

Santorum Wins Conservative Christian Endorsement for Republican Nomination

Rick Santorum has won over a large group of conservative Christian leaders.

More than 100 conservatives voted on Saturday to support Santorum for the **Republican presidential bid**. Meanwhile, *Left Behind* author **Tim LaHaye** has thrown his support behind former House speaker **Newt Gingrich**.

The rally of support could spur Santorum's campaign and hurt Republican rivals Gingrich and Texas Gov. **Rick Perry**, who were also vying for the evangelical vote. The endorsement hopes to prevent **Mitt Romney**, who some Christian leaders view as too moderate, from winning the nomination.

The backing of conservative Christian leaders should help Santorum raise more campaign funds and garner additional endorsements as the race for the nomination heats up. The next primaries are in South Carolina on Jan. 21 and Florida on Jan. 31.

"There is a hope and an expectation that this will have an impact on South Carolina," the *New York Times* reported **Tony Perkins**, the president of the Family Research Council and a spokesman for the meeting, as saying in a telephone news conference.

Perkins did not offer specifics as to why the Christian leaders gave the nod to Santorum, but he did point to a consistent record on economic and social issues. Some evangelicals have shied away from Gingrich, who has been married three times.

The *New York Times* reports that there was a series of three secret ballots. The first vote narrowed the field to Santorum and Gingrich. One hundred fourteen people voted in the final ballot in which Santorum won 85 votes compared to Gingrich's 29. At the news conference, Perkins said some **Christian leaders** who had supported Gingrich moved their allegiance to Santorum for unity's sake.

LaHaye is joining the Gingrich Faith Leaders Coalition as a national co-chair. In a letter to South Carolina pastors, LaHaye urged them to vote for Gingrich because he is in the best "strategic position" to improve America.

"During the last three years our nation has been led by **liberal secularists** who have tried their best to remove God from our public square and the elimination of the biblical principles our founding fathers built this nation on" said LaHaye.

Other Christian leaders who support Gingrich include: George Barna; Dr. Jim Garlow, the California pastor behind the **Proposition 8** battle; Congressman J.C. Watts; Don Wildmon of the American Family Association; and Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel.