

# Big Super Tuesday win for Mitt Romney in Massachusetts, Hampshire County

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Mitt Romney swept to an easy primary win in Massachusetts on Tuesday, in a victory that was as convincing as it was expected.

With 99 percent of precincts reporting, Romney had won 72 percent of the vote among Republican primary voters in the state where he served as governor from 2003 to 2007. Former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum placed second with 12 percent of the vote, followed by Texas Congressman Ron Paul with 10 percent and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich with 5 percent.

In a speech to supporters Tuesday night at the Westin Copley Place Boston Hotel, Romney said his "campaign is on the move and real change is finally on the way.

"We're going to take your vote, a huge vote tonight in Massachusetts, and take that vote all the way to the White House," Romney told his backers. "When I'm president, this American economy will not be lagging behind. This American economy will be leading the world."

None of the four remaining Republican candidates campaigned in Massachusetts in the lead-up to Tuesday's vote. Polls showed Romney with a large lead among likely GOP primary voters.

But despite the lack of fanfare, it was a win that looked increasingly important to the former Bay State governor's chances of winning the GOP presidential nomination.

Massachusetts had 41 delegates in play on Tuesday, 38 of which went to Romney following his convincing victory. Combined with victories in Virginia, Vermont and Idaho on Tuesday and wins in large states like Florida and Michigan earlier in the year, the Bay State victory makes Romney increasingly difficult to beat in the race to 1,144 delegates needed to secure the Republican nomination, analysts said.

GOP political consultant Ben Clarke of Greenfield said he believed Romney would pull out a win in Ohio, further cementing his case with Republicans.

"I think at some point (Wednesday) it will become clear to Republicans that Romney can't be beat," Clarke said.

However, a Santorum victory in Ohio could have disastrous consequences for Republicans in the fall, he said.

"If Santorum were to win Ohio, the odds of (President Barack) Obama winning in the general goes up drastically," Clarke said.

Matt Barron, a Democratic consultant from Chesterfield, said the "math and money are on Romney's side."

But he agreed with Clarke's view that an extended contest would only hinder Republicans' chances. He cited a Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll released this week showing that nearly 38 percent of Americans viewed Romney unfavorably, compared to 28 percent favorably.

"That doesn't augur well for the fall," Barron said.

Romney's statewide dominance included Hampshire County, where he won 19 of 20 communities. The only town where he did not score a victory was Cummington, where he and Santorum were tied at 20 votes apiece.

In liberal strongholds like Amherst and Northampton, Obama received more votes on the Democratic ballot than all the Republican candidates combined. In Amherst, Obama received 578 votes, compared to 213 votes for Romney, 83 for Paul, 69 for Santorum and 22 for Paul.

Obama received 770 votes in Northampton to 677 for the seven Republican candidates on the ballot. (The names of Michelle Bachmann, Jon Huntsman and Rick Perry all appeared on the ballot although they are no longer active candidates.) Romney won in Northampton among Republicans with 393 votes to 124 for Santorum, 106 for Paul and 34 for Gingrich.

Turnout across the county was down from the record levels established four years ago, when approximately 30,000 Democrats cast a vote in the contest between Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The Republican numbers were also down from four years ago. In 2008, McCain, Romney and former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee received 6,875 voters countywide. On Tuesday, the four remaining GOP candidates received a combined 5,828 votes.

Romney returned to the commonwealth for the first time in months to cast his ballot at a senior center in Belmont, where he and his wife, Ann Romney, own a condominium and raised their family.

"It's great to be back home," Mitt Romney told reporters after voting.

Romney said it had been "a couple of months" since he'd been in Massachusetts and he was looking forward to sleeping in his own bed.

Massachusetts Democrats tried to use Tuesday's contest to build support for the general election and to take a few whacks at Romney.

Obama campaign officials said volunteers have been conducting training sessions, holding phone banks, canvassing neighborhoods and hosting house parties to reach out to voters as they work to build their campaign infrastructure for November.

Massachusetts Democratic Party Chairman John Walsh said, "Romney may be able to spend his way through the Republican primary, but he can't write a check big enough to cover the fact that he will say anything to get elected."

But Republicans are holding out hope that Romney's strong primary win could open the door to a possible GOP victory in November in Massachusetts.

Those odds are long.

The last Republican to win Massachusetts in the November presidential election was Ronald Reagan, Obama remains popular and Democratic Gov. Deval Patrick is actively campaigning on his behalf.

One recent poll found Romney trailing Obama in a head-to-head matchup, with Obama receiving the support of 60 percent of voters, compared with 36 percent for Romney.

Romney's primary win should deliver to him the bulk, if not all, of the state's 41 GOP delegates. The state is not winner-take-all, but a candidate needs at least 15 percent of the vote for a chance to pick up any delegates.

Green Rainbow Party voters were also faced with the choice of three presidential candidates on the Massachusetts ballot: Kent Mesplay of California; Harley Mikkelson of Michigan; and Jill Stein of Massachusetts.

In Massachusetts, only enrolled and independent voters can cast votes using each party's ballot. Registered Democrats cannot cross lines and vote in a Republican primary.

Material from the Associated Press was used in this report.