

**Republican Party**

## **Paul Handily Wins Virginia Straw Poll**

Rep. Ron Paul (R-Tex.) convincingly won a straw poll Saturday night at the Virginia Republican Party Advance, an annual conference in Crystal City that drew about 500 state party leaders and activists.

The poll followed a series of speeches by surrogates representing each of the GOP presidential candidates. Voting was open to any Virginia resident who paid \$35.

Paul drew 38 percent of the vote after bringing in supporters from all corners of the state.

"It means we've got the strength to go the next step to take on the primary in Virginia," said Dennis Fusaro, Paul's national field director. "It shows our great organization. We won with a combination of people new to the process and the people who have been involved in the party a long time.

Former senator Fred Thompson finished second, with 23 percent of the vote. Among his supporters in Crystal City was former Virginia senator George Allen (R), who told conference-goers, "Fred Thompson believes common sense is not very common in Washington D.C."

Former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee came in third with 11 percent of the vote. Former New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani finished fourth with 9 percent.

A Washington Post poll of Republican voters in Virginia, conducted in October, found Giuliani with an early lead over the rest of the GOP field.

Virginia's presidential primary is Feb. 12.

**-- Tim Craig**

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