



Chicago Students in Iowa for GOP Debate



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December 10, 2011 (DES MOINES) (WLS) -- Republican presidential hopefuls are ready for battle in the state with the first caucus of the season.

All seven GOP hopefuls are in Des Moines for a debate. The Iowa Caucus is on January 3.

Right now it looks like a two-man race in Iowa as Mitt Romney and Newt Gingrich have emerged at the top. Romney could come out on the offensive against Gingrich as the other candidates try to score their own points.

Some Chicago-area high school students are in Iowa to witness it all. They spent their Saturday morning and afternoon in Ankeny, Iowa, going door to door trying to drum up support for Republican presidential candidate Texas congressman Ron Paul.

About 15 miles away in Urbandale, Iowa, other Chicago-area teens prepared signs for an afternoon rally in support of former House speaker Newt Gingrich.

"I feel that his immigration policy is the best, is the friendliest one to the Hispanic community," said Jesus Vallejo, Maine West High School.

The 55 students who politicked in and around Des Moines are part of the Mikva Challenge program. They earned their way to Iowa by writing essays about the Republican candidates and the primary.

"The main objective of this program is to really get your hands working and experiencing all that a campaign has to offer," said Christina Perez, Mikva Challenge.

Seventeen-year-old self-described progressive Democrat Jessica Alaniz worked for Gingrich, not so much to support his politics but for her experience.

"Whether I become a politician or I become a campaign, I want to have this under my belt to say I've done this before, I've phone banked, I've canvassed, different activities like that," said Alaniz.

But others who made the trip did so to support their candidate. Jared Roby, an Urban Prep student, is passionate about his reasons to support Ron Paul.

"When all else fails, Ron Paul is going to back up the U.S. Constitution, So three words, constitution, constitution, constitution," said Roby.

Other students are working for other Republican candidates in other parts of the Des Moines area. All those students will attend Saturday night's debate.

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