

Romney wins county Republican straw poll

By Tim Dudley

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Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney ran away with 61 percent of the vote in what the Teton County Republican Party was touting as one of Wyoming's first straw polls Saturday night.

County GOP Chairman Joe Schloss called Romney's showing remarkable considering the number of other candidates. About 100 people voted during the party's Elephant Jam event Saturday at 43 North. The get-together and fundraiser celebrated the one-year countdown to the presidential election.

A straw poll is a nonbinding vote taken before an election to gauge support for each candidate.

Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani took second, with 12 percent of the vote. Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee had 10 percent, U.S. Sen. John McCain of Arizona and U.S. Rep. Ron Paul of Texas each received 5 percent, U.S. Rep. Duncan Hunter of California had 4 percent, and lawyer, actor and former Sen. Fred Thompson got 2 percent. Other candidates received 1 percent or less, Schloss said.

Schloss said he thought Romney did well because he is a conservative candidate.

"That goes in line with the way that many of our citizens in Wyoming think," Schloss said. "By nature I think we're a conservative group, and certainly Romney fits that bill."

Schloss said Romney is also one of the few candidates, if not the only one, who has been running a strong campaign in Wyoming, which has just three electoral votes.

Giuliani, he said, is strong nationally but his name hasn't come up too often yet in Wyoming. Schloss said he also was somewhat surprised at Thompson's result but that it was in line with the "lukewarm" response to his candidacy in the rest of the nation.

There's still time for candidates to catch up to Romney, though, he said.

Schloss said he thinks Romney would do well against the Democrats' frontrunner, Hillary Clinton.

"I think it would be a lot closer than a lot of folks realize," he said.