

Is There an Anti-Ted Cruz Effort Building in Iowa?

According to a report published Wednesday by National Review, supporters of two Republican presidential candidates are seeking to forge an alliance with Marco Rubio's campaign in an effort to block Ted Cruz from winning in the first-in-the-nation caucus state.

The article, twin bylined by Senior Political Correspondent Tim Alberta and Washington Editor Eliana Johnson, quotes two Iowa GOP establishment insiders, former state central committee member Jamie Johnson and former Iowa GOP executive director Craig Robinson. They both suggest there is a growing "Anyone But Cruz" sentiment growing among the state party's elites.

Johnson formerly led Rick Santorum's successful 2012 Iowa campaign and was a key consultant for Rick Perry's failed 2016 campaign. In the article, he is quoted as saying he has heard from Santorum's and Mike Huckabee's camps that they expect supporters to swing from their campaigns to support Rubio.

"It is absolutely clear to me that many Huckabee and Santorum supporters are going to swing toward Marco Rubio, because he is a Christian conservative who they feel embodies more of the character traits that Huckabee and Santorum embody," he said.

Robinson, president of Global Intermediate LLC, an Iowa-based political public relations and marketing firm, also is founder and editor-in-chief of The Iowa Republican website. It is well known in Iowa political circles the website has longstanding ties to Concordia Group CEO Nick Ryan, who is identified, but not quoted, in the article.

Ryan serves as president of the pro-Huckabee Super PAC Pursuing American Greatness, which had paid Concordia Group

nearly \$30,000 in consulting fees in the first half of 2015, and more than \$2,000 in digital advertising fees to Global Intermediate, according to Federal Election Commission reports. In the report, Ryan is indicated as the central figure in the anti-Cruz effort:

“Several Republican sources point to Nick Ryan, a prominent Iowa strategist who leads the pro-Huckabee super PAC Pursuing America’s Greatness, as a key player in the anti-Cruz efforts. Ryan is known to have longstanding ties with operatives in Rubio’s orbit, most notably Sean Noble, whose group American Encore has been running ads pummeling Cruz on national security. Sources believe that Ryan has signaled to those allies a willingness to boost Rubio by weakening Cruz.”

The Iowa Republican published an article Monday titled “Ted Cruz: The False Prophet of Social Conservatism.” Robinson is identified as the author of the article, which attacks Cruz’ authenticity as a social conservative from the very first paragraph:

“Contrary to popular belief, the 2016 presidential campaign of Texas Senator Ted Cruz does not present socially conservative and evangelical voters their best chance to put one of their own in the White House. Instead, a Cruz presidency may usher in the total demise of social conservative movement in America.”

The question left unanswered in the article, however, is how such a coalition would work when both Huckabee and Santorum—past winners of the Iowa Republican Caucus—have said they won’t bow out before the first-in-the-nation caucus on Feb. 1. Santorum is on pace to have visited all 99 counties by Caucus Night, and Huckabee is fast approaching his own sweep of the state.

Even Johnson is quoted as saying the candidates won’t drop

out: "They're both fighters. I think they're in it through Iowa."