

Ron Paul Takes the Ribbon in State Fair's GOP Straw Poll

By Annapolis Notebook

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A curious thing happened this year at the Maryland Republican Party booth at the State Fair: A GOP presidential straw poll was won by *Ron Paul*, the idiosyncratic congressman from Texas who is a fierce critic of the Iraq war.

Perhaps just as curious was the Maryland GOP's decision to trumpet the results in a news release last week with the headline: "Maryland GOP Presidential Straw Poll Is a Big Success; Grassroots Candidate Wins Surprise Upset."

According to the release, Paul received 263 votes, and former New York mayor *Rudolph W. Giuliani* (for whom Republican former governor *Robert L. Ehrlich Jr.* is toiling) was second with 220 votes. (Ehrlich received three write-in votes.) Former Tennessee senator *Fred Thompson*-- who had yet to declare his candidacy -- finished third with 188 votes. No other candidate cracked 100 votes.

All told, nearly 1,000 people cast ballots in the Maryland GOP's first-ever presidential straw poll at the fair. The party said the straw poll was open to everyone of voting age, regardless of party affiliation, who stopped by the GOP booth.

The campaigns of nine GOP presidential candidates were invited to have representatives at the booth. It turns out only Paul had someone there all 11 days, the party said.

"The final vote showing Ron Paul won is a lesson for all campaigns of how grass-roots politics can make all the difference," said *Chris Cavey*, first vice chairman of the Maryland Republican Party and co-chairman of the party's State Fair Planning Committee.

"The Paul campaign repeatedly e-mailed their base of support to turn out at the State Fair to cast a vote for Dr. Paul, and in doing so, demonstrated that a small, organized operation can beat the odds."

-- **John Wagner**