

The Romney/Perry Feud

Political feuds are entertaining, especially when they involve presidential contenders. Thus, the alleged bad blood between Texas Governor Rick Perry and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney is worth examining, because those two guys are currently the frontrunners to challenge President Obama next year.

According to the reporting by the Boston Globe, there are two issues in play. First, back in 2002 when Mitt Romney was rescuing the Salt Lake City Olympic games from chaos, Rick Perry wanted the Boy Scouts of America to be named the official volunteers of the games. Romney said no because most scouts are under 18, the minimum age required to work at the Olympics.

Perry, however, thought there was a gay component to Romney's decision, since the scouts do not accept declared homosexuals as Scoutmasters. Romney denied that.

Then, in 2006, Romney traveled to Texas as the Chairman of the Republican Governor's Association. He met with Perry, who was furious that a man named Alex Castellanos had been hired as an advisor by Romney. It seems that Castellanos was also advising Carole Keeton Strayhorn, who was running against Perry for governor. It was a chilly meeting.

On paper, those incidents look small, and they are. But now Romney and Perry find themselves in a "high noon"-type situation; soon they will have a showdown, most likely in a debate situation. At the end of the primary season, only one will be standing tall.

I say that because there is not much chance that Michelle Bachmann, currently running third in the polls, will gain enough traction to threaten the governors. The Congresswoman is waging an energetic campaign, but big money Republicans are

looking for "gravitas" this time around, not ideology. Those running the GOP well understand that economics will decide the next presidential election.

Both Romney and Perry are well positioned in the economic area. While Romney was governor of Massachusetts, a liberal bastion, state bonds received an upgrade by Standard and Poors, the agency that just downgraded the USA.

Perry's economic story is solid as well. Texas leads the league in job creation in the teeth of a stubborn recession, and tort reform has attracted major medical concerns and personnel to the state. So, on balance, both governors match up well with Mr. Obama in the economic arena.

Perry is counting on his conservative credibility to hold his poll lead over Romney, who is suspect in some right-wing precincts because of the Massachusetts health care law. You may remember that President Obama gave Romney credit for passing the law which, of course, was like putting a nail in the governor's shoe.

The Romney-Perry matchup should be interesting, especially if it gets vicious. Both men are capable of slinging some mud. And with the hair situations they both have, that could get messy.