

# Santorum, the Dark Horse

Rick Santorum, more than most presidential candidates, enjoys stumping in small Iowa towns. He'll gladly spend hours at VFW halls and in church basements, even if only a handful of people are present. These trail gatherings remind him of his childhood in western Pennsylvania, where he grew up in a blue-collar neighborhood. His parents, traditional Roman Catholics, socialized in similar settings and, as employees of the Veterans Administration, encouraged their seven children to celebrate their faith and country. During the Vietnam era, Santorum's father, an Italian immigrant, would often bring his son to work, introducing him to wounded soldiers.

On the campaign trail over the past month, Santorum has frequently spoken about his youth. Yes, he served in the United States Senate from 1995 until he lost his 2006 reelection bid. But these days, in the eleventh hour of the primary, it's his roots and principles, his scrappy persona, that are stirring renewed interest in his candidacy. In the latest Public Policy Polling survey, his Iowa support has risen, hitting 10 percent, a mere four points behind Newt Gingrich with less than two weeks until the caucuses. Those numbers are close to those of other second-tier contenders, but Santorum has something they do not: upward momentum.

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