

## Iowa caucuses could launch Huckabee

by UPI

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa -- Iowans could make Republican presidential primary hopeful Mike Huckabee a real contender when the state holds its first-in-the nation caucuses next year. With less than two months to go, the centrist former Arkansas governor appears to be on a roll with rising contributions and a significant endorsement, The New York Times reported Friday. The former Baptist pastor has won the backing of the Rev. Donald E. Wildmon, founder of the American Family Association and a prominent Christian conservative leader. "The candidate du jour right now is Mike Huckabee," says Chuck Laudner, executive director of the Iowa Republican Party. "He certainly can win. It's still a wide-open race in Iowa." For Huckabee the fact that opponents like former Sen. Fred Thompson, R-Tenn., are beginning to take potshots at him is a sign that he is gaining ground with Iowa voters. Thompson recently called Huckabee a "pro-life liberal." "I've always said as a hunter, 'You never put the cross hairs on a dead carcass,'" he told reporters recently. "You only aim for something that's alive that you'd like to take home."

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