

## Romney popularity rising in primary states

*by UPI*

BOSTON - Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney is gaining popularity in key primary states such as Iowa and New Hampshire.

Having raised \$4 million for his campaign and with TV ads from this winter still running, most national polls show the Republican presidential hopeful gaining on his party's front-runners -- former New York Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani and U.S. Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., The Washington Post reported Monday.

Polls also indicate his standing in the states at the forefront of the nominating process has risen dramatically, despite criticism he has garnered for changing his views on abortion and gay rights.

In New Hampshire, Romney is ahead of both McCain and Giuliani, who leads virtually all the national polls, the Post said.

Giuliani and McCain also dropped out of a planned August GOP presidential straw poll in Iowa -- seen as a trial run for next year's caucuses -- rather than risk an embarrassing defeat by Romney.

Although he is well-liked in the first two primary states, no recent Republican nominee has won both.

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