

Santorum Exits Graciously, Romney Must Convince Conservatives

Rick Santorum on Tuesday proved that, while some politicians talk about family values, he lives them.

Rick's gracious announcement that he is suspending active campaigning for the Republican nomination for president was a disappointment to the millions of movement conservative voters who share his principled conservative positions.

His choice to suspend his campaign after prayer and thought over this past weekend will also spare his family the toll that a summer of scorched earth campaigning against uphill odds would inevitably entail.

Naturally, conservative voters in states like Texas, North Carolina, Indiana and West Virginia who have yet to be heard from were counting on Rick Santorum to take their message all the way to the Republican National Convention in Tampa. His commitment to continue the fight for their issues keeps their hopes for a platform based on conservative principles alive.

To date, Mitt Romney has spent about \$100 million to drive the conservative candidates from the field, in some case through vicious personal attacks. However, he has spent little effort making the case for his own candidacy to grass-roots movement conservatives.

The first great challenge facing Republicans is whether or not Mitt Romney can heal the wounds created by his negative campaigning.

The grass-roots movement conservative voters who powered the Santorum campaign cannot be taken for granted. During the 2006

congressional elections, 4 million conservative voters stayed home, producing one of the biggest defeats for the Republican Party in the modern era.

The next step is up to Mitt Romney. Romney is seriously behind with committed conservative voters. To catch up, he must make the case that he merits the support of movement conservatives and that a Romney administration, if elected, can and will produce conservative government.

Richard A. Viguerie *pioneered political direct mail and is the author of* Conservatives Betrayed: How George W. Bush and Other Big Government Republicans Hijacked the Conservative Cause.

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