

Romney gets closer to nomination, looks to general election

By David Bartholomew
via uWire

Tuesday night's Republican Primaries in Wisconsin, Maryland and Washington, D.C., all but supported the narrative that Mitt Romney is going to be the Republican Presidential nominee for the 2012 elections.

By sweeping the three primaries, Romney has pulled ever closer to the required amount of delegates needed to officially claim the party's nomination, even though the other three Republican candidates vow to continue their campaigns.

So now the big question is, where does Romney go from here? Given President Barack Obama's latest speech to the Associated Press, in which Obama called out Romney by name, it is becoming ever clearer that the Obama campaign is preparing for a general election against the former Massachusetts governor.

"Romney will definitely make the race close," said Steffen Schmidt, university professor of political science. "It will be close because presidential races always close up no matter what. Americans are very divided. It's not a 60-40 split, it's like a 49-51 split among

the electorate."

Indeed this so-called "divided electorate" could prove to be an interesting general election in which Romney will put his successes as a governor and businessman against Obama's first term in office.

"Romney's pros are he has a strong record on economic issues and he has a lot of money to work with," said David Peterson, associate professor of political science. "But he hasn't done a good job of defining who he is. The media has basically decided who he is. ... He also has trouble connecting to people."

Schmidt echoed Peterson's concerns about Romney while also mentioning Romney's vulnerability to the conservative base of the Republican Party, even though it appears many conservative Republicans are beginning to accept the idea of Romney as their nominee.

"Romney is seen as the Republican who can get the independents to vote for him," Schmidt said. "However, his biggest problem is getting the conservatives in his party to support him."

Schmidt used what he called "The Schmidt Analogy" to describe conservative Republicans' feelings toward Romney. According to Schmidt, conservative voters want to date and party with a person like Rick Santorum, who has positioned himself as the conservative alternative to Romney, but they know that in the end they will want to marry someone like Romney because of his stability and electability, despite his perceived moderate views. This analogy appears to be proving true as more and more conservative voters and politicians reluctantly voice their support for Romney.

"Romney also has the support of the

establishment of the GOP," Schmidt said. "And many Republican voters are beginning to say he is the most electable."

If Romney does end up becoming the Republican nominee, the next big question among voters and political pundits is who is going to be his running mate? Although it may be too early to speculate, there has been substantial talk of potential candidates, all of whom bring different voting blocs to his campaign.

Some speculate that Romney may choose a woman vice-president in order to quell the falling poll numbers the Republican Party is receiving from women voters. Others say Romney may pick a Hispanic running mate considering it is the fastest-growing demographic in the country and overwhelmingly votes Democratic in elections.

"I have no idea at this point," Peterson said. "There aren't many Republican women who are nationally prominent."

Peterson went on to say that picking someone like Florida Senator Marco Rubio, a Tea Party favorite of Cuban descent, might also not quite get the job done.

"Rubio will appeal to Cuban Americans, who already vote Republican anyway," Peterson said. "But I don't know if he will make a strong enough appeal to Latinos in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona."

Regardless of who Romney picks, assuming he locks up the Republican nomination, there is a general consensus this will be a very close general election come November. Candidates of both parties will have substantial financial backing as well as thousands of foot soldiers to campaign on their behalf. Presidential elections will take place Nov. 6.

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