

SUNDAY ■ NOVEMBER 19, 1995 ■ THE HAYS DAILY NEWS

# Dole wins Florida straw poll

But closest rivals say margin shows he can be defeated

By JOHN KING  
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole cemented his status as the Republican presidential front-runner Saturday by winning a major Florida straw poll, but his closest rivals said the margin proved Dole far from invincible.

In balloting by 3,325 GOP activists, Dole was first with 1,104 votes, or 33 percent. Texas Sen. Phil Gramm was second with 869 votes, or 26 percent, followed by former Tennessee Gov. Lamar

Alexander at 749 votes, or 23 percent.

Pat Buchanan was well back in fourth place, with 9 percent, hurt by a strong performance by another anti-abortion candidate, radio host Alan Keyes, who had 8 percent. Three others failed to crack 1 percent.

Given the diversity of Florida's Republican Party, the "Presidency III" contest was viewed as a credible barometer of support heading into the heavy campaigning for next year's early contests, beginning with the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary in February.

Coming on the heels of pushing the balanced budget through the Senate, "it is a big, big win for Bob Dole," said Dole campaign manager Scott Reed. "The bottom line is that Bob Dole is the overwhelming front-runner," said Dole deputy campaign chairman Bill Lacy. "We are in control of our own fate."

But the Dole camp entered the event hoping a big win would create an air of inevitability about his nomination. Gramm and Alexander rushed to say Dole had failed that test, and more neutral observers on hand tended to agree, even as they said the race was still Dole's to lose.

"He did not lap the field," said Florida Republican Chairman Tom Slade.

The event was dubbed "Presidency III" because Florida Republicans have conducted straw polls twice before: in 1979, Ronald Reagan won with 36 percent early on his path to the GOP nomination.

In 1987, then-Vice President George Bush won handily, and religious broadcaster Pat Robertson's second place showing was early evidence of the growing strength of Christian conservatives in GOP affairs.



Sen. Bob Dole and his wife, Elizabeth, give thumbs-up following his speech to the Republican Presidency III Florida Straw Poll Convention Saturday in Orlando.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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## Dole wins, Gramm 2nd in straw poll

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the last competition between the candidates this year, and, given the diversity of Florida's Republican Party, was viewed as a credible barometer of support heading into the heavy campaigning for next year's early contests, beginning with the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary in February.

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Gramm and Alexander suggested otherwise. "This cannot be good news for Bob Dole — 67 percent voted against him," said Gramm.

Still, Gramm competed hard here, too, and Dole aides were quick to recall his pledges to rout rivals in the South.

Gramm predicted Alexander's third-place finish wouldn't be enough to revive stagnant fundraising, a potential threat to his staying power.

"It is a two-man race," Gramm said.

Begging to differ, Alexander said the contest ultimately would turn in his favor as Republican primary voters considered who has the best chance of beating President Clinton.

"The answers to our most serious problem are not in Washington, D.C., and neither is our best candidate against Bill Clinton," he said.

Like Gramm, Alexander suggested that Dole had proven himself a fragile front-runner by winning just one-third of the vote after spending heavily here.

"If I were Senator Dole I would be worried about the friendly tortoise," said Alexander. Even after placing third, Alexander had to be a tad embarrassed: A video shown during his speech bragged of having "over 900 committed delegates."

Dole, Gramm and Alexander courted the delegates for weeks with letters, videotapes, visits to the state and phone calls to their homes.

"It has been overwhelming, bordering on ridiculous at times," said delegate Darin Pierce.

Buchanan didn't have the money for all that, but banked on support from Christian Coalition members and other social conservatives well represented in the audience.

"It is about Iowa and New Hampshire for the Buchanan campaign," said Angela "Bay" Buchanan, who runs her brother's campaign. Buchanan's 301 votes left him a distant fourth with 9 percent.

Keyes was next with 266 votes, winning last-minute support with a fiery speech in which he said Republicans were foolish if they believed tax cuts and balanced budgets would cure America's social ills without also outlawing abortions and promoting two-parent families.

The event was dubbed "Presidency III" because Florida Republicans have conducted straw polls twice before: in 1979, Ronald Reagan won with 36 percent early on his path to the GOP nomination. In 1987, then-Vice President George Bush won handily, and religious broadcaster Pat Robertson's second-place showing was early evidence of the growing strength of Christian conservatives in GOP affairs.

For those well back in the pack, it was a chance to establish a foothold in Florida and hope for a breakthrough later. But after Keyes, no other candidate cracked 1 percent. Publisher Steve Forbes got 18 votes, to 13 for California Rep. Robert Dornan and five for Indiana Sen. Dick Lugar. Pennsylvania Sen. Arlen Specter, who has said he might soon be forced to suspend his campaign because of stalled fund-raising, decided at the last minute not to attend, making him ineligible for votes.

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The "Presidency III" contest was

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The Kansas City Star Sunday, November 19, 1995

## Dole takes victory in Florida poll, but Gramm takes heart

Close No. 2 finish for Texan is expected to bolster campaign.

By JAMES KUHNHENN  
Washington Correspondent

ORLANDO, Fla. — Sen. Bob Dole crossed the finish line a winner in Florida's straw poll Saturday. But Sen. Phil Gramm came in clinging to Dole's shirttails in a finish that caused no significant reshuffling of the presidential field.

Gramm's showing — 26 percent of the vote to Dole's 33 percent — helped reinvigorate a campaign that needed a strong second-place showing.

"This is a victory for us," an elated Gramm said Saturday evening. Dole's victory, an accepted fact for weeks, fell victim of the expectations game, which had shoved his threshold for success higher and higher in recent days.

"This doesn't shake up the race," said Dole deputy national chairman Bill Lacy. "It reinforces Dole's position as a strong leader."

The straw poll also had been portrayed as a test for former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander,

### The Florida straw poll

■ Dole	1,104	33%
■ Gramm	869	26
■ Alexander	749	23
■ Buchanan	301	9
■ Keyes	266	8
■ Forbes	18	1
■ Dornan	13	—
■ Lugar	5	—
■ Specter	0	—

who had been doggedly trying to gain on Gramm. On Friday, Alexander insisted he would be happy with a strong third-place finish.

After the ballots were in, his supporters seemed subdued, although Alexander had 23 percent of the vote.

"We've come a long way," he said later. "We're headed exactly in the right direction."

The straw poll results differed

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## Nation

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The Kansas City Star A-19

# Dole wins Florida poll, but Gramm gathers strength

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widely from a public opinion poll of Florida Republicans last week. That poll gave Dole 44 percent; Gramm 13 percent; Pat Buchanan 9 percent; and Alexander 5 percent.

Alexander adviser Tom Rath suggested that the discrepancy was bad news for Dole because his numbers dropped.

Lacy dismissed that analysis. He said delegates to state conventions tend to be more in tune politically and more conservative than the general Republican population.

Dole had mounted an intensive campaign in Florida, visiting the state regularly since June, when he established a full-time campaign operation in the state.

Florida voters are familiar with Dole of Kansas. He lasted long enough in previous presidential runs to mount campaigns in the state and has achieved high name recognition. He also owns a condominium in the state.

The state's demographics also are in his favor. Dole, a wounded World War II veteran, can count on the support of many of the state's retirees.

"There is a disproportionate number of people who still remember World War II," said former Florida Gov. Bob Martinez, a Dole supporter. "A number of them are delegates."

The Florida state convention, known as Presidency III, attracted

more than 3,300 delegates who had been barraged with solicitations in the last two months.

Dole courted delegates with Godiva chocolates and bath oils.

Alexander brought in country music star Crystal Gayle and entertained delegates at a free lunch with his own piano renditions of "The Tennessee Waltz" and "Chattanooga Choo Choo."

The campaign featured tough political exchanges, especially between Gramm and Dole. The Gramm camp also distributed a biographical sketch of Alexander that included details about a paddling he received as a school boy.

The Dole camp spent lavishly to woo delegates. Gramm aides insisted Dole spent about \$2 million in Florida in the months leading up to the weekend.

Lacy flatly denied that estimate but would not reveal the Dole campaign's actual expenditures.

"I wouldn't accept the premise that we spent a whole lot more money" than other candidates, he said.

The last time the campaigns devoted such resources to a political event was last summer in preparation for the Iowa straw poll, in which Gramm stunned Dole by tying him. That poll was highly unstructured, allowing people from outside Iowa to cast votes. Candidates skewed the results by busying in out-of-state supporters.

Embarrassed by the tie, Dole immediately said Florida's poll would

be more accurate and said it would be the premier political event of the fall.

The Florida poll operated under rigid controls. The delegates were selected in county caucuses in September and had to meet tough credentials checks during the weekend convention.

Further elevating the importance of the event was a televised debate Friday from Orlando that had been advertised as the first face-to-face exchange of nine of the 10 candidates. Businessman Morry Taylor was not invited to participate in the debate or the straw poll.

But the federal budget impasse intervened, tying up four senators seeking the presidency, including Gramm and Dole. They stayed in Washington and joined the debate by satellite, giving the confrontation a disembodied and disjointed quality.

All of the candidates, except Sen. Arlen Specter, showed up in Orlando on Saturday to make one last pitch to the delegates before the voting.

Without Specter, who received no votes, the assembly had a decidedly conservative tilt. During the debate Friday, Specter described himself as a social libertarian, a stance that places him to the left of the rest of the field.

Buchanan offered his distinct brand of conservatism and populism, decrying recent trade agreements, denouncing President Clin-

ton's character and condemning foreign aid.

Alexander, who has built his campaign on an image of being a Washington outsider, attacked Republican congressional reforms that place restrictions on what states can do with welfare and anti-crime money. His campaign also has developed a message that Alexander stands the best chance against Clinton.

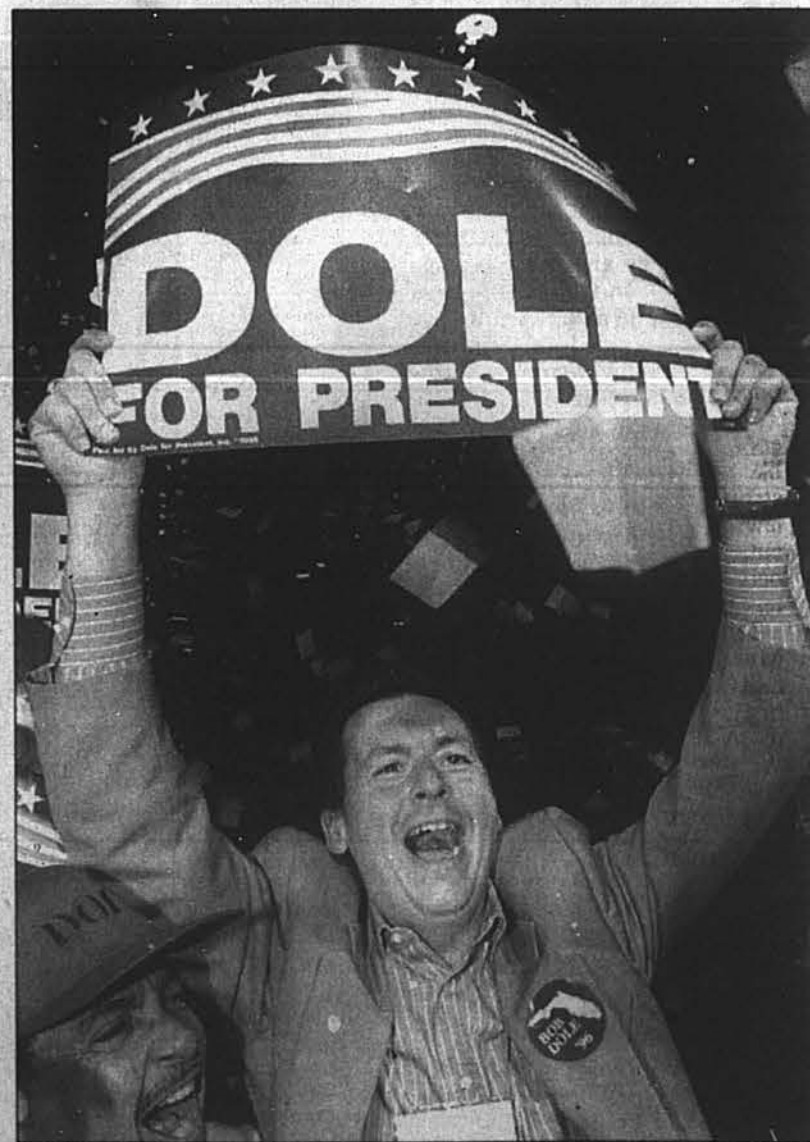
"He's licking his chops about running against one of our Washington senators," Alexander said of Clinton.

Dole, who on Friday defended his record against attacks from Republican opponents, devoted his Saturday speech to attacks on Clinton.

"This is his prescription for America," Dole said. "More affirmative action. Keep the ban on school prayer. Don't send welfare to the states. Nationalize health care. Politicize Medicare. Federalize education. Rig the results of our markets. But whatever you do, he says, don't criticize the government."

Supporters of Sen. Bob Dole celebrated Saturday after Dole won the Presidency III straw poll in Florida, capturing 33 percent of the vote.

The Associated Press



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## Dole finally wins a poll

By John King

AP Political Writer

ORLANDO, Fla. — Cementing his status as the Republican presidential front-runner Bob Dole won a major Florida straw poll Saturday after vowing to "return sanity and morality to the policies and programs of our government."

Texas Sen. Phil Gramm placed second and former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander third. Pat Buchanan was well back in fourth place, hurt by a strong performance by another anti-abortion candidate, radio host Alan Keyes.

In balloting by 3,355 Florida GOP activists, Dole placed first with 1,104 votes, or 33 percent. Gramm had 869 votes, or 26 percent; Alexander 749, or 22 percent.

"It is a big, big win for Bob Dole," said Dole campaign manager Scott Reed.

As the Dole campaign celebrated its victory, Gramm and Alexander suggested that the front-runner's margin hardly proved him invincible. They predicted the results would define the race as a three-way battle heading into the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary, the leadoff contests less than three months off.

"If I were Sen. Dole I would be worried about the friendly tortoise," said Alexander, who predicted he would gain steam as the race was framed as a choice between a former governor and two Washington insiders.

Dole, Gramm and Alexander invested heavily in the event, courting the delegates for weeks with letters, videotapes, visits to the state and phone calls to their homes. Buchanan didn't have the money to match their efforts, but was banking on support from Christian Coalition members and other social conservatives well represented in the diverse collection of GOP activists.

His 301 votes left him a distant fourth with 9 percent. Keyes was next with 266 votes, or 8 percent, after winning last-minute support with a fiery speech in which he said Republicans were foolish if they believed tax cuts and balanced budgets would cure America's social ills without also outlawing abortions and promoting two-parent families.

Before the voting, the candidates got 15 minutes each for one final pitch to the delegates, who were also in the convention hall

Friday night to watch the White House hopefuls debate. In the debate, the candidates mostly took issue with one another. But president Clinton was the favored target Saturday.

Making his case, Dole took credit for pushing tax cuts, a balanced budget and welfare reform through the Senate and said it was time for "a conservative Republican president whose vision and values and character make him fit to lead the people of the United States of America."