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# One nation under Giuliani

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Despite a resume that includes tackling organized crime as a U.S. attorney and reforming welfare in the Big Apple, Rudy Giuliani might always be remembered for his response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

To many people, he was a symbol of New York's — and America's — resilience in the face of its most devastating attack on domestic soil.

But is that enough to make a president?

National polls suggest so, with the first major GOP primaries still a year away.

Yet Giuliani's critics — including fellow Republican frontrunners John McCain and Mitt Romney — are not shy about pointing out the ex-mayor's positions on social issues, which might be more liberal than what attracts conservative voters.

Battleground state

And since social conservatives make up the bedrock of the Upstate, Giuliani could have a tough time in this 2008 battleground state.

But he does have Colonial Trust President Barry Wynn, a major GOP fundraiser, on his side in Spartanburg. And the Palladian Group, headed by former state education superintendent candidate Karen Floyd, is working with Giuliani's camp on some state events.

While Giuliani has never been governor or served in Congress, he does have the potential to raise money — a lot of it — and win votes.

Some early polls show Giuliani leading Democratic Sens. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Should he win the GOP nomination, his closest rival, those polls show, would be former Sen. John Edwards.

Giuliani is “the kind of guy who can do the two things we have to do in 2008 to win,” Wynn said.

“No. 1, he makes it a 50-state campaign. There will be no more red states/blue states if he’s the nominee. He’s the only Republican who can campaign throughout the country.

“The second reason is that he rebuilds the Republican brand. Much like Ronald Reagan did in 1980, he is unique in the sense that he has not been part of Congress for 30 years, and not part of a group that some people feel like turns the brand. He brings a freshness like Reagan did in 1980.”

But courting social conservatives in the South is “going to be a problem for him,” said Deborah Strober, who co-wrote a new biography, “Giuliani: Flawed or Flawless?”

“Things are so fluid,” she said. “If there is, God forbid, another terrorist attack, they could say, ‘Yes, we need him. Forget about social issues.’ If it stays relatively quiet, though, they (social issues) might be more important.”

Star power

Some national polls put Giuliani 10 to 12 points ahead of McCain among likely Republican voters. Two South Carolina-specific polls, one from December and one from late January, show him trailing Giuliani in the Palmetto State.

So far, it’s hard to tell how much of his popularity is star power — that hero image etched in people’s minds — and how much is dedicated support.

Clemson University political science professor Adam Warber believes that Giuliani has not yet “been put under the microscope.”

“Some of the average voters who are really conservative probably don’t understand where these candidates stand, because they’re not really talking about them nationally,” Warber said.

“Giuliani has been quite effective at working at the grassroots level and staying out of the national spotlight. I don’t think voters necessarily understand where he stands on some of the issues. They look at that hero image of him, of 9/11.”

Wynn calls it the seven-minute rule: If someone calls the White House and says that terrorists are going to attack in seven minutes, who do you want to answer the phone?

For some, Rudy is right.

Forget that he’s OK with civil unions between homosexual couples, they say.

Forget that he limited gun rights in New York City. Forget that he once said — and this reminder was circulated in a mass e-mail to Republican Party leaders across the state earlier this month — that he’d help pay for his daughter to have an abortion if she decided that was the right thing for her to do.

Not everyone, though, is willing to forget.

“Those positions have concerned us,” said Oran Smith, president of the conservative Palmetto Family Council, which doesn’t endorse candidates.

“We think it’s important for any candidate to support issues like the right to bear arms, and that the definition of marriage is between one man and one woman, and the idea that abortion should be rare in this country. Generally, some of the positions that (Giuliani) has taken, we don’t share.”

Smith said three GOP presidential hopefuls — McCain, Romney and Mike Huckabee — helped the Palmetto Family Council raise money for its South Carolina marriage amendment campaign in 2006.

That amendment, which defines marriage in the state constitution as the union between one man and one woman, passed overwhelmingly.

Enter Giuliani, who in between two of his marriages, once stayed with a homosexual couple.

Enter Giuliani, who has said that while he is against abortion, he believes the choice to have one should be a woman’s.

Enter Giuliani, who believes large cities should have the right to restrict handguns in an urban environment.

“One of the things he’s tried to do at least is to talk about other issues — issues other than abortion, gun control, gay rights,” Warber said. “He’s trying to talk about other things that might interest them, like dealing with crime and dealing with terrorism. He’s trying to downplay that.”

But Giuliani will have to talk about these things sooner rather than later. An early litmus test might be a GOP presidential primary debate in Columbia in May.

Some S.C. Republicans feel the New Yorker will win over social conservatives.

“Giuliani will do quite well,” said Spartanburg County GOP Treasurer Bill May.

“Yes, he brings some baggage with him that he’s going to have to explain. However, I think that if his answers are straightforward and they feel that what he had to do in New York City was to run as a social liberal in order to win, then they will give him the benefit of the doubt. After all, he is America’s Mayor. And 9/11 gave him a lot of credibility.”

State GOP Chairman Katon Dawson said: “His appeal in South Carolina is much like his appeal in the country. He has tremendous name ID. He was an outstanding mayor of New York. And, in my opinion, I see Giuliani as a very serious candidate, because the nature of campaigns is ‘Do I know you and do I like you?’

The rest of it will be where he is on social issues, economic issues, the war on terror — basically, how the country feels.”

Wynn believes that some of Giuliani’s opponents are “kind of stretching and exaggerating” his positions.

On abortion, for instance, Wynn pointed out that Giuliani “hates the procedure,” and would always advise against it, but that he doesn’t think a law prohibiting it is enforceable.

That stance doesn’t have social conservatives cheering, but it might not push them away either.

Alice Armantrout, assistant secretary of the county GOP, says she is “up in the air” between supporting either Giuliani or Romney.

“First of all, (Giuliani) is very well respected generally speaking, and showed his true colors during and after 9/11. I respect him for all of that,” she said.

“On specific topics, let’s say abortion, he is pro-choice, but he has also made a statement that he is not going to force his feelings on other people, and would not push that. So, I personally think that is OK. We all have our right to our opinion.”

The nudging, (as opposed to the hard pushing of some candidates) could bode well for America’s Mayor.

“What separates (Giuliani) from a lot of candidates is that he doesn’t go out and necessarily force his views on people,” Warber said. “He can get along with folks on both sides of the aisle. He’s not going to berate conservatives for not supporting him on these particular views. He’s going to say, ‘I’ve got these views, and they’re a little different than yours, but we can work together.’ ”

The road ahead

The Giuliani camp deferred questions about the former mayor’s strategy in South Carolina to Wynn. Wynn already has spoken to several groups of activists about what he believes are the merits of such a campaign.

Giuliani “will have a chance to address the issues that are concerning people. I don’t think anything’s disqualified him yet,” Dawson said.

Political pundits like to say that primary voters typically lean to the more extreme of their party’s ideology — most GOP primary voters are more conservative than the average general election voter; most Democratic primary voters, more liberal.

That could make the social conservative vote here all the more important to Giuliani and all of the Republican contenders. (Dawson points out that “from Newberry up, if you don’t win, you won’t win the state.”)

So does Giuliani have what it takes?

“I would think he does,” Spartanburg County GOP Chairman Rick Beltram said.

“What it’s going to come down to (is) a real comparison between Romney and Giuliani, because they are somewhat the same on the business side. There’s an interesting dichotomy: You hear about social issues in the media, but then you talk to people in a business setting and abortion never comes up. What comes up is, ‘What are we going to do with this awful budget deficit? What are we going to do with the war?’ ”

Beltram attended a Columbia meeting with Giuliani earlier this month.

Key points to the former mayor’s presentation were terrorism, the economy and education, Beltram said.

He talked about the importance of cutting taxes, and how he would tell every federal agency to assume their budgets would be cut. He didn’t talk about school choice, but he did talk about putting teachers on a merit system, which would reward better performing teachers with higher pay and weed poorly performing teachers out of the system.

Giuliani will be at Wynn's house in Spartanburg for a private fundraiser on Wednesday, a day before the county GOP's annual President's Day Banquet, which features Romney as keynote speaker. That banquet also will include an issues caucus for voters to rank what's important to them — and what they think presidential contenders should address.

“Giuliani and Romney are going to come out a lot stronger than members of the Congress. Anyone who is a senator or congressman has been part of an organization that has not reduced the size of government. Anyone who has been a governor or mayor of a big city I feel is much more equipped as a CEO to also be CEO of the United States,” Beltram said.

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