited-to-march-7-iowe-forum/>

Attachment 16

Haberman, Maggie. "Iowa's New Generation Gap." Politico. March 9, 2011. <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0311/51001.html>

Attachment 17

Kilgore, Ed. "New Republic: In Iowa, Did the GOP Prove Worthy?" NPR. March 9, 2011. <http://www.npr.org/2011/03/09/134389310/new-republic-in-iowa-did-the-gop-prove-worthy>

GOP presidential hopefuls push moral code at Iowa forum

Written by

THOMAS BEAUMONT and REID FORGRAVE

10:17 PM, Mar. 7, 2011

Five Republican presidential prospects Monday professed before an influential audience of Iowa evangelical conservatives how religious faith ought to blend with public life.

But some of the five potential candidates who spoke to the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition's spring kickoff event in Waukee balanced their calls for a more conservative moral code with appeals for unity across the conservative spectrum in trying to solve the nation's vexing economic problems.

It was the first group appearance of the developing campaign for the Iowa caucuses and an opportunity for a first impression with an active and loyal segment of the Republican caucus electorate. Iowa polls have shown that about 45 percent of Iowa's caucus and primary voting base consider themselves evangelical Christians.

However, former U.S. House Speaker Newt

Gingrich and former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty also used their speeches to the audience of about 1,500 at a Waukee church to remind the audience it will take a unified conservative front to remake the White House next year.

"We're all going to have to be on the same team when this is over," Gingrich said. "It's going to take all of us to defeat the left."

Gingrich, who last week began raising money to explore seeking the 2012 nomination, proposed a series of executive orders that he argued could quickly set a more socially conservative tone in the federal government.

They include issues that resonated with the audience at the evangelical, theater-style suburban church: reinstating policies banning federal spending on international organizations that provide abortions and allowing doctors and nurses to refuse as a matter of conscience to perform abortions.

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White House advisers known by their opponents as czars and requiring the U.S. State Department to move the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

Gingrich said in a Des Moines Register interview earlier Monday that the array of presidential orders would appeal to the entire spectrum of conservatives.

Gingrich and Pawlenty drew on the Declaration of Independence to support their arguments that government service and religious faith have been intertwined since the nation's inception.

"It means that power comes from God to each one of you personally," Gingrich said. "You loan power to the government. The government does not loan power to you."

Pawlenty also hit the themes of opposing abortion rights and gay marriage, a particularly hot issue among conservatives in Iowa, where the state supreme court struck down a statutory gay-marriage ban in 2009.

"We have people in Washington, D.C., who say marriage will be defined however we feel like defining it," Pawlenty said. "No, it won't. It should be defined as between a man and a woman."

But he also said Americans would have to come together to solve the nation's biggest challenges, as they did during pivotal moments in history.

"This ain't about easy," he said. "This is about rolling up our sleeves, plowing ahead

and getting the job done."

Rounding out the presidential prospects who attended the event were former Godfather's Pizza CEO Harrison Cain, former Louisiana Gov. Buddy Roemer, and former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum.

About 150 state, national and international media representatives covered the event.

Of the five, Gingrich, Pawlenty and Santorum have visited Iowa most often and signaled plans to run all-out for the caucuses. Pawlenty said Monday he was at most weeks away from an announcement about his presidential plans.

The balance between social and economic issues is one that has been an early topic of debate in the developing Republican contest.

National Earth & Freedom Coalition founder Ralph Reed, a featured guest at the event, jabbed at potential presidential candidate Mitch Daniels, the governor of Indiana,

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though not by name, for his comment suggesting social issues take a back seat to the economy and federal debt.

Daniels was not at the event, nor were other GOP prospects including former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour and former governor of Alaska and vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin.

Reed said social conservatives helped turn the midterm elections for Republicans last year, and would again for the White House in 2012.

"In spite of all the talk of it being about the economy and jobs - and clearly economy and jobs were critical - they found that 32 percent of the entire electorate on Nov. 2 was made up of conservative and evangelical Christians, who voted 78-to-21 Republican," Reed said. "And they were the booster rocket that drove the biggest off-year landslide in a century, and they will be key to victory in 2012 again."

The Des Moines Register's Iowa Poll taken the week before the 2008 Republican caucuses showed 46 percent of likely GOP caucusgoers considered themselves born-again or fundamentalist Christians. The same poll showed 41 percent of Republican caucusgoers said they preferred a fiscal conservative; 26 percent said a social conservative.

Santorum said that he had played key roles as a member of the U.S. House on domestic policy, such as health care and

welfare reform. But he spent most of his time on his reputation as an abortion opponent.

Santorum recalled that during his Senate career he offered the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act, signed by President George W. Bush in 2002.

"If a child is born as a result of a quote 'botched' abortion, then that child is entitled to medical protection and entitled to treatment," Santorum said. "To my knowledge in this country it was only one person on the floor of any state legislature who stood up and opposed it. That happens to be the current president of the United States, who stood up and said he opposed this bill because it would impinge on a woman's right on Roe v. Wade."

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Former CEO of Godfather's Pizza Herman Cain shakes hands with Jason Fredregill and his wife, Wendi, of Ames before the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition spring kickoff event at Point of Grace Church in Winfield. / Justin Haythe/Des Moines Register Photos



Former Louisiana Gov. Buddy Roemer signs a picture for Jerry Litzel of Ames before the Republican forum began on Monday evening.

Gingrich: Team fumbled news

Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich acknowledged in a Des Moines Register interview Monday that his team bobbled the news last week before the announcement Thursday that he planned to begin raising money to explore seeking the 2012 GOP presidential nomination.

Top Gingrich adviser Joe Gaylord told the Register on Tuesday Gingrich planned to announce during a Georgia appearance two days later that he would form an exploratory committee.

Later Tuesday, Gingrich's spokesman and press secretary Rick Tyler issued a news release stating the announcement would not be an exploratory committee.

What Gingrich announced Thursday was formation of a website to allow him to test the waters with an eye toward launching a campaign, but not announce himself a candidate, as an exploratory committee requires.

Gingrich said Monday that Gaylord was mistaken, and that it took a few hours to iron out the inconsistency.

"It led to unfortunate confusion," Gingrich said. "I wish we had been a little more structured last week. But I don't take it as a very serious problem. We do many, many things, and most of them reasonably well."

One reason for the delay is that Gingrich was traveling at the time the story broke, as was Gaylord separately.

"We live in an age of 24/7 constant surveillance of really smart people, and every once in a while something stupid will happen to every single campaign," Gingrich said. "And I think the real trick is to relax, live it out and keep moving." Gingrich also stood by Gaylord, a Des Moines native and Gingrich's closest adviser for more than

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"I can't imagine any major project I'd undertake that wouldn't have Jon as a senior advisor in a very strategic and important way," Gingrich said.

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Not in Iowa tonight? GOP no-shows missed out

9:43 PM, Mar 7, 2011 | by Kathie Obradovich | 3 Comments

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Mitt Romney, you missed out tonight. So did you, Sarah Palin, Mike Huckabee, Michele Bachmann and everybody else who may be thinking about running for president but who weren't in Waukegan.

The five potential presidential candidates who were here at the forum sponsored by the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition had an overflow audience over 1,000 enthusiastic Republicans, according to organizers, and over 150 media representatives.

Gov. Terry Branstad, who helped open the forum, noted: "I want you to know, these people of Faith & Freedom here tonight are people who show up at caucuses."

Each of five candidates had 10 minutes to make an impression on an eager audience. Most of them did their potential candidacies more good than harm.

Atlanta businessman Herman Cain may have gotten the biggest audience response. That was only in part because people were so anxious to hear a candidate after about an hour of preliminary speeches.

What Cain had to say wasn't terribly original: He thinks the American dream is under attack. He thinks government should do the right thing. (And guess what, he thinks it wasn't right to sue Arizona over immigration enforcement or back off protecting the Defense of Marriage Act.) He wants to make this a better nation and world for his grandchildren.

And yet former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who followed him, said he was going to steal as much of Cain's material as he could. Cain's radio experience has clearly taught him to talk in sound bites and ramp up the energy.

Gingrich, on the other hand, seemed almost subdued by comparison. He gave his standard stump remarks about the need to acknowledge American exceptionalism and held up his 2+2=4 slogan.

His biggest cheer came when he suggested the next president eliminate all White House czar positions on the first day in office. People didn't show the same excitement about the idea of letting Israel declare Jerusalem as its capital. But Gingrich demonstrated his savvy by making sure every audience member got a handout of his proposed executive orders.

Former Louisiana Gov. Charles "Buddy" Roemer, colorful and charismatic, didn't get the entire audience on its feet when he took the podium. But a lot more were standing when he finished. Roemer, who says he won't take PAC money or individual donations over \$100, was the only candidate to direct poke at others who shared the podium. He said only a president who is free of special-interest obligations can do the kinds of things that Gingrich and former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty want to do.

"I know all the other candidates are good people and they've got PACs and they've got airplanes. All I've got is me and you," he said.

Roemer is also the only candidate to quote poet Robert Frost. Everybody else stuck to the Bible.

Pawlenty and former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, who have spent the most time in Iowa, rounded out the forum. Pawlenty started slow, his second joke about prayer in LBJ's administration falling totally flat. He also ended on a gaffe, apologizing for referring to Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition President Steve Scheffler as "Choeb." But in the middle, he fired up the audience with an aggressive rendition of his budget-cutting efforts as governor, including withstanding a 44-day transit strike.

Santorum had the misfortune of wrapping up a program that dragged on too long. But he was the only candidate to claim to have saved an unborn baby's life with a Senate floor speech on abortion. He said a pregnant young woman who heard him speak on C-SPAN decided not to have an abortion after all, according to her boyfriend. That had to count for something with this group.

One potential candidate who might not have done a fledgling candidacy any good at this event was Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels. His call last month for a truce on social issues was roundly mocked by both Santorum and Ralph Reed, national chairman of the Faith & Freedom Coalition.

There's another beauty pageant later this month, sponsored by Congressman Steve King. After seeing what they missed on Monday, there likely will be more candidates in the running for Mr. or Miss Congeniality.

Tags: Buddy Roemer, Congressman Steve King, Herbert Cain, Iowa caucuses, Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition, michele bachmann, mitt romney, Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum, Sarah Palin, Terry Branstad, Tim Pawlenty



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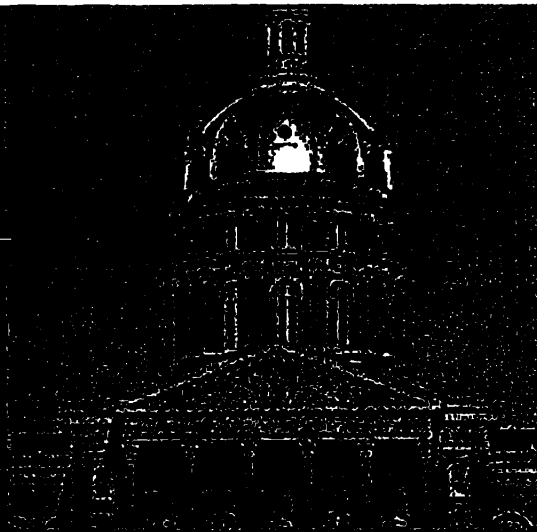


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Let's Get Iowa Moving in the Right Direction

Join the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition as we continue to work to build our state and country. If we hope to see our values represented in the public arena, we have to be active in educating those who represent us.

Now is a critical time for citizens of faith to get involved. To stand in the gap and defend our freedoms. Join us today!



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Iowa Faith & Freedom Annual Spring Kick-Off March 7

March 6, 2011 at 10:27 pm

Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition Spring Kick-off Event * Monday, March 7th; 5:30-7:30 pm * Point of Grace Church in Waukee, IA (Click link for directions) * 305 NE Dartmoor Drive

Don't miss the most exciting political event ever held in Iowa's presidential caucus history! The Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition is hosting its Eleventh Annual Spring Kick Off on Monday, March 7th, at the Point of Grace Church in Waukee. This year the event has garnered wide national and international media interest. CSPAN will be broadcasting the candidate's speeches live! Please join hundreds of other fellow Iowans for this historic event!

Five potential presidential candidates will be speaking - former CEO of Godfather's Pizza Herman Cain, former Louisiana Governor Buddy Roemer, former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty and former Speaker of the U.S. House Newt Gingrich. This collection of speakers marks the first event of its kind in the 2012 race with multiple potential candidates sharing the same stage!

Other distinguished guests expected to attend the event include Congressman Steve King, Governor Terry Branstad, Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds, other statewide elected officials, state legislators and the president of the national Faith & Freedom Coalition and Fox News contributor Ralph Reed.

Light refreshments will be served from 5:30 to 6:15 in the atrium. The program will start promptly at 6:15 in the church sanctuary. Point of Grace is a superb facility that will accommodate a large crowd. There is seating for up to 800 people. This is the must-attend political spring event in Iowa! This will be an exciting, patriotic event that you won't want to miss! There will be candidate and issue-oriented literature tables for you to browse. There will be opportunities for you to interact with the candidates. In addition, we expect to have many state legislators on hand—take the opportunity to tell them that you are proud of the job they are doing on the "hill."

We expect to have media from all over the state, nation, and even foreign press who will be covering this exciting event!

Where else could this opportunity come about—only in Iowa—the site of the first presidential caucus of 2012! As the most viable and effective multi-issue pro-family organization in Iowa, we are proud and honored to host this event.

Come join us for this truly exciting event - our 2012 Spring Kick Off. Invite your family and friends and let's pack the place out—Monday, March 7th! If you have any questions or would like to RSVP - call our office at 515-225-1515.

February 15, 2011 at 11:39 am

Iowa Faith & Freedom Spring Kick-off Event * Monday, March 7th; 5:30-7:30pm * Point of Grace Church in Waukee, IA (Click link for directions) * 305 NE Dartmoor Drive * Email Steve Scheffler slscheffler@ffciowa.com with questions or to RSVP.

Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition Announces Presidential Forum

January 4, 2011 at 12:45 pm

For Immediate Release

Contact: Steve Scheffler

515-225-1515

January 3, 2011

West Des Moines - This weekend, the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition sent out invitations to the top names being floated in the Republican primary for the 2012 presidential race. The group has planned a presidential forum for Monday, March 7th which is likely to be the first of its kind in the nation as the beginnings of a wide open presidential

primary take form. Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition President, Steve Scheffler states that the event will shape up to be the largest gathering of pro-family, values minded voters in the spring of 2011. "Candidates considering a run for president must take the Iowa Caucuses seriously and we are the caucus voters."

The letter sent to candidates reads:

"The Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition is the largest and the most influential group in Iowa politics. In the past election cycle, we made well over 560,000 voter contacts through our VoterTrax program that allows us to identify and reach low propensity conservative voters. We worked hand-in-hand with eight state legislative candidates to put volunteers on the ground in the most competitive districts. Six of the eight will be sworn in as legislators this month. We published and distributed over 300,000 voter guides to churches all across the state to educate voters prior to the November 2nd election. The result was record progress in all three branches of Iowa's government.

As an organization, we host two large events every year with our statewide membership. On Monday, March 7th, 2011, from 5:30-7:30pm, we will be hosting our annual Spring Kick-Off here in Des Moines as the 2012 presidential cycle begins. This year, the format of the event will be a 2012 Republican Presidential Candidates Meet and Great Event. It is not a debate and there will be no Question and Answer time, but it will give presidential candidates ten minutes to make a pitch and present their vision as the voters of Iowa begin the process of making their decisions for the first in the nation caucuses.

Last year, in a non-presidential cycle, we had nearly 500 people in attendance at this event, including many elected officials. This year, we expect to see a much larger crowd. This event is an important stop for candidates because over 60% of 2008 GOP caucus goers in Iowa self identified themselves as evangelical Christians. There will be no better opportunity to meet these voters this spring than the 2011 IFFC Spring Kick-Off. Come early and stay late to shake hands and to talk to your potential voters one on one before and after the program."

Media requesting credentials should email Gopal Krishna at gopal.krishna@ymhoo.com. Shooting of any type of video or taking any type of photographs of any part of the event will not be allowed without prior permission from IFFC.

Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition
939 Office Park Rd. - Suite 115
West Des Moines, IA 50265
515-225-1515

IFFC is a non-profit organization that seeks to make a difference in the public arena regarding the issues that matter most. We stand for integrity in government, high moral values, constitutional authority, and Christian principles. Our purpose is to educate and influence voters and politicians to keep their commitment to both liberty and law; that America may continue to be one nation under God.

November 19, 2010 at 2:30 pm

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November 3, 2010 at 7:38 pm

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POLITICO

Social issues dominate Iowa confab

By: Maggie Haberman and Jonathan Martin
March 7, 2011 08:16 PM EST

WAUKEE, IOWA — Five potential presidential candidates vied to please a socially conservative crowd at a packed event here Monday night that marked the unofficial start to the Iowa caucus campaign and the first time a crush of GOP hopefuls shared a major stage.

Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum, Tim Pawlenty, Buddy Roemer and Herman Cain each took a turn at the microphone, riffing on a range of social-issue touchstones — denouncing gay marriage, lambasting activist judges and praising the push to defund Planned Parenthood.

But all five essentially share the same positions, and in the end, it was Cain and Roemer — the least known and probably longest-shot of the hopefuls — who got the most praise from a group of influential Hawkeye State conservatives.

"This is the first significant event of the caucus season and you're turnout tonight says you are very interested in making some change," Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad told the crowd before the speeches, calling those on-hand loyal caucus-goers and "valuable" potential supporters.

The theme throughout the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition's presidential forum was a push to make social conservative values on par with the economy in the upcoming elections. Foreign policy was barely mentioned — there was one reference apiece to Libya and Israel.

That sentiment was echoed by national Faith and Freedom Coalition head Ralph Reed, who said, "if you turn your backs on the pro family pro life constituency... you will be consigned to permanent minority status."

In a swipe at Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, Reed said, "some have suggested that we call a truce on social and moral issues. ... I'd like to have a leader who can walk and chew gum at the same time."

Gingrich was the biggest name and a major attraction, trailed by a crowd and TV camera crews before the event started, thanks in part to his Fox News commentator fame and also his position as a well-known former House Speaker. He lambasted Barack Obama during his speech, saying the president is beholden to the "secular, socialist left" and that a change must come.

Gingrich told the standing-room-only crowd of more than 1,000 people at the Point of Grace Church in Waukee, a non-denominational house of worship in suburban and heavily Republican Dallas County, that he's "exploring" a run. And he insisted the political climate across America is "fundamental to the nation's future."

He slammed the president for his use of executive orders, accused him of being soft in his support of Israel, and hit other tea-party favored themes.

"I think that we are at a crossroads that we cannot hide from," Gingrich said. And in what was a unique moment at the gathering of several hundred people and five GOP

presidential hopefuls, he quoted from the French writer and philosopher Albert Camus to make his point that "we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights."

But Gingrich tread gingerly with the other potential rivals, saying, "Every person that's going to speak tonight is a friend of mine. ... It's going to take all of us to defeat the left." He added that they all need to be on the "same team" once the primaries end and the race pivots toward the general election.

After his speech, Gingrich got mixed reviews, with some praising his work in Congress but others saying his three marriages and the scandals surrounding them made him a non-starter for now.

"I'm not so sure that one of the candidates should speak about morals since his weren't that great," sniffed Joel Best, 74, of Norwalk, a clear reference to Gingrich's three marriage, two divorce, and admitted affairs.

Ravenscroft delivered a high-volume speech in which he rapped government for curtailing social conservatives, saying the constitution was written "to protect people of faith from government, not to protect government from people of faith." He mistakenly identified Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition head Steve Scheffler as "Chuck" more than once, a mistake he corrected at the end.

Santorum spoke about his push against abortion, and his religion.

But it was the scripture-spouting Roemer and the fire-breathing Cain who stole the show, giving a preview of what is likely to happen throughout the cycle, with lesser-known hopefuls with strong oratory skills overshadowing their more viable but more wooden rivals.

Earlier at the event, Scheffler rapped other states for trying to leapfrog ahead in the primary calendar.

"This is the start of the 2012 presidential caucus process," Scheffler said. "The focus on the nation is on Iowa and we want to tell all of our other friends in all the other 49 states, don't get cute because we are going to be first."

And Rep. Steve King, an Iowa conservative whose district doesn't encompass Waukegan, insisted that social issues need to be front and center in the presidential primary race.

"If we get the culture right the economy will be right eventually," King said, as he praised colleague Michele Bachmann's push to repeal President Barack Obama's health care reform law, and the efforts by Rep. Mike Pence to defund Planned Parenthood.

After the speeches, King, an ardent conservative, had praise for all the hopefuls but said he thought Roemer's down-home preacher routine had the audience rapt.

"Buddy really had the crowd raptured," said King.

Other estimates singled out Cain, like Roemer a native Southerner with a homespun pitch.

"I thought he was a very charismatic, dynamic gentleman," said Kay Quirk, a Republican who drove three hours down from Storm Lake, in northwest Iowa. Quirk said she had signed up for Cain's emails and would consider caucusing for him.

The five hopefuls weren't the only ones in Iowa Monday — Rep. Ron Paul spoke at the Iowa Family Leader's speech series in three different towns, and an adviser to Donald Trump came and met with a slew of GOP activists.

The adviser, Michael Cohen, sparked tough questions about whether the trip — made on one of Trump's planes — put the potential presidential hopeful into a legally dicey area with the FEC.

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Religion, the Economy and "Weird and Kinky" Lifestyles at a GOP 2012 Forum in Iowa

Posted by MICHAEL CROWLEY Tuesday, March 8, 2011 at 1:23 am

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WAUKEE, IOWA—"Are you ready to begin the process of choosing Barack Obama's successor here in Iowa?" So asked the longtime Christian conservative activist Ralph Reed on Monday night at the giant Point of Grace evangelical church here a few miles outside of Des Moines, Iowa. Before a crowd of perhaps 1500 charged-up activists, the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition hosted a smattering of the Republicans running or contemplating a run for the White House in 2012.

It was a crowd convinced that something is fundamentally wrong with their country. In the telling of HFC vice president Gerald Kuhlman, America is "doing a slow dance with socialism," "abandoning friends and apologizing to enemies" abroad, and even becoming "a multicultural haven for every weird and kinky lifestyle." The activists in attendance thrilled to each assertion. But by all appearances they have yet to settle on either a candidate or a message that can reverse this terrible course.

The lineup at tonight's event seemed substantially less than the best a major political party should have to offer. Not in attendance, for instance, was the presumed front runner, Mitt Romney, or the last winner of the Iowa Republican caucuses, Mike Huckabee, or other substantial maybe-candidates such as Haley Barbour and Mitch Daniels. Instead the lineup featured one solid politician almost certain to run but who remains unproven on the national stage (Tim Pawlenty); one political heavyweight whose intentions remain unclear (Newt Gingrich); a former Senator beloved by neo-conservatives but with scant mass appeal (Rick Santorum) and two promising fringe candidates (former Indiana Governor Buddy Roemer, long absent from politics, and the little-known Godfather's grandfather Herman Cain).

It would be hard to declare any of them a clear winner. All the candidates refrained from taking shots at each other, and all offered variations on the notion that America is a fallen nation in need of rescue. Mostly, the stammering nature of their speeches suggested a party still unsure about the core message to launch against Barack Obama.

Gingrich, for instance, bashed "the secular socialist left" and spoke of the need for renewed belief in "American exceptionalism." But he offered a grab bag of specific proposals, including abolition of White House policy "czars" and recognition of Jerusalem as the official capital of Israel. Santorum devoted nearly his entire speech to his years spent working to outlaw abortion (and the "special place in heaven" reserved for him for spending long hours on the Senate floor debating California Senator Barbara Boxer), though he digressed to assert that the Obama administration "took the side of the mullahs" during the 2009 popular protests in Tehran.

Not generally known for his religious bona fides, Pawlenty quoted the Bible and heavily emphasized religion—"the Constitution was meant to protect people of faith from government, not protect government from people of faith"—in a speech otherwise devoted

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Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition: Five Republicans fight for the faith(ful) in Iowa

By Jacques Berlinerblau

The 2012 Republican Presidential race for conservative Christian hearts and minds and votes got off to an unbelievable start yesterday—really, I mean, beyond anything I could have ever dreamed of—when the ultra-Conservative, Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition hosted its 11th Annual Spring Kick off.

I hadn't even pulled my Stokely Reference Bible down off the shelf when the evening's MC, Gopal Krishna, was already lambasting the "wild and king lifestyles" that have become prevalent in our sinful nation.

The five presidential sort-of-hopefuls who showed up did not disappoint their audience at Point of Grace Church in Waukee, Iowa. Nor did warm-up speaker congressman Steve King who assured us "If we get the culture right the economy will be right eventually." Nor did the founder of the Faith and Freedom Coalition, Ralph Reed, who insisted that it may be necessary to overthrow the American government (about which we were sure).

Ladies and gentlemen, the 2012 Faith and Values games have begun! Here are the major themes and storylines of the evening as I see them:

Meshing the Tea Party Agenda and the Evangelical Agenda: Well, that happened fast. In the run-up to the midtown elections most Republican candidates were (suspiciously) silent on the issues of abortion and gay marriage. Instead, the focus was on lowering taxes, reducing the size of government, taming the national debt, etc.

What was curious yesterday was how evangelical worldview and Tea Party bluster seamlessly coalesced. Nearly every one of the speakers managed to integrate anti-abortion themes with small government appeals. (Look at the platform of the Faith and Freedom Coalition to see the new hybrid in action).

But permit me a thought experiment: wouldn't it take an awfully big, well-funded, and creepily invasive government to enforce penalties for crimes committed against unborn life, especially when life is understood to begin at the moment of conception?

Newt Gingrich Invokes Obama, Quotably Brings the Gumbo: A variety of resonant motifs were on display. Former speaker of the House and author of a doctored, Newt Gingrich, sounded, well, presidential.

Former Louisiana governor Buddy Roemer, by contrast, could just as well have emerged from a gator-wrestling party in the bayou for all the drawing he did (e.g., "I am uh Church goin' Methodist boy from a cotton-field in LouEEEsianAHHH").

As for Tim Pawlenty, he was handsome, but seething. If he wants to challenge no-show Mitt Romney who is not only handsome, but smooth and likable, he better blast some of his egoist Rick Santorum who was awfully smug as he rehearsed, oddly, an endless litany of Barbara Baxer inflicted tales concerning abortion battles of yore.

Talk-radio host and businessman Herman Cain had the best rhetorical tools of the bunch, but failed to articulate any clear policy prescriptions that would move us from "the entitlement

[Return to the Article](#)

March 8, 2011

Potential 2012 GOP Candidates Convene in Iowa

By [Tom Bevan](#)

WAUKEE, Iowa - It's on. The 2012 presidential nominating season officially began last night as five potential Republican contenders appeared at a forum outside Des Moines hosted by the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition.

The early-bird candidates (Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, Buddy Roemer, Tim Pawlenty and Rick Santorum) took turns speaking for 10 minutes apiece to an audience of social conservatives. Each man played up his pro-life, pro-family credentials, stressed the role of faith in American life, and even cast the country's debt crisis in moral terms.

Gingrich, making his first appearance in Iowa since announcing his exploratory committee last week, said he believes America faces its greatest crisis since the 1950s. Not known for a tendency toward understatement, the former House speaker compared the importance of 2012 to the election of 1860 - the one that brought Abraham Lincoln back to Washington.

An unrelenting advance of liberal institutions in America over the past 80 years will require a "deep and profound" political change to reverse, Gingrich told the crowd. He outlined four executive orders he pledged to sign on his first day as president - steps he said would start the process of change. They ranged from eliminating White House policy "czars" to moving the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

Tim Pawlenty, the former governor of neighboring Minnesota, touted his accomplishments as a "blue" state chief executive who managed to both balance a budget and focus on faith. "We need to remember this and always remember this," Pawlenty said. "The Constitution was designed to protect people of faith from government, not to protect government from people of faith."

Herman Cain, the former CEO of Godfather's Pizza, roused the crowd by proclaiming the "the United States of America will not turn into the United States of Europe. Not on our watch."

Cain, a Georgia-based talk show host who has never held elective office, is a longshot in the fledgling GOP field, but he is not alone. Santorum, former senator from Pennsylvania, lost in a landslide when he ran for a third term in 2006. But on Monday night, the ardent social conservative was among friends, and he took the opportunity to recount his many fights on behalf of the pro-life community - many of which, he noted, earned him unflattering labels. "My children, after reading newspapers all those years used to think my first name was 'ultra,'" Santorum said to appreciative laughs from the crowd.

Perhaps the most uphill candidacy is that of Buddy Roemer, the former governor of Louisiana - and a former Democrat - who, like Gingrich is married for the third time. Among this crowd, Roemer didn't hack into it. "I'm honored to be with you in Iowa in faith and freedom!" he said, stressing his childhood as a "churchgoing Methodist boy from a cotton field in north Louisiana." After a long period as a divorced man, he told the crowd, "I married the piano player in a church next door to my own. Thank you, Jesus."

Republican activists in Iowa have been eager to start the caucus season, and some have chafed at the relative lack of attention that the flock of potential candidates has paid to the Hawkeye State. Those feelings were on full display last

night as more than 2,000 people packed every corner of the Point of Grace Church in Waukegan to get a first glimpse of at least part of the Republican field.

Ralph Reed, founder of the National Faith and Freedom Coalition and a featured guest at the event, echoed the crowd's sentiments. "Some said March 7 was too early to start," he quipped. "I was ready to start the process on March 7, 2009."

Reed also sought to re-establish the muscle of social conservatives, citing an exit poll from 2010 showing that evangelicals comprised 32 percent of the electorate and had voted for Republicans over Democrats by an overwhelming 78 - 21 margin. This base formed the "booster market" that powered big Republican gains last November, he proclaimed. "If you turn your backs on the pro-family, pro-life constituency," Reed added in a warning to the GOP Washington establishment, "you will be consigned to permanent minority status."

Steve Scheffler, president of the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition, fired off a warning shot of his own for any Republican from other states contemplating any primary calendar mischief next year. "I'd like to tell our friends in the 49 other states: don't get cute, we're going to be first," Scheffler said. "That's just how it is."

Tom Bevan is the co-founder and Executive Editor of RealClearPolitics. Email: tom@realclearpolitics.com

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/08/potential_gop_candidates_convene_in_iowa_109152.html at March 10, 2011 - 01:36:45 PM CST

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TUESDAY, MAR 8, 2011 11:35 ET

The roots of the GOP's crackup

BY STEVE KORNAETZ



WAR ROOM

Two pieces of information about the Republican presidential forum held just outside Des Moines on Monday night stand out:

- 1) It took place in a church and was sponsored by the Iowa chapter of the Faith and Freedom Foundation, an organization that descends from the Christian Coalition, the Pat Robertson-founded group that attained prominence in the early 1990s under Ralph Reed (who is now the national Faith and Freedom chairman and who was on stage Monday night).
- 2) While it didn't attract every prospective GOP candidate (no Romney, Huckabee or Palin), it attracted enough of them that the forum can be considered the first major 2012 campaign event in the lead-off caucus state.

On the surface, there wasn't much remarkable about the proceedings. The five candidates who did show up — Tim Pawlenty, Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum, Buddy Roemer and Herman Cain — peppered their speeches with references to God and morality, denouncing abortion and gay marriage (and, of course, disparaging President Obama). As the Los Angeles Times put it, "the candidates essentially pledged the same thing, with a few variations in language and emphasis." By now, we're more than accustomed to national Republican politicians making these kinds of appeals to these kinds of audiences.

If you take a step back, though, that we are so accustomed to this actually is remarkable, when you consider that just over two decades ago, it was possible for Republicans to run in Iowa without straining to appeal to religious conservatives, or feeling compelled to stress a blindly, reflexively anti-government message.

If you have time, just compare the speeches delivered on Monday night (Slate's David Weigel has collected video here) with one given at roughly this same point in the 1988 cycle by Bob Dole, the eventual caucus winner. I can't embed the video, but you can watch it here. Dole and his fellow GOP candidates (except for then-Vice President George H.W. Bush, who sent his son Neil instead) each addressed a county Republican picnic. Dole did not discuss any social issues and instead focused his remarks on ... empathy for the less fortunate. He talked about serving in town office in Kansas just after the Dust Bowl and signing welfare checks for his own grandparents and asked the audience to support him because of his ...

sensitivity to the needs of a lot of people in America — yes, senior citizens, disabled Americans, farmers, whoever they may be — sensitivity to the concerns of some who must rely on the federal government from time to time to make it

Granted, Dole wasn't speaking at an event sponsored by a social conservative group. But that's just the point. Christian conservatives hadn't yet come to dominate the Iowa GOP. And the Republican base itself wasn't in the grips of the Fox/Rush/Hannity machine, which has forced national Republican politicians to offer up the same narrow, often irrational and increasingly hysterical rhetoric. Dole talked about helping people who rely on the federal government ... and he ended up winning the caucuses in a rout, with 37 percent of the vote. Can you imagine anyone doing that today?

Of course, you could also draw a straight line from that same '87 county fair to Monday night's forum. If you watch the whole video, you'll also see Pat Robertson step forward to an enthusiastic reception. The televangelist was attempting to build a national campaign out of the millions of conservative Christians who had become engaged in Republican politics in the preceding decade. (Many of them had initially supported Jimmy Carter, a self-described born-again Christian from Georgia, only to conclude that he was far too close to his party's cultural liberals.) The Christian right was a growing force in Iowa and in the national GOP (enough that Bush, a Yankee Protestant, actually declared himself a "born-again" Episcopalian in 1987), but it was still considered shocking when Robertson finished in second place in the caucuses — behind Dole but ahead of Bush, with 25 percent.

Robertson's campaign fizzled out shortly thereafter, but in defeat, he launched the Christian Coalition and recruited a young

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Ralph Reed to run it, then watched as Christian conservatives asserted themselves and grabbed control of local, county and state Republican organizations across the country. And now, all these years later, the 2012 caucus campaign has just begun in a church in Iowa, with Reed acting as an emcee.

-- Steve Kornacki

12044322286

GOP presidential contenders make case to Iowa faithful

Posted by Brian Montopoli



Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich talks with Karen and Tom Quiner at the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition, Monday, March 7, 2011, at the Point of Grace Church in Waukee, Iowa.

(Credit: AP)

Newt Gingrich, Tim Pawlenty and a trio of lesser-known potential GOP presidential candidates spoke to about 2,000 Iowa social conservatives Monday night in what organizers cast as the kickoff to the nominating contest in the key first-in-the-nation voting state.

The event, held at a church in the town of Waukee outside of Des Moines, was organized by the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition. It offered the candidates considering a run for the GOP nomination a chance to make a positive impression on some of the most politically-engaged social conservatives in Iowa, which will hold its caucuses early next year.

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While plenty of big-name possible Republican candidates turned down the group's invitation - among them Mitt Romney, Sarah Palin and 2008 Iowa caucus winner Mike Huckabee - the event did attract five likely candidates: Gingrich, Pawlenty, former Sen. Rick Santorum, former Godfather's Pizza CEO Herman Cain, and former Louisiana governor Buddy Roemer. (Openly gay Republican strategist Fred Karger, who has embarked on a longshot presidential run, was shut out of the event.)

Cain and Roemer, who are not considered top tier candidates, have already announced exploratory committees, making them the only members of the emerging GOP field to have done so. Gingrich, Pawlenty and Santorum are widely expected to run but have yet to make an official announcement.

Gingrich, the highest-profile potential candidate to speak at the forum, offered a speech centered on the importance of recognizing American exceptionalism. In a speech peppered with historical references, the former GOP House speaker said that the "secular socialist people around Obama" don't understand the nature of their country.

In a note struck by many of the night's speakers, Gingrich said the power of America comes from God, not Washington.

Newt Gingrich's life in pictures



[View the full gallery](#)

"You are personally sovereign," he said. "You loan power to the government, the government does not loan power to you."

Gingrich complained that judges are "fundamentally out of touch with America" and argued that Republicans have failed to keep the judiciary from becoming "more alienated from the American system."

Though he has made it clear he is likely to enter the presidential race, Gingrich maintained that he is still exploring a run and said no matter what happens, "we're all going to have to be on the same team after this is over."

Pawlenty, the former Minnesota governor, said America needs "to be a country that turns toward God, not a country that turns away from God." He railed against the "immoral debt" and efforts to define marriage as between anything other than one man and one woman.

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"We need to remember, as others try to push out or marginalize people of faith...the Constitution was designed to protect people of faith from government, not to protect government from people of faith," said Pawlenty, who complained that the media, judges and "elites" need to remember the Constitution grants power to the people.

Pawlenty, who has battled perceptions that he is not edgy enough to win the GOP nomination, also compared his time as governor to the current situation in Wisconsin. He pointed to his refusal to compromise with transit workers, which prompted a strike and protests, in order to maintain fiscal responsibility.

"We the people of the United States will rise up again, we will take back our country," he added, his voice going hoarse.

Santorum, who is known for his strong social conservatism, complained to the crowd that he had been defined as nothing more than a social conservative simple because he fought for their values.

"Once you stick your head out on the social issues, once you fight for the social fabric of this country, you're labeled," said Santorum, who pointed to his efforts to end partial birth abortion but also his work on health care and welfare reform. He joked that his children had come to think his first name was "ultra," a reference to how he had been portrayed as extreme in the media.

Roemer, whose speech was grounded in strong opposition to the influence of money and special interests in Washington, complained that while "the nation is hurting...Washington is a boom town." He vowed not to take more than \$100 from any individual because America needs a president "who's free to do the right thing. Who's free to lead."

"The system is institutionally corrupt, and people of faith need to come against the corruption," said Roemer, who, with little to lose, attacked ethanol subsidies before his Iowa audience. He cast himself as a "seasoned warrior against special interest money."

Cain, a radio talk show host and the only African-American in the GOP field, told the audience that the "bad news" is that "the American dream is under attack" under President Obama.

"The good news is we are fighting back," he said. Cain went on to argue that "The United States of America is not going to become the United States of Europe - not on our watch."

Gopal Krishna, vice president of the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition, set the tone for the event in his opening remarks, which included a statement that his organization is concerned that America has become a "multicultural haven for every weird and kinky lifestyle." Other speakers included Republican Rep. Steve King, who railed against the Obama administration's decision not to defend the Defense of Marriage Act in court, and Ralph Reed, who warned Republicans not to ignore social conservatives even as they focus on fiscal issues.

2012 Confounders: Strengths and Weaknesses

Photo courtesy of Fred Karger Exploratory Committee

Karger files FEC complaint against conservative Iowa group

Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition denies violating election laws

By Tyler Kinglake | 02.24.11 | 8:04 am

Fred Karger, the first Republican candidate to open a presidential exploratory committee, will be filing a formal complaint with the Federal Election Commission against the prominent conservative group, the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition, for excluding him from a March 7 event.

Republican presidential hopefuls will gather at the Point of Grace church in Waukee on March 7 for an event organized by the IFFC. Former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, former Godfather's Pizza CEO Herman Cain and former Louisiana Gov. Buddy Roemer have all confirmed their participation. Iowa Republicans U.S. Rep. Steve King, Gov. Terry Branstad and Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds have also said they will be in attendance.

Karger was told early on he would not be welcome at the March event because he "is not a legitimate candidate," or so says president of IFFC, Steve Scheffler, who is also one of three Iowans on the Republican National Committee. Karger's camp counters it's simply because Karger happens to be gay.

"There is no set of rational criteria that could explain some of those who were invited but still exclude Fred," said Nathan Tielcar, Iowa director for Karger's exploratory committee. "That only leaves irrational criteria, or bigotry."

Karger's committee said the complaint states that the IFFC forum violates federal election law because it constitutes a donation to those candidates who were invited. They believe this qualifies as an in-kind donation. As a tax-exempt 501(c)4 organization, they said, the IFFC is allowed to engage in political education, but cannot donate or expressly advocate for or against a candidate.

"Any claim by Mr. Karger that the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition's Spring Kick-off constitutes an in-kind contribution to the campaigns of as-yet undeclared presidential candidates is specious and utterly without merit," the IFFC said in a statement. "Potential candidates were invited based on an objective criteria of viability, fundraising ability, and prior electoral success with advice from legal counsel. We are in full compliance with federal campaign regulations governing such events."

But Karger is going beyond the FEC complaint, he also launched LetFredIn.com, in an attempt to build support to include him in the forum.

The March 7 is expected by the IFFC to draw about 600 "Iowa activists."

Karger also recently had trouble being included at the Conservative Political Action Conference, where he was refused a speaking invitation, a booth in the exhibition hall and was not included in the straw poll.

In response, Karger then threw a party in the host hotel, inviting former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson, a potential GOP 2012 candidate, Lt. Dan Choi, an activist against Don't Ask, Don't Tell, and Log Cabin Republicans executive director R. Clarke Cooper.

This is also not Karger's first run in with Scheffler. Last May, Scheffler sent an e-mail to Karger telling him he would "work overtime to help ensure that your political aspirations are aborted right here in Iowa." The reason, Scheffler said, is that Karger is part of the "radical homosexual community."

Karger will be in Iowa this week to attend the 2011 Iowa Governors Conference on LGBT Youth being held on

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the Drake University campus.

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Man says Iowa forum excluding him because he's gay

By MIKE GLOVER

Associated Press

1:30 p.m. CST, February 25, 2011

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DES MOINES, Iowa — A gay rights activist and Republican presidential hopeful from California says he's filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission alleging that he's being excluded from an upcoming GOP forum in Iowa because of his sexual orientation.

Frank Nugent, founder of the gay rights group Californians Against Hate, criticized forum sponsor the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition during a news conference Friday.

"The party of Abraham Lincoln should be inclusive and welcome all to discuss the important issues of today," said Karger, who is openly gay. "As someone who has been actively involved in Republican politics my entire life and worked on nine presidential campaigns, including three as senior consultant to Presidents Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush and Ronald Reagan I feel I deserve a seat at the table."

In his complaint mailed to the FEC on Thursday, Karger argues the coalition is in effect endorsing the 15 potential presidential candidates it did invite. The forum is scheduled for March 7 at Point of Grace Church in Waukegan.

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Steve Schaeffer, president of the Iowa Faith and Freedom
conscious and utterly without merit."

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He said the coalition used objective criteria such as a participant's viability to compete in Iowa's caucuses, fundraising ability and past electoral success in selecting who to invite. He said group

2022-23

members consulted with lawyers in deciding how to set the criteria.

"We are in full compliance with federal campaign regulations governing such events," Scheffler said.

Of the 15 potential candidates invited, four have confirmed they will be attending: former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, former Godfather's Pizza CEO Herman Cain and former Louisiana Gov. Bobby Roemer.

Karger said there's a long history of ill will between Scheffler and his group, pointing to an e-mail he received last May as an example.

"You don't care about transparency -- you and the radical homosexual community want to harass supporters of real marriage," Scheffler wrote in the e-mail. "Have you studied our past caucuses -- you have no chance here in Iowa."

Scheffler said he ~~wasn't~~ to consider an invitation to the group's event as amounting to an in-kind contribution, because the invitation has no monetary value.

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5 potential GOP candidates to converge at forum



Written by

JASON CLAYWORTH

8:31 PM, Mar. 5, 2011

A high-profile forum in Waukee on Monday will mark the unofficial start of the run-up to the 2012 Iowa presidential caucuses.

Potential candidates who are absent may stunt their eventual campaigns, some Republican strategists said, while also acknowledging that it's early, and there's time to make up ground.

Two of the biggest names who aren't scheduled to attend: Sarah Palin and Mike Huckabee.

"They are losing out because it reinforces the talking point that they're not running," said Chuck Laudner, former executive director of the Republican Party of Iowa. "Every day that somebody comes to the conclusion that Palin or Huckabee or whoever isn't going to run, then they start lining up behind these other candidates."

The Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition's annual spring event will feature five Republicans eyeing a run for president in

2012: former Godfather's Pizza CEO Herman Cain; former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich; former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty; former Louisiana Gov. Buddy Roemer; and former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum. Each is to be allowed 10 minutes to speak.

National news coverage is expected at the event at Point of Grace Church, and more than 600 GOP activists have made plans to attend, including Gov. Terry Branstad and Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds.

The coalition is a conservative group headed by Republican National Committee member Steve Scheffler of West Des Moines. It invited about 15 potential candidates, including Palin, the former Alaska governor, and Huckabee, the former Arkansas governor. Scheffler has pitched Monday's event as "the largest gathering of pro-family, values-minded voters in the spring of 2011."

The group gained attention for one person who was excluded from the invitation list:

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Fred Karger, a gay man and longtime Republican activist from California who has formed a presidential exploratory committee.

Scheffler and Karger butted heads last year when Scheffler sent an e-mail telling Karger: "I will work overtime to help ensure that your political aspirations are aborted right here in Iowa."

Karger has filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission, saying Scheffler is unfairly promoting other candidates. Karger acknowledged that FEC action against caucus debate sponsors is rare. The coalition would face fines or possible loss of its nonprofit status if the FEC were to investigate and rule in Karger's favor.

Scheffler did not return a phone call Friday, but the coalition's organizational director, Drew Klein, said sexual orientation was not a criteria for the invitations. He declined to specify why Karger wasn't invited.

Karger, 61, said he wants to help transform the GOP into a more welcoming and tolerant political group from the inside out. He said he will not attempt to crash Monday's event.

"It's very disturbing," Karger said of Scheffler and the group's decision. "He's so blatant and so nasty about his approach, saying I'm a single-issue candidate, which is code for: 'He's gay.'"

Laudner noted that in previous years, hundreds of people have filed paperwork

to run for president, and that someone like Karger, who has slim name recognition, isn't a viable candidate.

Bob Haus, a Des Moines Republican who managed caucus campaigns for Fred Thompson, Steve Forbes and Phil Gramm, said Karger has been able to gain attention by not being invited. Ultimately, however, the forum is about the most serious candidates, Haus said.

Haus said it's possible that those who skip the event may hurt their long-term viability as candidates. However, any candidate could quickly regain ground in town with hard work and one-on-one meetings with the party's core voters, he said.

Nonetheless, he called Monday's event "a pretty big deal."

"I think many are on their own time frame, and they're going to figure out when and if they want to get in according to their own schedule," Haus said.

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[Revised as of January 1, 2010]
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[CITE: 11CFR110.13]

[Page 183-184]

TITLE 11--FEDERAL ELECTIONS

CHAPTER I--FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION

PART 110 CONTRIBUTION AND EXPENDITURE LIMITATIONS AND PROHIBITIONS-- Table of Contents

Sec. 110.13 Candidate debates.

(a) Staging organizations. (1) Nonprofit organizations described in 26 U.S.C. 501 (c)(3) or (c)(4) and which do not endorse, support, or oppose political candidates or political parties may stage candidate debates in accordance with this section and 11 CFR 114.4(f).

(2) Broadcasters (including a cable television operator, programmer or producer), bona fide newspapers, magazines and other periodical publications may stage candidate debates in accordance with this section and 11 CFR 114.4(f), provided that they are not owned or controlled by a political party, political committee or candidate. In addition, broadcasters (including a cable television operator, programmer or producer), bona fide newspapers, magazines and other periodical publications, acting as press entities, may also cover or carry candidate debates in accordance with 11

[[Page 184]]

CFR part 100, subparts B and C and part 100, subparts D and E.

(b) Debate structure. The structure of debates staged in accordance with this section and 11 CFR 114.4(f) is left to the discretion of the staging organizations(s), provided that:

(1) Such debates include at least two candidates; and

(2) The staging organization(s) does not structure the debates to promote or advance one candidate over another.

(c) Criteria for candidate selection. For all debates, staging organization(s) must use pre-established objective criteria to determine which candidates may participate in a debate. For general election debates, staging organizations(s) shall not use nomination by a particular political party as the sole objective criterion to determine whether to include a candidate in a debate. For debates held prior to a primary election, caucus or convention, staging organizations may restrict candidate participation to candidates seeking the nomination of one party, and need not stage a debate for candidates seeking the nomination of any other political party or independent candidates.

[61 FR 18051, Apr. 24, 1996; 61 FR 24533, May 15, 1996, as amended at 67 FR 78681, Dec. 26, 2002]

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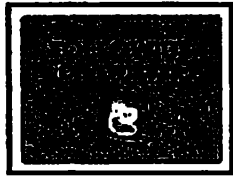
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By: Twitter Buttons

Candidate exclusion based on 'bigotry'

February 23, 2011, 3:13 pm

By From a Media Release

Exclusion of prospective Republican presidential candidate Fred Karger from a March 7 Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition forum can only be attributed to "irrational criteria, or bigotry," according to his Iowa campaign director.



Fred Karger

Despite being the first potential candidate to form an exploratory committee, hire Iowa staff, and air an Iowa commercial, Karger was told by IFFC President Steve Scheffler that his candidacy was not credible, according to the Karger's Iowa director, Nathan Treloar.

The only explanation is that Karger is openly gay, Treloar said.

"There is no set of rational criteria that could explain some of those who were invited but still exclude Fred," Treloar said.

Karger is launching a website Friday, www.LetFredIn.com, for people to get more information and sign an online petition.

In addition, Karger will file a formal complaint with the Federal Election Commission alleging the IFFC forum violates federal election law because it constitutes a donation to those candidates who were invited. As a tax-exempt 501(c)4 organization, the IFFC is allowed to engage in political education, but cannot donate or expressly advocate for or against a candidate.

Karger's seventh trip to Iowa will also include a visit to the 2011 Iowa Governors Conference on LGBT Youth at Drake University Feb. 24.

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Fred Karger responds to exclusion from Iowa candidate forum 2/23/2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wednesday, February 23, 2011

CONTACT: Nathan Treloar 515-783-0932

(DES MOINES, IA) Prospective Republican presidential candidate Fred Karger will be in Iowa later this week to respond to his exclusion from an upcoming candidate forum.

The Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition (formerly the Iowa Christian Alliance) invited many of the likely, and even some not-so-likely, GOP hopefuls to the March 7 forum. Despite being the first potential candidate to have formed an exploratory committee, hired Iowa staff, and aired an Iowa commercial, Karger was told by IFFC president, Steve Scheffler that his candidacy was not credible. Mr. Scheffler would not disclose what factors were considered when deciding who would be invited.

Nathan Treloar, Iowa director for Karger's exploratory committee, believes there is only one explanation for the snub – because Karger is openly gay. “There is no set of rational criteria that could explain some of those who were invited but still exclude Fred,” Treloar said. “That only leaves irrational criteria, or bigotry.”

Karger is launching a new website, <http://www.LetFredIn.com>, for people to get more information and sign an online petition to show their support for his inclusion. The website, which will become active Friday, will be used to raise awareness of the situation in Iowa and prepare for his exclusion from any future forums or debates as he tests the waters to determine if he will run for President in 2012.

In addition, Karger will be filing a formal complaint with the Federal Election Commission (FEC). The complaint states that the IFFC forum violates federal election law because it constitutes a donation to those candidates who were invited. As a tax-exempt 501(c)4 organization, the IFFC is allowed to engage in political education, but cannot donate or expressly advocate for or against a candidate.

Karger will preview <http://www.LetFredIn.com> and provide more details of his FEC complaint and other actions at a press conference on Friday, February 25.

Karger's seventh trip to Iowa will also include a visit to the 2011 Iowa Governors Conference on LGBT Youth being held on the Drake University campus Thursday, February 24.



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Obama DOMA decision ensures gay marriage as presidential campaign issue

By Bret Hayworth | February 23, 2011 - 12:25 pm

There's midday news that ensures gay marriage will be a topic considerably discussed during the 2012 presidential race. Here in Iowa, gay marriage has been a hot button topic for the last half decade with a pending court case and then April 2009 Iowa Supreme Court ruling on the state's constitution that has led to unabated discussion of who should be able to marry whom. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent by new groups formed to support and oppose the same-sex marriage reality in Iowa.

In late 2010, the so-called don't ask, don't tell policy on service by gay military members was overturned in Congress. And then this news in the last hour, which will mean marriage will be even more hotly debated as the presidential campaign kicks up:

The Obama administration says it will no longer defend the constitutionality of a federal law that bans recognition of same-sex marriage.

In a statement Wednesday, Attorney General Eric Holder says President Barack Obama has concluded that the administration can no longer defend the federal law that defines marriage as only between a man and a woman.

The Justice Department had defended the Defense of Marriage Act in court until now.

You can absolutely count on Republicans campaigning to win the February 2012 Iowa caucuses to be dismissive of the justice department change. National GOP'ers will no doubt be giving public statements of outrage as the afternoon goes on.

ADDITION AT 12:58 P.M. — This latest step in the national debate on gay marriage comes as the only openly gay Republican presidential candidate, Fred Karger of California, is balking over being omitted from a March 7 Iowa forum. Karger in a release today says the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition (formerly the Iowa Christian Alliance) invited many likely GOP candidates to the forum, but IFFC President Steve Scheffler is saying Karger isn't a credible candidate.

Karger, overlooked on many lists of Republican presidential hopefuls, has formed an exploratory committee and hired Iowa staff. His Iowa campaign director, Nathan Treloar, contends there is only one explanation for the IFFC snub — because Karger is openly gay. Karger supports repealing the Defense of Marriage Act.

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Tags: barack obama, caucus, defense of marriage act, don't ask don't tell, eric holder, fred karger, gay marriage, iowa supreme court, nathan treloar

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About

Politically Speaking was named Best Blog By a Newspaper in the 2009 Iowa Newspaper Association awards presented February 2010. The award covered blogs of any topic at Iowa newspapers. Bret Hayworth has covered politics for the Sioux City Journal since September 2002. A Kingsley (Iowa) native, Hayworth has two degrees from the University of Northern Iowa, and majored in American Studies with his 1998 B.A.

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Dear Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition: Why Are You Afraid of Fred Karger?

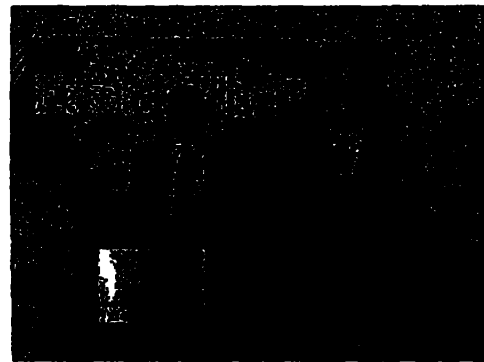
by Michael Jones · February 24, 2011

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717 views



Fred Karger is the openly gay Republican -- and former Reagan adviser -- exploring a run for the 2012 GOP Presidential nomination. He might not get as much press as, say, the Santorums or Pawlenty's or Huckabees, but Karger has been vocal about his intentions of exploring a run for President, and he's been trekking to places like Iowa and New Hampshire meeting with scores of voters.

By many respects, Karger has invested himself more into his exploratory campaign than any other potential 2012 GOP nominee. Yet despite his efforts, the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition doesn't consider Karger a "legitimate" contender for President. The group's head even went so far to say a couple months ago that he'd like to personally "abort" Karger's potential candidacy.

In just a few weeks, the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition will be hosting an event for potential 2012 GOP Presidential candidates. Rick Santorum will be there. Herman Cain will be there. Tim Pawlenty will be there. Heck, even former Louisiana Gov. Buddy Roemer will be there, and there's been virtually no buzz whatsoever about him. But at the moment, Fred Karger will not be there, because the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition has refused to invite him.

That's led Karger to start his own web site -- LetFredIn.com -- calling for his inclusion in the March 2011 event; it's led more than 500 Change.org members to put pressure on the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition to open their doors to Karger; and it's now likely to lead to an official complaint with the Federal Election Commission (FEC), charging that the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition is violating federal law by purposely excluding Karger from their event.

The Iowa Independent has this story, with Tyler Kingcade speaking to Karger's Presidential exploratory committee about the upcoming FEC complaint.

"There is no set of national criteria that could explain some of those who were invited but still exclude Fred," said

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Nathan Treloar, Iowa director for Karger's exploratory committee. "That only leaves irrational criteria, or bigotry."

If I were a betting man, I'd place my money on bigotry. Here's the money paragraph from Kingkade's piece that explains the justification for Karger's FEC complaint:

Karger's committee said the complaint states that the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition (IFFC) forum violates federal election law because it constitutes a donation to those candidates who were invited. They believe this qualifies as an in-kind donation. As a tax-exempt 501(c)4 organization, they said, the IFFC is allowed to engage in political education, but cannot donate or expressly advocate for or against a candidate.

It all leaves the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition with a lot of explaining to do. What's the criteria they've set for determining who to invite to this forum? Do they not welcome the participation of openly gay candidates within the ranks of the GOP? And don't they trust Iowa voters to make up their own minds about who is, or isn't, a legitimate candidate for President?

Hank, even Mitt Romney said earlier this month that any presidential forum ought to be all-inclusive, rather than limiting.

"Frankly, the more people we have on the stage in those debates, talking about different ideas and different approaches, the better," Romney said.

What a shame that the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition doesn't concur. Send the group a message that Karger is more than just a legitimate potential candidate for President; he's possibly the most legitimate candidate in the field for the nomination. And he deserves a spot in their forum, so that voters, and not the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition, can decide who's a legitimate candidate for President.

Photo credit: Fred Karger



Michael Jones is a Change.org Editor. He has worked in the field of human rights communications for a decade, most recently for Harvard Law School.

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Karger complains officially he was left out of forum

5:19 PM, Feb 25, 2011 | by Tom Beaumont | 4 Comments

Categories: Iowa Politics Insider

Fred Karger stepped up his feud Friday with Iowa Republican Steve Scheffler by filing a complaint for excluding him from a Mar. 7 GOP event that is expected to feature several presidential prospects.



Karger, a political strategist and businessman from California, is openly gay and has promoted gay rights as a central theme of his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination.

Karger said he mailed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission said Scheffler, in inviting 15 Republican figures to the event, was in effect promoting them. So far, former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, former CEO Herman Cain and former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum have accepted the invitation.

Scheffler, who has said he would try to derail Karger's campaign, is the president of the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition, which is sponsoring the forum. Scheffler has said he invited presidential prospects who met criteria including fundraising and previous political activity.

Tags: Fred Karger, Herman Cain, Iowa caucuses, Rick Santorum, Steve Scheffler, Tim Pawlenty

Tom Beaumont



Tom Beaumont is chief political reporter for the Des Moines Register.

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WHO

NOT INVITED: California businessman Fred Karger says he's filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission.

WHO

Staff Writer

6:22 PM CST, February 25, 2011

Fred Karger says he's been excluded from a March 7th Republican Presidential forum sponsored by the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition.

Karger is an openly gay candidate for the GOP nomination and argued he was excluded due to his sexual orientation. In his complaint, he argues the group was, in effect, supporting the 15 candidates it did invite. Karger says if he were to get an invite, he'd focus on his top issues.

Steve Scheffler of the Faith and Freedom Coalition says his group used objective criteria in making its invite choices. That includes viability, fundraising and past electoral success.

Scheffler says his group consulted with lawyers in deciding how to set the criteria for issuing invitations.

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02/26/2011

Gay Republican presidential hopeful Fred Karger has filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission over his exclusion from a candidates forum in Iowa, the AP reports. Karger, 61, is a former state legislator and a vocal conservative.

Fred Karger, founder of the gay rights group, California's Against Hate, is denied forum speech at the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition during a news conference Friday.

The party of Australian-born Karger, an outcast, is exclusive and welcoming all candidates the underground, says of Karger, "said Karger, who is openly gay." As someone who has been actively involved in Republican politics for more than 20 years, and worked on nine presidential campaigns, including under as senior consultant to Presidents Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush and Richard Reagan, "I feel I deserve a seat at the table."

In his complaint, mailed to the FEC on Thursday, Karger argues the coalition is in effect blocking the 15 potential presidential candidates it did invite. The forum is scheduled for March 7 at Point Grace Church in Waukee.

Steve Schiffer, president of the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition, called Karger's denial "obvious and utterly without merit."

It was the first time Schiffer had addressed Karger, who in 2008, after an event, said he was "a Republican, not a conservative."

Said the chief, "You don't care about transparency, you and the radical homosexual community want to have a supermajority of 95% marriage. I am the Republican National Committee member for Iowa. As a private citizen and knowing literally thousands of people, I will work every means to help ensure that your political aspirations are aborted right now in Iowa. Have you studied our past records? You have NO chance here in Iowa!"

...discrimination, Karger wanted to be treated as a normal person, not a political figure.

...the coalition's decision to exclude Karger from the forum is a clear violation of the FEC's rules.



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Man says Iowa forum excluding him because he's gay

By MIKE GLOVER, Associated Press
Friday, February 25, 2011

(02-25) 14:22 PST Des Moines, Iowa (AP) --

A gay rights activist and Republican presidential hopeful from California says he's filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission alleging that he's being excluded from an upcoming GOP forum in Iowa because of his sexual orientation.

Fred Karger, founder of the gay rights group Californians Against Hate, criticized forum sponsor the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition during a news conference Friday.

"The party of Abraham Lincoln should be inclusive and welcome all to discuss the important issues of today," said Karger, who is openly gay. "As someone who has been actively involved in Republican politics my entire life and worked on nine presidential campaigns, including three as senior consultant to Presidents Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush and Ronald Reagan I feel I deserve a seat at the table."

In his complaint mailed to the FEC on Thursday, Karger argues the coalition is in effect endorsing the 15 potential presidential candidates it did invite. The forum is scheduled for March 7 at Point of Grace Church in Waukee.

Steve Scheffler, president of the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition, called Karger's complaint "specious and utterly without merit."

He said the coalition used objective criteria such as a participant's viability to compete in Iowa's caucuses, fundraising ability and past electoral success in selecting who to invite. He said group members consulted with lawyers in deciding how to set the criteria.

"We are in full compliance with federal campaign regulations governing such events," Scheffler said.

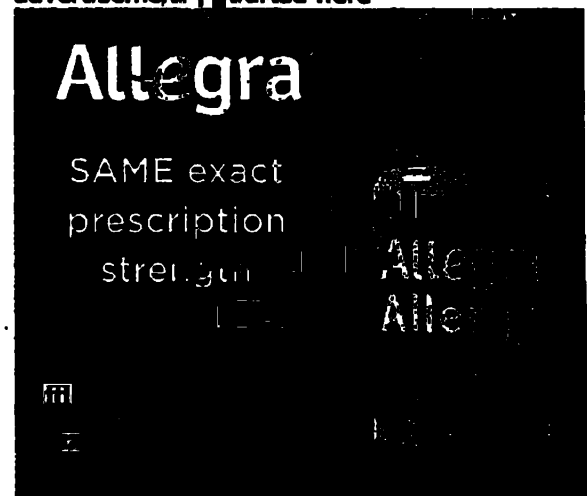
Of the 15 potential candidates invited, four have confirmed they will be attending: former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, former Godfather's Pizza CEO Herman Cain and former Louisiana Gov. Buddy Roemer.

Karger said there's a long history of ill will between Scheffler and his group, pointing to an e-mail he received last May as an example.

"You don't care about transparency — you and the radical homosexual community want to harass supporters of real marriage," Scheffler wrote in the e-mail. "Have you studied our past caucuses — you have no chance here in Iowa."

Scheffler said it's nonsense to consider an invitation to the group's event as amounting to an in-kind contribution, because the invitation has no monetary value.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2011/02/25/state/n141706S47.DTL>



Man says Iowa forum excluding him because he's gay

By MIKE GLOVER Associated Press

Posted: 02/25/2011 02:18:34 PM PST

Updated: 02/25/2011 02:23:00 PM PST

DES MOINES, Iowa—A gay rights activist and Republican presidential hopeful from California says he's filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission alleging that he's being excluded from an upcoming GOP forum in Iowa because of his sexual orientation.

Paul Karger, founder of the gay rights group Californians Against Hate, criticized forum sponsor the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition during a news conference Friday.

"The party of Abraham Lincoln should be inclusive and welcome all to discuss the important issues of today," said Karger, who is openly gay. "As someone who has been actively involved in Republican politics my entire life and worked on nine presidential campaigns, including three as senior consultant to Presidents Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush and Ronald Reagan I feel I deserve a seat at the table."

In his complaint mailed to the FEC on Thursday, Karger argues the coalition is in effect endorsing the 15 potential presidential candidates it did invite. The forum is scheduled for March 7 at Point of Grace Church in Waukee.

Steve Scheffler, president of the Iowa Faith and

Freedom Coalition, called Karger's complaint "specious and utterly without merit."

He said the coalition used objective criteria such as a participant's viability to compete in Iowa's caucuses, fundraising ability and past electoral success in selecting who to invite. He said group members consulted with lawyers in deciding how to set the criteria.

"We are in full compliance with federal campaign regulations governing such events," Scheffler said.

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Posted on Advocate.com February 26, 2011 12:07:57 PM

Fred Karger Files Complaint with FEC Following Iowa Exclusion

Republican presidential hopeful Fred Karger says he's being excluded from an upcoming GOP forum in Iowa because he's gay.

By Winston Glesne

Republican presidential hopeful Fred Karger says he's being excluded from an upcoming GOP forum in Iowa because he's gay.

Karger, a gay rights activist who founded the group Californians Against Hate, has filed a complaint with the Federal Election Commission, saying the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition, sponsor of the forum scheduled for March 7, is in effect endorsing the 15 potential presidential candidates it did invite.

"The party of Abraham Lincoln should be inclusive and welcome all to discuss the important issues of today," said Karger at a news conference today. "As someone who has been actively involved in Republican politics my entire life and worked on nine presidential campaigns, including those of senior presidents Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush and Ronald Reagan I feel I deserve a seat at the table."

The Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition's president, Steve Scheffler, called Karger's complaint "specious and utterly without merit," saying his organization used objective criteria in selecting who to invite and is "in full compliance with federal campaign regulations governing such events."

Karger says this isn't the first time his group has battled with Scheffler, citing an e-mail he received last May. "You don't care about transparency—you and the radical homosexual community want to harass supporters of real marriage," wrote Scheffler. "Have you studied our past cautions—you have no chance here in Iowa."

Karger is eyeing a run for the Republican nomination for president in 2012.

[Read the full story here.](#)

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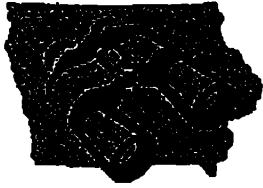
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Republican 2012 contender: "I will not be bullied" by Iowa conservative group

Posted on 26 February 2011.

By [ADAM B SULLIVAN](#)
Special to IowaWatch

A little-known presidential prospect said he will appeal to the federal government and to his likely opponents in hopes of being included in a Republican presidential debate next month.

California Republican Fred Karger was the first contender to form an exploratory committee for the 2012 presidential election and already has staff on the ground in

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Iowa. He's made a handful of trips to Iowa and New Hampshire and shot commercials both places.

If Karger does officially join the race, he'll be the first openly-gay presidential candidate. So perhaps it's unsurprising that the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition — a socially conservative group ~~operated~~ by the Iowa Christian Alliance — didn't invite Karger to a rally next month in ~~Waukegan~~.

Karger says he's being excluded because he's gay. At a press conference in Des Moines on Friday, he called the event organizer "a bully and a bigot" and announced he is calling on federal authorities to intervene.

Iowa Christian Alliance President Steve Scheffler wasn't available to comment on Friday afternoon, but he told The Des Moines Register earlier this year that Karger isn't worthy of debating the other contenders because he only focuses on gay issues.

"He's got one issue and in my opinion that does not make him a serious or legitimate candidate," Scheffler said.

The Karger camp says that's not a good enough reason. In a letter to the Federal Election Commission, Karger alleges that because Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition organizers haven't disclosed how they determined who to invite to the forum, the group is illegally supporting participants.

"[Scheffler] doesn't like me or my beliefs, so Fred Karger is not invited," Karger said. "There is no specific political criteria used like other sponsors of debates and forums use."

While Karger doesn't shy away from his status as a gay Republican that has fueled much of his media attention, he fights the single-issue label.

"I want to focus on education and the economy — I come from California where unemployment is 12 percent," he said. "I want to work on the issues that are important to my community, but I've talked about dozens of other issues."

The conservative organization said in a statement to the Iowa Independent, that forum invitations were based on viability, fund raising ability, and prior electoral success:

"Any claim by Mr. Karger that the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition's Spring Kick-off constitutes an in-kind contribution to the campaigns of as-yet undeclared presidential candidates is specious and utterly without merit."

A federal election law expert said groups generally rely on objective criteria to exclude fringe candidates, but it's not uncommon for certain politicians to be left out.

"You'll see plenty of debates that include only the front-runners," Paul S. Ryan, a lawyer with the Campaign Legal Center in Washington D.C., told IowaWatch. "There might be 15 candidates but many debates might include only four or five of them. And I think that's in the public interest. There's not much good that would come out of an hour or hour-and-a-half debate between 15 people."

Organizers snubbed candidates a handful of times during the last election cycle. Alan Keyes, a former U.S. diplomat, and Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-California, were denied invitations to events because debate sponsors said their polling numbers were too low.

Among the Democrats, former Alaska Gov. Mike Gravel and Rep. Dennis Kucinich,

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D-Ohio, were each left out of a few debates for poor poll showings or based on requirements that candidates hire campaign staffers or rent office space in contentious states. Some on the left criticized the Des Moines Register for excluding them.

Those cases all include objective criteria for who was invited. Perhaps more controversial, though, was the Republican Jewish Coalition's decision not to invite Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, to a 2007 event. Paul supporters criticized the Jewish group, saying the congressman was excluded because he has frequently opposed aid to Israel. Still, federal elections authorities didn't intervene.

If the Federal Elections Commission doesn't side with Karger in advance of the March 7 event, the self-described Independent Republican hopes the other possible candidates will stick up for him.






In a letter to the 15 expected forum attendees — most of whom had made far fewer moves toward a presidential run — Karger wrote:

As someone who has been actively involved in Republican politics my entire life and worked on nine Presidential campaigns including three as a senior consultant to Presidents Gerald Ford, George H.W. Bush and Ronald Reagan, I feel I deserve a seat at the table.

The Party of Abraham Lincoln should be inclusive and welcome all to discuss the important issues of today. Our nation is at a pivotal point, and I would hope that you would support my effort to speak at the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition Forum.

An Iowa political expert says it's not likely the other Republicans — including big names like Sarah Palin, Mitt Romney, and Mike Huckabee — will align with a candidate who is so vocal about gay issues.

"People aren't going to jump into the fray with him if that's his main thing," said Tim Hagle, an associate professor in the University of Iowa's political science program. "You gotta have more than one issue here. It's gotta be more than that."

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Gay GOP Presidential Contender Shut Out of First Iowa Debate

No matter how hopeless the candidate, Ralph Reed's Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition invites every potential 2010 GOP presidential contender to the first debate of the campaign—everyone, that is, but Fred Karger.

By Stephanie Munkner | Tue Mar. 1, 2011 11:56 AM PST

Former Christian Coalition whiz-kid Ralph Reed's new Faith and Freedom Coalition [1] will be hosting the first major event of the GOP 2012 presidential race next week in Iowa. Pretty much anyone who's expressed even a remote interest in running has been invited to attend: John Thune, Rick Santorum [2], Newt Gingrich, Ron Paul, even not-promoter and former New Mexico governor Gary Johnson [3] have all received invites, even though there's almost no chance any of them will win the GOP nomination, much less make it to the White House. (Thune, in fact, has announced that he isn't running.) Which is why Fred Karger [4] is so miffed.

The first openly gay Republican to make a run for the White House [5], Karger has already started a presidential exploratory committee, hired staff in Iowa and New Hampshire, where he's been running TV ads, and has been profiled in major media outlets for launching his serious campaign. But none of those things, apparently, was enough to convince conservative Christian activist Steve Scheffler, the organizer of the Iowa event, to invite Karger to the presidential forum. Karger's pretty sure that it's because he's gay. Last week, Karger asked the Federal Election Commission to investigate Scheffler and the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition [6] for violating federal election laws.

In his complaint to the FEC [7], Karger argues that the Iowa forum, if considered a debate, has used arbitrary criteria for deciding on whom could participate, in violation of explicit rules. If the FEC decides that the event—designed in more of a meet and greet format—isn't a debate, then Karger says it still violates the ban on corporate contributions because the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition would be breaching its nonprofit tax status by endorsing some candidates over others (namely Karger). Because the Iowa forum will be held on March 7, Karger has asked the FEC for an expedited ruling.

Karger and Scheffler have some history. [8] Back in May, Scheffler, one of Iowa's two members of the Republican National Committee, sent Karger an email saying:

You don't care about transparency—you and the radical homosexual community want to harass supporters of REAL marriage. I am the Republican National Committeeman for Iowa. As a private citizen and knowing literally thousands of caucus goers, I will work overtime to help ensure that your political aspirations are aborted right here in Iowa. Have you studied our past caucuses—you have NO chance here

in Iowa!"

When the Des Moines Register asked Scheffler about his email [9], he was unapologetic, responding, "I'm going to call a spade a spade." So perhaps it's no surprise that Scheffler declined to invite Karger to participate. Karger has been relentlessly lobbying for weeks for an invite, even petitioning Ralph Reed himself when the two were in Washington attending the Conservative Political Action Conference [10] in January. But Karger's appeals were for naught, which might be all the better for his campaign: Getting shut out of the forum has given him a good reason to hold press conferences and publicize his campaign while highlighting the pettiness of the GOP foot soldiers. He's created a website called www.LetFredin.com [11] to generate an onslaught of petitions to Scheffler to persuade him to change his mind.

It is possible. Scheffler has also in the past dissed potential presidential candidate and Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour for his comments suggesting that the GOP ought to declare a truce in the culture wars and that he would support pro-choice Republicans for office. Last year, Scheffler informed Barbour he was "toast" in Iowa should he decide to run in 2012. But Scheffler apparently decided to plug his nose and invite Barbour to the March forum anyway. If he can survive an hour in the same space as Barbour, Scheffler could probably bring himself to shake hands with a gay Republican.

Source URL: <http://motherjones.com/mojo/2011/03/gay-gop-presidential-contender-shut-out-first-iowa-debate>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.ffcoalition.com/>
- [2] <http://motherjones.com/politics/2010/08/rick-santorum-google-problem-dan-savage>
- [3] <http://motherjones.com/politics/2010/09/tea-party-marijuana-legalization>
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- [7] <http://www.fredkarger.com/posts/fac-complaint-against-the-iowa-faith-freedom-coalition>
- [8] <http://motherjones.com/mojo/2010/06/RNC-threatens-gay-presidential-candidate>
- [9] <http://blogs.desmoinesregister.com/dmr/index.php/2010/05/27/iowa-gop-committeeman-to-gay-candidate-ill-sink-you/>
- [10] <http://www.cpac.org>
- [11] http://www.letfredin.com/iowa_debates.html

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Upcoming Iowa presidential forum excludes gay Republican candidate

By Amanda Carey - The Daily Caller 9:22 AM 03/05/2011
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The Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition (IFFC) plans to host a presidential forum on Monday, March 7. As presidential forums go, this one is considered a big deal. It's the first time prospective 2012 Republican candidates will appear together and it takes place in the great state of Iowa — home to the Iowa caucuses.

So far, Rick Santorum, Buddy Roemer, Herman Cain, Tim Pawlenty and Newt Gingrich have signed on to attend. Haley Barbour, Mitch Daniels, Mike Huckabee, Sarah Palin, Ron Paul, Tim Pawlenty, Mike Pence, John Thune, Gary Johnson and John Bolton were all also invited.

The forum isn't a debate. Rather, it's a meet-and-greet, where potential candidates will give a 10-minute pitch to the nation's first voters.

Steve Scheffler, president of the Coalition, recently commented on the event, saying the 2012 election has the "most wide-open field in 50 years." And according to a December 2010 Wall Street Journal story, Scheffler said invitations to the forum had been sent to "anyone who has expressed the slightest interest in the 2012 Republican nomination."

But one potential candidate is being kept out of the forum.

Fred Karger, the openly gay Republican from California who was among the first to launch a presidential exploratory committee and run in ads in Iowa and New Hampshire, has been barred from participating in the event.

The reason? According to Karger, it's because he is gay.

"There is no specific political criteria used like other sponsors of debates and forums use," said Karger in a statement. "[...] By excluding one possible candidate, he [Scheffler] is in fact making an 'in-kind' contribution to all those who are participating."

According to Karger, Scheffler also sent him a 'disturbing' email last May, in which he wrote, "[you and the radical homosexual community want to harass supporters of REAL marriage. I am the Republican National Committeeman for Iowa ... I will work overtime to help ensure that your political aspirations are aborted right here in Iowa."

As a response, Karger filed an official complaint with the Federal Election Commission (FEC) just last week, arguing that Scheffler was violating campaign finance laws. He even launched a website, LetFredIn.com, where supporters can sign a petition supporting Karger's participation in the forum.

When contacted by The Daily Caller, Karger said "No, I'm not going to go if I'm not invited," but he wasn't going to give up on getting an invitation.

He even has back-up plane reservations to Iowa Sunday night. Just in case.

When asked by TheDC, why Karger was being excluded from the forum, Scheffler simply said, "Look at our quote on the Iowa Independent."

Presumably, Scheffler meant this quote that was in the Independent on Feb. 24: "Potential candidates were invited based on an objective criteria of viability, fundraising ability, and prior electoral success with advice from legal counsel. We are in full compliance with federal campaign regulations governing such events."

Karger told TheDC the FEC did acknowledge receiving the complaint, and the agency promised to issue "some kind of statement" within days.

So far, none of the other participants in Monday's forum have expressed support for his efforts, said Karger, though Republican Rep. Ron Paul of Texas was also excluded from the event four years ago.

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Five possible Republican candidates for president to attend Iowa forum

By Will Rahn - The Daily Caller 12:27 AM 03/07/2011
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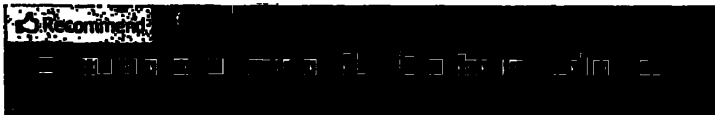
The Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition is planning to hold a forum for some likely Republican presidential candidates Monday night.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, former Godfather's Pizza CEO Herman Cain, former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, and former Louisiana Gov. Buddy Roemer are all expected to attend the event at the Point of Grace Church in Waukee, Iowa. Each will be given 10 minutes to address the audience, which will include Terry Branstad, the state's Republican governor, and more than 600 GOP activists.

Steve Scheffler, a National Republican committeeman and leader of the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition, has billed the event as "the largest gathering of pro-family, values-minded voters in the spring of 2011." According to their website, the IFFC is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that advocates for "integrity in government, high moral values, constitutional authority, and Christian principles."

The IFC reported on Saturday that California businessman and potential Republican candidate Fred Karger was not invited to the event. Karger, who is openly gay, says in testimony his sexual orientation was the reason for the snub and has filed a complaint with the Federal Elections Commission.

Next year's Iowa Caucus will be the first contest of the 2012 presidential primary season.



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URL to article: <http://dailycaller.com/2011/03/07/five-possible-republican-candidates-for-president-to-attend-iowa-forum/>

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Iowa's Faith and Freedom Coalition, a leading social conservative group in the leadoff caucus state, has invited 12 Republican presidential prospects to what so far is the first group forum in the state of the 2012 campaign. The event is set for March 7 at a church in a western Des Moines-area suburb.

The group, headed by Republican National Committee member Steve Scheffler of West Des Moines, sent invitations Dec. 31 to Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour, Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, Texas Congressman Ron Paul, former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, Indiana Congressman Mike Pence, former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, South Dakota Sen. John Thune.

Those 11 often appear on lists of GOP figures weighing 2012 bids. Another, a name increasingly popular in tea party circles, is Herman Cain, the former CEO of Godfather's Pizza.

Former United Nations Ambassador John Bolton, who has said he is weighing a 2012 campaign, is expected to receive an invitation to the event, although Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition planners had not yet sent one.

The event, at Point of Grace church in Waukee, is being billed as the first such group gathering of 2012 prospects in Iowa, expected to host the leadoff presidential caucuses in a little more than a year. The forum is not a debate, but will afford prospective presidential candidates a chance to make a speech to conservative activists. There is no question and answer session planned for these GOP hopefuls who attend.

Fred Karger, a gay-rights activist and veteran California-based political consultant, complained that he was not invited. Karger has visited Iowa five times, formed a presidential exploratory committee and hired an Iowa campaign staffer.

Scheffler said Karger's focus on gay rights makes him a marginal candidate. In Iowa, social and evangelical conservatives form the core of the Republican caucus base.

"He's got one issue and in my opinion that does not make him a serious or legitimate candidate," Scheffler said.

Tags: Haley Barbour, Herman Cain, Iowa caucuses, Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition, John Bolton, Mike Huckabee, Mike Pence, Mitch Daniels, Mitt Romney, Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum, Ron Paul, Sarah Palin, Tim Pawlenty

POLITICO

Iowa's new generation gap

By: Maggie Haberman
March 9, 2011 08:38 PM EST

DES MOINES, IOWA — A political generation gap among Iowa caucus-goers is emerging as the 2012 campaign gets under way, with many younger voters citing the nation's fiscal situation as their main focus, while older Republicans cite social issues.

Interviews in Iowa this week during the state's first big event of the presidential campaign season, the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition forum, showed a trend — repeated references to the economy from voters under the age of fifty.

For those voters that time, the majority said a candidate's stances on issues like abortion and gay marriage were their litmus tests.

Pam Caloway, 40, described herself as a "strong Christian" and is a teacher at a local religious school, but she promptly cited "fiscal issues" as what she's watching for right now as she starts to scout out her candidates.

"I hope that we could find someone who's [the total package]," she said.

Another attendee at the Faith and Freedom Coalition event, who gave her age as 30 but declined to give her name because she works for the state government, said, "I'm not one of those [who focuses on only social issues.] ... A lot of these people are retired and it's not as big a deal to them if I need a job. They can stay home and fixate on that gay marriage thing."

"Obviously, our main focus, and really the younger focus, is the debt and the deficit," Natalie Ginty, who's running for chair of the state federation of college Republicans, said shortly after Tim Pawlenty paid a visit to Iowa State University in Ames.

"We're much more concerned with things that will deal with our future," Ginty said, adding that a focus on social issues is "not on the agenda for us. ... Our discussions mainly deal with talking about the budget and how we are going to improve that."

But Bob Kaldenberg, 70, said he favored Pawlenty and Rick Santorum because of "their views and past history." Santorum, he said, had always stood out to him for his time in the U.S. senate fighting against abortion.

State GOP chairman Matt Strawn said he could see from personal experience as a 37-year-old father of three how "tenuous finances can be when you have to juggle" the concerns of family costs such as schools could force that to the foreground.

"Despite record corn and bean prices, record land prices, we see people that are awfully worried," he said.



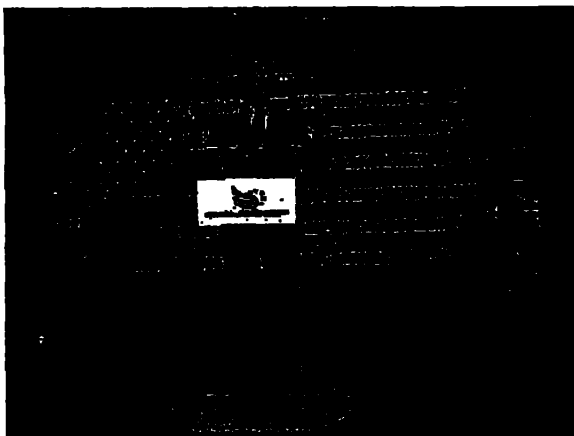
New Republic: In Iowa, Did The GOP Prove Worthy?

by ED KILGORE

March 9, 2011

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Former U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum speaking at the Iowa Faith and Freedom Coalition on Monday. Five Republicans considering a run for president in 2012 presented themselves to hundreds of activists at the event.

On Monday night, the 2012 Republican primary kicked off in earnest. The occasion was an Iowa forum sponsored by Ralph Reed's Faith and Freedom Coalition, which is eager to ensure that the Christian Right (and Ralph Reed, who is launching his own campaign) maintains a prominent — indeed, an absolutely overbearing — place in the decision-making process of the GOP. This "cattle call" was held in a brightly colored suburban megachurch in Waukegan, Iowa, known locally for having a rockin' pastor and praise band. It was a strange event, full of partisan red meat, but also

off-kilter due to the fact that several major figures in this election's social-conservative psychodrama, Mike Huckabee, Mitch Daniels, Sarah Palin, and Michele Bachmann, were not in attendance. What the audience did witness was an eclectic group of conservative sinners jockeying against each other — and the absent ghosts listed name — in hopes of easily discrediting themselves in the eyes of Christian conservatives.

Obscure talk-show host and former pizza magnate Herman Cain was actually the most natural. He managed to act as something of a stand-in for Sarah Palin and Michele Bachmann, evincing a snug synthesis of the old Christian Right and the new Tea Party, and fluently tying together attacks on legalized abortion with claims that liberals were trying to turn America into the "United States of Europe." But who cared? With several more appealing, more electable Christians waiting in the wings, his fluency seemed a moot point.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich opted to bury his audience in obliquely direct rhetoric about the clash between secularism and Christianity. He referred to the opposition not as "liberals" or "Democrats" but as "secular socialists"; compared the current partisan conflict to the buildup before the Civil War; and promised that two of his first four executive orders as president would deal with abortion, while a third would move the U.S. embassy in Israel to Jerusalem (a guaranteed applause line among staunchly pro-Israel evangelicals). It seemed almost enough to distract the audience from his less-than-sterling family values.

Ex-Senator Rick Santorum spent most of his speech dwelling on his role in the Right to Life movement, even going so far as to declare it a good thing that Bill Clinton vetoed two bills banning partial-birth abortions because the procedure's legality served as agitprop for general opposition to legalized abortion. (George W. Bush finally signed a bill on this subject, which Santorum had originally sponsored.) Had he waved a fetus poster right there at the podium, it would not have been surprising.

The most unusual speech of the evening was delivered by former Louisiana Governor Buddy Roemer, best known for a failed 1991 re-election campaign that teed up the infamous "race from hell" runoff between Ed Edwards and David Duke (Roemer wryly noted in his speech that he narrowly lost, but Edwards and Duke both wound up in the penitentiary). Roemer's shtick is to refuse to accept campaign contributions over

\$100, and he tried to frame his assault against "special interest" money as a moral issue, even going so far as to blast Iowa's beloved ethanol subsidy as a symbol of corruption and Big Government. This attracted hearty, charitable applause, of the kind that brooks no commitment whatsoever.

Perhaps the most consequential talk of the night was given by Tim Pawlenty, who is trying to frame himself as a good alternative for Christian conservatives, in case their more visceral champions fail to enter the race or to gain traction. He is clearly trying to figure out the right mode of speaking to the Republican base without appearing too bland — so this time he just spoke extremely loudly and quoted as much scripture as possible. Pawlenty did dutifully employ one of the Christian Right's most potent dog whistles, referring multiple times to the line in the Declaration of Independence which says that people are "endowed by their creator" with inalienable rights. (The implication is that religion and "natural rights," i.e., the rights of the unborn or absolute property rights, can be sneaked into the Constitution via their alleged presence in the Declaration.) But, by and large, Pawlenty did not manage to give off the impression of an ardent culture warrior who chews nails for breakfast — something he will have to perfect if he wants to capitalize on the political opening available for him in 2012.

Meanwhile, everyone was bagging on Mitch Daniels, who is looking less and less like a viable Iowa candidate. Early on in the event, Ralph Reed directly alluded to Daniels's belief that Republicans should declare a "truce" in the culture wars by trashing it; and nearly everyone who stood at the podium attempted to make it clear he didn't buy the idea that the "Red Menace" of debt — in Daniels's phrase — should motivate them to stop talking about abortion or same-sex marriage or secularism.

The mood of Ralph Reed's forum was instructive. Religious conservatives are not about to be consigned to the background of Republican politics, particularly in Iowa where — as Reed reminded the audience — they are in a position to dominate the caucuses. There was no appetite for talk of compromise or dialogue with the Democrats, and candidates like Daniels, or even Pawlenty, seem like they might face a disadvantage if they do not sharpen their red-meat delivery. After the Tea Party victories of 2010, the atmosphere of the event was unabashedly triumphalist. It was a signal that conservatives will be highly energized in 2012 — but perhaps also over-confident.

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