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Perry wins over voters – but not for Giuliani

Iowans like messenger more than his message

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DAVENPORT, Iowa – Gov. Rick Perry was barely into his first stop in a two-day defense of Rudy Giuliani when a woman at the Thunder Bay Grille had a question about immigration.

"Isn't New York a sanctuary city?" said Andrea Archer, a nurse practitioner from nearby Bettendorf.

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The Texas governor offered an elaborate answer about how the federal government had failed and how Texas had sought to stem the tide of illegal immigrants – and how Mr. Giuliani would solve the problem.



KEVIN SANDERS/Special Contributor
CTexas Gov. Rick Perry thinks Rudy Giuliani is No. 1 - and he spent two days telling Iowa Republicans just that.

Ms. Archer was not persuaded.

Her reaction was typical during Mr. Perry's first solo voyage this week on behalf of the Giuliani presidential campaign, which hopes the governor's conservative credentials will reassure voters uneasy about the former New York mayor's liberal record on social issues.

It's unclear how many Iowa Republicans the Texas governor won over. But if they were skeptical about the message, they seemed to like the messenger.

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"He's impressive; he's charismatic," Ms. Archer said after Mr. Perry's visit to the Scott County Republican Women's Club luncheon, where he made his way around the tables in a dark suit and blue tie, greeting members.

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At the Kiwanis noon meeting in Waterloo, GOP activist Charles Wheeland said he liked Mr. Perry's style.

"He is a politician, but he doesn't sound like a politician," said Mr. Wheeland.

Mr. Perry denies national political ambitions, although he is seen as an increasingly attractive party spokesman. He brought up the idea of himself as Mr. Giuliani's running mate – but quickly swatted down the possibility, saying he has "the best job in the world."

In his pitch to Iowa Republicans, Mr. Perry touted the former New York mayor as a leader tested by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and as the Republican most likely to beat Hillary Rodham Clinton.

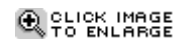
But Mr. Giuliani's support of gay rights, abortion rights and gun control is an obstacle for many conservative evangelicals who make up a key Republican voting bloc. Critics say sending Mr. Perry as a surrogate won't help Mr. Giuliani, who has struggled to gain footing in Iowa.

"Rick Perry coming to Iowa, I don't think is going to get Rudy Giuliani any mileage among social conservatives at all. None," said Steve Scheffler of the Iowa Christian Alliance. "They know Rudy is wrong on guns. They know he's wrong on marriage. They know he's wrong on life."

Iowa holds its presidential caucus Jan. 3, and voters here are serious about their first-in-the-nation nominating contest.

"This is an unusual group in American politics," said University of Iowa political scientist David Redlawsk. "Iowa caucusgoers are far more aware and involved in politics than pretty much anywhere else."

Across the fields of Iowa, political signs have sprung up among the light-brown stubble left from the harvest.



TV and radio are filled with political spots: Fred Thompson ("a true conservative") and Tom Tancredo ("jihadists are here and planning our destruction") and Texas congressman Ron Paul ("If we'd listened to Ron Paul, we wouldn't be mired down in Iraq").



KEVIN SANDERS/Special Contributor
Texas Gov. Rick Perry (center) spoke with voters Monday outside Rudy Giuliani's presidential campaign office in Iowa City, Iowa.

Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney has expended time and energy here and leads in the polls. Iowa caucusgoers want to see the candidates themselves, Mr. Redlawsk said.

"Surrogates can play a role because you can bring some people out if they're curious," he said. "But a lot of that is driven by whether anyone knows who that surrogate is."

For the most part, the voters Mr. Perry met during his six-city swing had never heard of him. One woman asked if he had "any history with the president."

Mr. Perry smiled, explained he had known George W. Bush since the late 1980s, served as lieutenant governor and succeeded Mr. Bush when he went to Washington.

He rarely mentioned Mr. Bush. Mostly, he denounced Washington as a place that has spent too much money and botched immigration – and how putting Mr. Giuliani in the White House would fix things.

There was the occasional miscue.

Mr. Perry asked about Calvin Coolidge's presidential library. It's Herbert Hoover's, who is still highly esteemed by Iowa Republicans.

He noted that famed University of Iowa football coach Hayden Fry was a Texas native. "Didn't he pass away?" said Mr. Perry.

Actually, he moved to Nevada.

It might have not been the best idea to begin the swing at a restaurant decorated like hunting lodge – with pictures of fish on the walls and a sculpture of a moose outside.

Mr. Perry avoided any mention of Mr. Giuliani's support of gun control, emphasizing instead his success as a crime-fighter. Nobody asked about gay rights. But everywhere, people wanted to talk about abortion and immigration.

At a roundtable with undecided voters at the community college in Peosta, Mr. Perry was interrupted when he advocated securing the border and providing noncitizen workers with a tamper-proof ID card.

"That sounds like amnesty," said Charles Burkhart.

But it was abortion – and Mr. Giuliani's support of abortion rights – that sparked the most passionate debate around the table.

"We're talking about our leader standing up and saying, 'I'm going to be pro-choice and pro-open marriage,' " said John Markham, a natural gas executive from Dubuque. "The social thing is a real, real hurdle."

Mr. Perry described himself as "the most anti-abortion governor in Texas history," but said he was satisfied by Mr. Giuliani's promise to appoint conservative judges to the Supreme Court.

"What about a veto of stem cells," said Colleen Pasnik. "Money for Planned Parenthood?"

Others jumped in, talking over one another.

"I can tell you I'm comfortable that on the vast majority of those issues, he is going to be ..." – and here Mr. Perry paused in search of the right word – "... a proper leader."

Silence.

Mr. Perry looked down at the table. "I'm doing a poor job of explaining," he said.

Afterward, Ms. Pasnik said that Mr. Perry didn't convince her, but he did make a good impression on his own behalf.

Mr. Markham agreed.

"He's got a good practical approach to governing that seems to be results-

oriented," he said. "I think he'd be a great selection for vice president."

Mr. Perry insists he has no aspirations for higher office and says he's happy being governor.

At Giuliani headquarters in Cedar Rapids, he recalled how Mr. Bush was so confident that a year before the 2000 presidential election he told Mr. Perry, "You're going to love being governor."

After being elected president, Mr. Bush called one day from the Oval Office.

"Laura was in Crawford. He talked for 30 minutes. I think he was a bit lonely," Mr. Perry recalled. "He said, 'You remember that conversation we had about governor of Texas being the best job in the world?' "

Mr. Perry said he did.

"Well," said the president, "it is."

DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

How Rick Perry and Rudy Giuliani differ on the social issues:

ABORTION

Perry: Opposes abortion rights and signed a bill requiring minors to get parental consent for an abortion.

Giuliani: Favors abortion rights but supports restrictions such as parental notification and a ban on late-term abortions.

IMMIGRATION

Perry: Favors tougher border security but opposes a fence. Signed a law allowing illegal immigrant students to pay in-state tuition as long as they're pursuing citizenship.

Giuliani: As mayor, sued over a law that allowed city employees to turn in illegal immigrants seeking services. Now favors a border fence and tighter security. Doesn't favor deporting illegal immigrants but says they should have to earn citizenship. Opposed the immigration overhaul bill that failed this

summer, saying it was a “mishmash” written for lawyers.

GAY MARRIAGE

Perry: Endorsed a constitutional amendment, approved by Texans in 2005, to ban gay marriage, a measure approved by Texans in 2005.

Giuliani: Says marriage should be defined as between a man and a woman but supports domestic partnerships and legal benefits for same-sex couples.

GUN CONTROL

Perry: Strongly supports gun owners' rights. Says Texans who have concealed-weapon permits should be allowed to carry their guns anywhere in the state, including churches, courthouses and bars.

Giuliani: As mayor, he lobbied Congress to outlaw most military-style assault weapons and joined a lawsuit by dozens of cities against the gun industry. Now says that he supports the right of individuals to bear arms and that states — and generally not the federal government — should decide whether to limit that right.

SOURCE: *Dallas Morning News* research