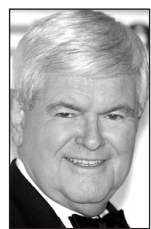


DECISION 2012 | IOWA

# Romney's Rivals Go On Attack

BY DAVID ESPO  
AP Special Correspondent



Gingrich

DES MOINES, Iowa — Displaying the confidence of a front-runner, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney swept into Iowa on Tuesday ahead of next week's caucuses, shrugged off criticism from his Republican rivals and unleashed an attack on President Barack Obama.

"Mr. President, you have now had your moment. We have seen the results. And now, Mr. President, it is our time," Romney said in excerpts of a speech released in advance by his campaign.

Romney spoke as his rivals vied in increasingly acerbic terms to emerge as his principal, conservative rival in the long march of primaries that will follow the caucuses. The Jan. 3 event is the official kick-off of the competition for delegates to next summer's Republican National Convention.

The strongest rhetoric of the day came from former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who said unequivocally he would not vote for Rep. Ron Paul if the Texan is the party's opponent against Obama next fall. In an interview on CNN, Gingrich said Paul, whose views verge on libertarianism, shows a "systematic avoidance of reality."

In a measure of the political stakes, the candidates and allied groups have spent more than \$12 million on television commercials to air

through caucus day next Tuesday. Romney, Texas Gov. Rick Perry and supporting groups account for nearly half the total, according to one estimate.

Most of Romney's rivals preceded him into the state during the day at the end of a holiday lull, seeking support in caucuses that are likely to dispatch one or more of them to a hasty campaign exit.

"My idea of gun control? Use both hands," said Perry, setting out on a bus tour in hopes of resurrecting his once-promising candidacy.

"I've been a conservative all my life," said Gingrich. He called Romney a "Massachusetts moderate ... who campaigned to the left of Teddy Kennedy."

In Dubuque, the first stop of a bus tour through the state, Gingrich said his own economic proposal for an optional flat-tax as well as the elimination of all capital gains taxes was a more pro-growth approach than Romney's prescription.

In a radio interview, former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum said Romney had "sort of gotten a pass" when he said in a recent debate he had done all he could as Massachusetts governor to block same-sex marriages in the state.

Rep. Michele Bachmann of Minnesota had a

bus of her own, and saw herself as the rightful Romney alternative.

"I am the only consistent conservative in the race and the only candidate with the proven leadership and experience to create more American jobs and repair our economy," she wrote in an email seeking donations for her underfunded candidacy.

Bachmann, Perry and Gingrich have all spent time atop the Iowa public opinion polls in recent months, either alone or alongside Romney, only to fall back.

Recent soundings suggest Texas Rep. Ron Paul is Romney's likeliest threat in Iowa. He is due in the state on Wednesday.

A conservative with libertarian leanings, Paul commands strong allegiance from his own supporters but appears to have little potential to expand his appeal and emerge as a serious challenger for the nomination.

Unlike his rivals and most Republican voters, he says the federal government should have no authority to ban abortion.

And Paul was alone among the GOP contenders in a recent debate in saying the United States should not consider preemptive military action to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, an issue of significant importance to Israel. He warned against jumping the gun, adding, "That's how we got into that useless war in Iraq."

# Firm To Close 100-Plus Sears, Kmart Stores

NEW YORK (AP) — After a disastrous holiday shopping season, the parent company of Sears and Kmart will close at least 100 stores to raise cash — a move that sparked speculation about whether the 125-year-old retailer can avoid a death spiral fed by declining sales and deteriorating stores.

Sears Holdings Corp., a pillar of American retailing that famously began with a mail-order catalog in the 1880s, declared Tuesday that it would no longer prop up "marginally performing" locations. The company pledged to refocus its efforts on stores that make money.

Sears' stock quickly plunged, dropping 27 percent.

The closings are the latest and most visible move by Eddie Lampert, the hands-on chairman who has struggled to reverse the company's fortunes.

As rivals Wal-Mart and Target Corp. spruced up stores in recent years, Sears Holdings confronted falling sales and perceptions of dowdy merchandise.

Some analysts wondered if it was already too late, questioning whether the retailer can afford to upgrade stores as it burns through its cash reserves.

The sales weakness "begins and some would argue ends with Sears' reluctance to invest in stores and service," Credit Suisse analyst Gary Balter wrote in a note to clients.

"There's no reason to go to Sears," added New York-based independent retail analyst Brian Sozzi. "It offers a depressing shopping experience and uncompetitive prices."

Spokesman Chris Brathwaite said no one had determined which stores would close or how many jobs might be cut. He disputed

doubts about the company's survival, noting it still has \$2.9 billion available under its credit lines.

"While our operating performance has not met our expectations, we have significant assets," including inventory, real estate and valuable proprietary brands such as Kenmore and Craftsman, Brathwaite said.

Sears and Kmart were both retail pioneers. Sears' catalog and department stores were fixtures of American life stretching back to the 19th century before being hurt in recent years by competition from steep discounters and by missteps that included forays into financial services and the decision to sell off a lucrative credit card business.

Kmart helped create the discount-store format that Wal-Mart Stores Inc. came to dominate.

## Consumer Confidence Surges In December

NEW YORK (AP) — Americans are gaining faith that the economy is on the upswing.

An improving job outlook helped the Consumer Confidence Index soar to the highest level since April and near a post-recession peak, according to a monthly survey by The Conference Board.

The second straight monthly surge coincided with a decent holiday shopping season for retailers, though stores had to heavily discount to attract shoppers.

The rise in confidence jibes with a better outlook for the overall economy. An Associated Press poll of three dozen private, corporate and academic economists projects U.S. economic growth will speed up in 2012, if it isn't derailed by upheavals in Europe.

But confidence is still far below where it is in a healthy economy. And Americans' mood could sour again if the debt crisis in Europe deepens and spreads to the U.S. Shoppers still face big obstacles — higher costs on household basics and a still-slumping housing market.

## Mass Protests Erupt In Besieged Syrian City

BEIRUT (AP) — Tens of thousands of defiant Syrian protesters thronged the streets of Homs Tuesday, calling for the execution of President Bashar Assad shortly after his army pulled its tanks back and allowed Arab League monitors in for the first time to the city at the heart of the anti-government uprising.

The pullback was the first sign the regime was complying with the League's plan to end the 9-month-old crackdown on mostly unarmed and peaceful protesters.

Yet amateur video released by activists showed forces firing on protesters even while the monitors were inside the city. One of the observers walked with an elderly man who pointed with his cane to a fresh pool of blood on the street that he said had been shed by his son, killed a day earlier.

The man, wearing a red-and-white checkered headdress, then called for the monitor to walk ahead to "see the blood of my second son" also killed in the onslaught.

"Where is justice? Where are the Arabs?" the old man shouted in pain.

## Officials: Christmas Fire Caused By Embers

STAMFORD, Conn. (AP) — A Christmas morning fire that killed a couple and three of their grandchildren was accidentally started by fireplace embers that had been discarded near a first-floor entryway, officials said Tuesday.

The officials also said it wasn't clear if the home had working smoke detectors. Stamford Mayor Michael Pavia called the fire a "tragic accident," not the result of foul play.

Sometime between 3 a.m. and 3:30 a.m., a friend staying in the home put fireplace ashes in a bag and left it either in or outside a mud-room and trash enclosure attached to the rear of the house, said Barry Callahan, Stamford's fire marshal. The fire was reported just after 4:40 a.m.

"The fire entered the house quickly and spread throughout the first floor and up two interior vertical openings, trapping the occupants on the upper floors," Callahan said.

Officials described a frantic scene after rescuers arrived early Sunday.

## Yemen's Leader Causes Headaches In D.C.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration is weighing an unprecedented diplomatic act — whether to bar a friendly president from U.S. soil.

American officials were evaluating on Tuesday an awkward request from Yemeni strongman and longtime U.S. counterterrorism partner Ali Abdullah Saleh. Saleh has said he plans to come to the United States for medical treatment for injuries suffered in a June assassination attempt, and he has asked for a U.S. visa for entry to the country. Fearful of appearing to harbor an autocrat with blood on his hands, the Obama administration was trying to ensure that Saleh visits only for medical care and doesn't plan to stay, U.S. officials said.

Washington's hesitation reflects the shifting alliances and foreign policy strategy prompted by a year of upheaval in the Arab world. Saleh has served as an American ally against al-Qaida and will soon transfer power under a U.S.-backed deal with Yemen's opposition aimed at ending months of instability. He isn't subject to any U.S. or international sanctions.

## Babysitter Fatally Beat, Dismembered Girl

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (AP) — A babysitter and trusted neighbor has confessed that he bludgeoned a 9-year-old Indiana girl to death with a brick then dismembered her, hiding her head, hands and feet at a home where he was staying and dumping the rest of her remains nearby, police said Tuesday.

Allen County sheriff's investigators said in an affidavit that 39-year-old Michael Plumadore admits he killed Aiahna Lemmon on Thursday.

According to the affidavit, Plumadore told police that after beating Aiahna to death on the front steps of the home in the early morning hours, he stuffed her body into trash bags and hid her in the freezer at the home in a rundown trailer park in Fort Wayne. He said he later chopped up her body with a hacksaw and stuffed her remains into freezer bags.

Police said Plumadore told them he had hidden Aiahna's head, feet and hands at the trailer and discarded her other remains at a nearby business. Police obtained a warrant to search the trailer on Monday and found the body parts.

Authorities didn't say Tuesday why Plumadore killed the child, but Sheriff Ken Fries said investigators suspected Plumadore was involved since soon after she was reported missing Friday night.

## OBITUARIES

### Antonette Lange

NORFOLK, Neb. — Antonette G. Lange, age 78 of Norfolk, Nebraska and formerly of Hartington, Nebraska, died on Monday, December 26, 2011 at Faith Regional Health Services in Norfolk.

Mass of Christian Burial will be on Thursday, December 29, 2011 at 10:30 a.m. at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Hartington with Rev. Timothy Lange and Deacon Mike Stratman officiating. Burial will be in the St. Michael's Cemetery in Hartington.

Visitation will be on Wednesday from 4:00 pm to 8:00 p.m. with a Vigil Service at 7:00 p.m. at the Wintz Funeral Home in Hartington. Visitation will begin one hour prior to services on Thursday at the church.

To send online condolences please visit [www.wintzfuneralhome.com](http://www.wintzfuneralhome.com).

Pallbearers will be Nathan Stratman, Justin Eskens, Adam Lange, Tyler Eskens, Nicole Kunzie and



Lange

Kora Kunzie.

Antonette was the daughter of Gilbert and Coletta (Maly) Steffen born September 22, 1933 at the family residence in rural Crofton, Nebraska. She grew up in the Constance area and attended St. Joseph's Catholic Church and school until 1947. She then moved with her family to rural Wakonda, South Dakota and graduated from Wakonda High School in 1952. She worked at the Wakonda bank from June 1952 to August 1956. Antonette married Quintin Lange on October 8, 1956 at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Wakonda, South Dakota. To this union four children were born: Cynthia Rose, Tamara Anne, Bradley Joseph and Beth Audrey. She and Quintin farmed 8 miles south of Yankton, South Dakota until 1959 when they

moved and farmed northwest of Hartington. They resided there until the time of Quintin's death on February 25, 1987. At that time Antonette moved into Hartington and lived there until moving to Norfolk in 2006.

She was a member of the Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Guild, Christian Mothers and Catholic Daughters of America in Hartington. She was a former member of the Solitaires. Antonette was instrumental in having the Sunday Mass videotaped and played at the nursing home and she also did a lot of volunteer work there. She enjoyed playing cards.

Antonette is survived by 4 children: daughters Cynthia (Mike) Stratman Terre Haute, Indiana; Tamara (Ron) Eskens Fordyce, Nebraska; son Bradley (Kandi) Lange Pierce, Nebraska; daughter Beth (KC) Kunzie Norfolk, Nebraska; 12 grandchildren, 19 great grandchildren, 4 brothers Bill (Bonnie) Steffen, Ogden, Iowa; Bernard (Ruth) Steffen, Wakonda, South Dakota;

Leon (Linda) Steffen Holiday Island, Arkansas; Roman (Ruth) Steffen, Fordyce, Nebraska; 3 brothers-in-law John Carpenter of Pahump, Nevada; Luverne (Bud) Lange and Rev. Timothy Lange both of Yankton, South Dakota; 2 sisters-in-law Verda Cardwell St. George, Utah and Audrey Jonas Littleton, Colorado.

She was preceded in death by her husband Quintin at age 59, her parents, 2 sisters Ailene Carpenter, Angela Hill, 3 brothers-in-law Albert Hill, Les Cardwell, George Jonas, a sister-in-law Mary Lange and 2 nephews John and Christopher Steffen.

Yankton Press & Dakotan  
December 28, 2011



Hartington \* Coleridge \* Crofton  
203 W. Franklin, PO Box 505  
Hartington, Nebraska 68739

### Bernice Nissen

SIoux FALLS — Bernice Angeline (Sivertson) Nissen, age 95, passed away Monday, December 26, 2011 at Good Samaritan Society Nursing Home in Sioux Falls, SD.

Bernice was born April 20, 1916 to Bert and Eline (Vevang) Sivertson at home in rural Volin, SD. She was the eldest of nine children. Bernice was baptized and later confirmed at the Zion Lutheran Church in 1931. Norwegian was spoken in the family home in the earlier years; she learned to speak English when she went to school. She continued to speak, read and write Norwegian until her death.

On October 12, 1935, she married Henry Carl Nissen. They raised three children in the rural Volin and Irene area. They were members of the Trondhjem



Nissen

Lutheran Church, Volin, SD.

She loved listening to music, playing cards, bingo, doing word find puzzles, as well as keeping in touch with her relatives in Norway. Her happiest and most treasured moments were times spent with her husband, children and many grandchildren.

Grateful for sharing her life are her three children, Mary Ellen Nielsen of Sioux Falls, SD, Robert Burnell (Pam) Nissen of Fordyce, NE, and James Henry (Deb) Nissen, of Steinbach, Manitoba; 10 grandchildren, 20 great-grandchildren, 5 step-great-grandchildren, 8 great-great-grandchildren, 1 sister, Alice (Louie) Larson, and 3 brothers

Leslie (Marie) Sivertson, Olin Sivertson, and Harold (Sharyn) Sivertson.

Bernice was preceded in death by her husband, Henry, her parents, 1 grandson, Kevin Knudsen, two brothers, Arnold Sivertson, Kenneth Sivertson, 2 sisters, Elsie Holsether and Sylvia Hagen.

Funeral services will be held at Trondhjem Lutheran Church, rural Volin, SD on Thursday, December

29, 2011 at 10:30 am. Burial will follow in Trondhjem Cemetery.

Visitation, with the family present, will begin on Wednesday, December 28, 2011 from 5 to 7 pm at Hansen Funeral Home in Irene with a short prayer service at 6:30pm.

For obituary and online condolences visit [hansenfuneralhome.com](http://hansenfuneralhome.com)

Yankton Press & Dakotan  
December 28, 2011

## IN REMEMBRANCE

### Buzz Mann

11:00 AM, Wednesday  
United Church of Christ  
Yankton



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402.254.6547

## Congratulations



### 5 Star Communications Ribbon Cutting

The Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce Ambassador Committee hosted a ribbon cutting for 5 Star Communications located at 210 West 3rd St. 5 Star Communications is a corporation owning the radio signals of FM106.3, a Classic Hits Format, and AM 1570 ESPN Radio. We are locally operated and committed to 5 Star Communication excellence and a local presence. Jeff Fuller, owner and Simon Fuller manager can be reached at (605)665-2600 or [kvht.com](mailto:kvht.com) or e-mail to [sfuller@kvht.com](mailto:sfuller@kvht.com) or their office hours are M-F 8-5 p.m., 8-12 Saturdays.

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