



## The Colorado GOP Straw Poll (Preference Poll)

### What is the straw poll?

The straw poll is a way to gauge popular Republican opinion, at a given point in time, for presidential candidates.

### When do we have it?

At caucus – very early in the election cycle.

### Why do we have it?

- Fundraising for COGOP. Candidates are required to pay to be listed on the straw poll. In 2012, the pay-to-play price was \$5,000.
- Public relations opportunity. COGOP is guaranteed a place on the 10 p.m. news on caucus night.
- May increase caucus attendance, depending on the county.

### When did it start?

- Straw polls started in 2008 by then-chairman Dick Wadhams. We've had three (3) straw polls in Colorado – two in presidential years and one in a gubernatorial year (2008, 2010, 2012).
- Chairman Ryan Call and the Executive Committee voted not to have the straw poll in 2014.

### Who decides if a poll is conducted?

The COGOP Executive Committee authorizes the straw poll, by majority vote.

### Why didn't we have one in 2014?

The Chairman didn't want it and the Executive Committee voted not to authorize it. There is some speculation that because Bob Beauprez chose to petition onto the ballot instead of go through the assembly process, Chairman Call did not want a strong straw poll showing for another gubernatorial candidate.

### Are straw polls binding?

Yes and no.

In our COGOP bylaws, the poll is specifically non-binding, i.e., *"a non-binding preference poll shall be conducted."*

Our bylaws have always allowed our delegates the freedom to pledge to a candidate, or not, but never mandated or bound a delegate. i.e., *"In no event, however, shall the results of any preference poll dictate or require the proportional allocation or representation of delegates chosen for any county assembly, higher assembly or convention, or bind such delegates as may be chosen to vote for any particular candidate."*

However, the Rules of the Republican National Committee supersede our state bylaws in the presidential election cycle. New RNC Rules adopted in 2012 now mandate and bind all delegates immediately, with results of any straw poll.

*RNC Rule 16(a)(1) Binding and Allocation. (1) Any statewide presidential preference vote that permits a choice among candidates for the Republican nomination for President of the United States in a primary, caucuses, or a state convention must be used to allocate and bind the state's delegation to the national convention in either a proportional or winner-take-all manner, except for delegates and alternate delegates who appear on a ballot in a statewide election and are elected directly by primary voters.*

**Why is the RNC binding delegates?**

- Binding delegates makes it easier, administratively, to count votes for a nominee in advance of the convention
- Binding delegates is advantageous to candidates and campaigns because funding resources can be allocated more efficiently
- Binding delegates discourages “faithless delegates” (those who break their pledge)

**Why wouldn't delegates want to be bound?**

- Restricts delegates early in the process and inhibits the ability to change with the circumstances
- Restricts delegates from voting their conscience
- Restricts delegates when a candidate drops out of the race
- Restricts delegates to vote for only that candidate
- Creates a coronation, not a convention (Ronald Reagan's delegates in '76 led to a Reagan win in '80)
- Discourages party participation; delegates are not free to make their own choice

**What happened in 2012?**

In 2012, the Colorado Delegation was comprised of pledged Romney delegates and a coalition of delegates representing other candidates, some voluntarily pledged and some voluntarily unpledged. Among unpledged delegates were Chairman Ryan Call and several legislators. Santorum won the straw poll and Romney was second. The Colorado Delegation properly represented the grassroots, both in composition and the votes they cast at the convention. There were no faithless delegates (delegates casting votes for someone other than pledged). Despite coming in second in the straw poll with 35%, Romney garnered 78% of the Colorado delegation vote in Tampa – because delegates were free to vote their conscience.

**Colorado 2012 National Delegates – Straw Poll Results vs Votes Cast at Convention**

CO Non-binding Straw Poll Results		CO Delegation Composition	Votes Cast/Tampa	
Santorum	40%	14 delegates   39%	-0-	(candidate withdrew)
Romney	35%	16 delegates   45%	28   78%	
Gingrich	13%		-0-	
Paul	12%	6 delegates   16%	8   22%	(abstention)

### ✓ **What will happen to bound delegates in 2016?**

Bound delegates in 2016 will only be able to vote for the candidate they are bound to. There is no provision in the RNC Rules for a candidate, who drops out before the convention, to release their delegates.

If the present Rules had applied in 2012, 40% of the delegates in the Colorado delegation would have been bound to Santorum. When Santorum dropped out of the race before the convention, those delegates would not have been free to cast their votes according to their conscience.

### ✓ **Conclusion**

There is a huge difference between allowing delegates to pledge (or not) and a mandate to bind. RNC Rules have been changed to “manage the process.” If our processes don’t have integrity (fairness) those who participate in them, and lose, will not stay with us. A big part of the loss in 2012 was a significant undervote of Republicans who normally vote with us, but who were discouraged over the manipulated process. Free our delegates and ensure integrity in the process! NO STRAW POLL IN 2016!

### ✓ **Colorado National Delegation Composition**

RNC Rule 14: allotment of delegates | 37 total for Colorado; 34 elected, 3 automatic

- 10 at-large (elected at state convention)
- 21 from CDs (3 ea x 7 CDs, elected at CD assemblies)
- 1 additional at-large (if 1/2 of congressional delegation is REP)
- 1 additional at-large (if REP majority in state senate)
- 1 additional at-large (if US Senator is REP)
- 3 automatic RNC members (state chairman, national committeeman & woman)

### ✓ **Applicable Citations**

- RNC Rule 14(c): RNC rules trump state bylaws
- RNC Rule 16(a)(1): straw poll will bind delegates
- RNC Rule 16(c)(2): before 3/15 = proportional allocation
- RNC Rule 16(c)(3)(i): state may establish minimum threshold not more than 20%
- RNC Rule 16(c)(3)(ii): state may establish winner take all if 50%+1
- CRC Bylaws, Article XII(c)(4)(a): executive committee authorizes straw poll