



(AP) Turnout has generally been low for Minnesota's Republican presidential caucus, and that appears to be no different in the latest straw poll. The GOP says Tuesday's contest drew about 47,800 participants with about 95 percent of precincts reporting. Four years ago turnout was nearly 63,000 after all precincts were counted. Rick Santorum finished comfortably ahead of Ron Paul Tuesday with Mitt Romney a distant third and Newt Gingrich last. Romney, the front-runner for the nomination, won in Minnesota four years ago by casting himself as the conservative alternative to John McCain. It proved to be a winning strategy in a state where party processes are traditionally dominated by deeply conservative activists. The results are a blow for Romney who had the help of former Gov. Tim Pawlenty in Minnesota.