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Report from the San Diego Straw Poll

The annual Salute to Republican Elected Officials took place last night at the Rancho Bernardo Inn. Many of the heavy hitters were absent, but there were still a good deal of electeds in attendance, including Senator Mark Wyland and San Diego City Councilman Kevin Faulconer.

Candidates were also out in full force, including candidate for San Diego City Attorney Jan Goldsmith, Candidates for the 7th City Council seat Carl DeMaio and Bob Ilko, and Candidate for the 52nd Congressional district Ken King.

The event was billed as the Annual Salute, but my guess would be that 90% of the people came exclusively for the straw poll. Once they announced that the polls were open and people could vote, there was a line wrapping half-way around the ballroom for at least 2 hours.

One of the most interesting aspects of last night was the crowd. Although there were the usual suspects - staffers, campaigners, activists and hangers on - there were an exceptional amount of people who I have never seen at a political event. Ron Paul definitely brought in the largest number of new people. About the only Ron Paul supporter there that I actually recognized was Sally Cruever (CRA activist). Paul's following was made up of mostly young 20/30 something's dressed in jeans and holding up their Ron Paul signs with great pride at every possible moment. The Romney campaign also energized a group of people that are not at the typical County Party event. The Romney supporters seemed like they came from each age group.

Here are the official results:

Mitt Romney - 117
Ron Paul - 73
Rudy Giuliani - 51
Duncan Hunter - 36
Mike Huckabee - 14
John McCain - 12
Fred Thompson - 10
Tom Tancredo - 0

There are a few things that I find interesting about these results. First is that Hunter did not have a better showing. Rancho Bernardo is a stones throw from his district. He has won a couple straw polls in the past, and it seems like with minimal effort he could have had a stronger showing in his own back yard.

Second, Fred Thompson, who was once the "savior" for our party's hopes of holding on to the Oval Office, has no tangible organization in California. The same can be said for Huckabee and McCain. Straw polls are not a scientific representation of how voters are leaning at the moment. They are scientific representations of the organization a campaign has locally, of its activist support and of the resources they are willing to commit to energizing their supporters to attend and cast a ballot.

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