

# OUTSIDER POLITICIANS

## *steal the show this time*

By: Alex Hanson

Call it the year of outsider candidates.

First it was Donald Trump's summer full of shenanigans that filled the news; then it was Carly Fiorina's breakout performance in the first Republican debate; and now voters look on as candidates who defy their party's establishment sit atop the polls heading into February's Iowa caucus.

And it's happening on both sides.

Republicans have chosen Trump as their top choice in almost every poll since the first Republican debate in August. On the Democratic side, the once-strong frontrunner Hillary Clinton's lead continues to dwindle as a self-described democratic-socialist inches closer, coming within single digits in Iowa polls.

"There's a concern that politicians are just not getting the job done," said Tim Hagle, a University of Iowa political science professor who keeps close tabs on the presidential race in Iowa and beyond.

"We've had divided government at the federal level, and that tends to keep things from getting done."

Hagle said in both parties, voters are fed up with politics and those who have been made a career out of it.

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## REPUBLICAN OUTSIDERS

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### TRUMP

Trump, the business and real estate mogul who often touts a \$10 billion net worth – although a Bloomberg News analysis disputes that number and says it's closer to \$3 billion – is not afraid to cause controversy.

There were his comments about illegal immigrants at his announcement speech in New York, referring to some as "criminals," "drug dealers" and "rapists."

He caused an uproar on stage at the Family Leadership Summit in Ames when he questioned the war record of U.S. Sen. John McCain. Trump said he likes veterans who weren't captured during war.

He gave out former fellow Republican presidential candidate Lindsey Graham's cell phone number at an event in South Carolina this summer.

He tweets insults daily at other candidates and celebrities.

He's had an ongoing feud with FOX News anchor Megyn Kelly following the first debate.

The list goes on.

But while he may be a controversial figure that dominated the news



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for months, his poll numbers showed that the voters like something about him. A week before he announced his candidacy, a FOX News poll showed him with support from just 5 percent of national voters.

A month after his campaign launch, his numbers had more than doubled according to another FOX News poll – now he was sitting at 11 percent support.

Jump forward another month, and he had support from 24 percent of voters nationally – now in first place, according to a poll from ABC News and The Washington Post.

“Trump comes across as brash, and he is seen as a bulldog – he does attack issues and people head on,” said Mack Shelley, chair of Iowa State’s political science department. “He’s not shy, and I think there’s a persona in the general public where people like that kind of behavior.”

His numbers soared after he announced he would run for president. At his peak in late August and early September, several national polls conducted by CNN/ORC, ABC News/Washington Post and Monmouth University showed Trump with 30 percent support from likely Republican voters – way ahead of any competition.

“Every single day the news media says he’s peaked, but so far, he’s held up because he’s so disrespectful of political correctness – but a lot of people think and wish they could say what he’s saying,” said Steffen Schmidt, an Iowa State political science professor. “He’s kind of reflecting that particular frustration people have.”

“Plus he’s an entertainer. People love to be entertained,” he said.

## FIORINA

The two other real “outsiders” may not match Trump’s outspoken style, but they’ve caught the attention of voters.

Fiorina struggled early on. She barely registered in most polls until mid-August after the first Republican debate where she stood with the other lower-tier candidates.

Her performance was widely regarded as a breakout moment, and she would go on to “graduate” to the primetime debate in September, although recently she has moved back to the JV debates.

“I’ve liked her for awhile,” said Krista Klocke, an Iowa State senior in speech communication. “When I listen to her, I see that she commands respect, and she is respectable. She is somebody who to me strikes me as being very truthful and very principled.”

Besides serving as an adviser to 2008 Republican presidential nominee John McCain and an unsuccessful run for a U.S. Senate seat from California in 2008, Fiorina’s had no experience in politics – only private sector experience in business.

“It’s that outsider appeal, but the appeal she has to a certain extent is business experience,” Hagle said.

Fiorina was the first woman to serve as CEO of a Fortune 100 company when she took over at Hewlett-Packard in 1999. After overseeing a merger with Compaq, Fiorina laid off roughly 30,000 employees – a figure that opponents have used to attack her.

In 2005, the HP board of directors forced Fiorina out of her role as HP.

“I don’t think it hurts her at all,” Klocke said.

She added she thinks that Fiorina did the best under the circumstances presented and that her time at HP makes her stronger.

“I don’t get the impression that Trump was in that CEO role like Fiorina,” Hagle said.

“She hasn’t always been successful, and she gets some criticism on how she handled HP, but I think she’s learned for that. Plus, she’s already run a political campaign before; granted it was unsuccessful for senate in California.”

Fiorina has had some run-ins with Trump, and it showed up center-stage at the second Republican debate on Sept. 16, when Trump refused to apologize, but was forced to walk back comments he made in a Rolling Stone magazine interview.

“Look at that face! Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president?” Trump said in the interview.

Fiorina may have gotten the biggest applause of the night at the debate, when she responded to a question, saying, “I think women all over this country heard very clearly what Mr. Trump said.”

After a loud applause from the debate crowd, Trump responded, saying, “I think she’s got a beautiful face, and I think she’s a beautiful woman.”

But Fiorina did not acknowledge Trump while they were side-by-side on television.

“I think she is a very polished and effective communicator,” Klocke said. “She has a commanding presence, and even though she is a woman in petite, she is able to command the respect of everyone else in the room, and I really admire that.”

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## CARSON

Then there's Carson – who is just about the opposite when it comes to public speaking when compared to Trump and Fiorina. His soft-spoken style sticks out when he's on stage with other Republicans.

But just because he's soft-spoken doesn't mean he's not making an impact and being heard. After a speech in February of 2013, he became a darling among Tea Party Republicans for his staunch opposition to things like the Affordable Care Act and being open about his faith.

"Carson has a real different persona," Shelley said. "He's not a CEO, but a retired neurosurgeon, and he actually has some intellectual firepower that the other two don't have. Carson sort of exudes intellect and the ability to get something done."

Carson often uses stories from his career as a neurosurgeon while on the campaign trail.

"You've got three unusual people who are all pretty aggressive and all have a brand," Schmidt said. "The others don't have a brand, and that explains it. Yes, people are ticked off at politicians, and that certainly helps these three that they're not politicians."

## OTHER REPUBLICANS

But don't forget about the other candidates. There are at least 12 other big name Republicans running, and while the others have held elected office at some point, some run as if they're outsiders.

Take Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul for example – a first term senator who came to Washington in the 2010 Republican wave. Instead of campaigning on his libertarian-leaning record in Congress, he often talks about being a doctor in his home state.

He's also made a point to try to reach out a broader base of support among Republican candidates. While he may not have much legislation to show for it, Paul has sponsored bills on criminal justice reform with Democrats, stood 10 hours to filibuster a CIA nomination over the use of drones, and later stood 13 hours to filibuster a renewal of the PATRIOT Act.

On the campaign trail, he touts a less aggressive foreign policy, scaling back drug sentences and reaching out to minority communities.

Austin Dzik, an Iowa State junior studying mechanical engineering, heads the "Students for Rand" group at ISU – one of more than 300 student wings of Paul's campaign on college campuses across the country.

“He’s someone who definitely went along with my core values,” Dzik said. “He stands up for personal liberty, and that’s a huge thing for me.”

Dzik, who came to Iowa State from Chicago, said he thought of himself as a conservative Republican in high school but said his views are more in line with libertarians once he got a new perspective in college.

And Paul isn’t the only Washington senator trying to appeal as an outsider. Ted Cruz often takes jabs at what he calls the “Washington cartel” while on the campaign trail and runs a campaign highlighting what he says proves he’ll take on D.C.

Governors are doing it also. Gov. Mike Huckabee also campaigns on changing Washington and how it has become disconnected from Americans.

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## DEMOCRATIC OUTSIDERS

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While Republican voters rally around several outsiders, it is also happening on the Democratic side with Bernie Sanders.

The definition of an outsider may have to change when it comes to Sanders, who has been a politician for more than 30 years – he was the mayor of Burlington, Vt., in the 1980’s and in congress since 1991.

Rosie Cook, an ISU freshman studying business, leads the “Cyclones for Bernie” group at ISU. As of mid-October, she said the group had already lobbied more than 250 students to caucus for Sanders. And she fits right in with the Vermont senator, describing herself as a “democratic-socialist.”

“I think he’s proposing drastic changes that really should have happened a long time ago,” she said.

Cook said Sanders’ plan on reigning in Wall Street and his economic policy are ideas that really stand out among the Democratic field.

Sanders stands out in the smaller field of Democrats, calling for free college tuition at public universities, a single-payer Medicare-for-all healthcare system and other ideas that end up to the left of frontrunner Clinton and former Maryland Gov. Martin O’Malley.

“In Bernie’s case, his appeal is a combination of things,” Hagle said. “First, as an outsider candidate, and as a democratic-socialist, he’s been bucking the establishment for awhile.”

## SO WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

As the outsiders take up time from those who were supposed to be leading in the nominating contest at this point, Iowa political experts agreed that the more conventional candidates were likely to take over the lead as voters decide governing experience is important.

But it’s not a guarantee; so far the 2016 election cycle has been unpredictable.