

## Huckabee triumphs in 'Value Voters' straw poll

By Klaus Marre  
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Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee (R) was the big winner of a straw poll of "value voters," garnering 64 percent of the vote and easily beating all other GOP presidential hopefuls.

The poll of 340 delegates, who were handpicked by social conservative activists, followed a debate on issues important to many members of the Republican base.

The forum attracted only the so-called "second-tier" GOP candidates, with former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, former Sen. Fred Thompson (Tenn.), Sen. John McCain (Ariz.) and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney all skipping the event. Their absence was reflected in the poll results.

"We won huge," Huckabee said. "I'm pleased, and proud, and honored to have this historic endorsement from America's leading social conservatives who believe, as I do, in the core values which define American culture and life. This overwhelming vote affirms that conservatives are coalescing around one candidate and that candidate is me."

Delegates were asked to cast a vote prior to the debate and at its conclusion, and the support for the first-tier candidates plunged. Thompson fell to below 5 percent from 15 percent, Giuliani dropped to just above 1 percent from 5 percent, McCain dipped to below 1 percent from 4 percent and Romney failed to garner a single vote after attracting about 4 percent prior to the debate.

"How can we expect these no-show candidates to take on Osama bin Laden and other world leaders when they're afraid to show up and answer questions from Phyllis Schlafly?" Rabbi Aryeh Spero of the Jewish Action Alliance asked.

Added Rick Scarborough, the president of Vision America: "If you care about our votes, you need to care about our values enough to show up."

The debate focused on abortion, national security, a marriage amendment and immigration.

Rep. Ron Paul (Texas) finished a distant second behind Huckabee, taking 16 percent of the vote.