Written by Lynn Campbell Friday, 26 November 2010 12:40

Former Republican National Committee (RNC) political director and Iowa native Gentry Collins says he is weighing a bid for chair of the organization.

The announcement came one week after Collins announced his departure from the RNC with a scathing letter directed at current RNC Chair Michael Steele.

"I have been encouraged by many friends, both on the committee and from outside the committee, to take this step as the RNC prepares to elect a chairman in January," Collins said in a statement.

Republican National Committee member and former Michigan GOP state chair Saul Anuzis is the only candidate to publicly announce he's running for RNC chair.

Others mentioned as possible candidates include former Bush administration and RNC official Maria Cino, Wisconsin GOP chair Reince Priebus, former Luxembourg ambassador and RNC Chair Ann Wagner, former South Carolina Republican Party chair Katon Dawson, California Republican Party Chair Ron Nehring, Connecticut Republican Party Chair Chris Healy, Republican Governors Association Executive Director Nick Ayers, Mississippi Governor and former RNC Chair Haley Barbour, and former Minnesota Senator Norm Coleman.

Former Republican Party of Iowa Chair Brian Kennedy of Bettendorf on Nov. 9 filed the paperwork with the Iowa secretary of state's office creating "Collins for Chairman" as a 527 not-for-profit corporation. The paperwork lists Kennedy as the incorporator and says the corporation shall have no members.

Collins, 35, is a former executive director of the Republican Party of Iowa. He was former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney's Iowa state director prior to the 2008 Iowa caucuses and later served as Midwest regional director for Arizona Senator John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign. He also managed Doug Gross' 2002 gubernatorial campaign and was a legislative aide to state Representative Chris Rants (R-Sioux City).

Written by Lynn Campbell Friday, 26 November 2010 12:40

In announcing his departure from the RNC, Collins sent a four-page letter to the members of the RNC claiming that Steele made many mistakes. Collins' main point of criticism was the RNC's fundraising operation and Steele's alleged inability to attract major donors.

Republican National Committee member Steve Scheffler of West Des Moines, president of the Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition, told IowaPolitics.com that he thinks Collins' chances of becoming RNC chair are as good as anybody else's when the RNC votes January 14.

"I'm real open to that," Scheffler said of Collins' candidacy, noting that he met with Collins recently.

"I'm absolutely not going to vote for Michael Steele," Scheffler said. "I like him as a person; he's charismatic; he's engaging. But there's just one shoe after another shoe that's dropped. ... We need to have that embarrassment go away and find somebody who can pull everybody together."

## Medal of Honor Winner Giunta Recognized at State Capitol

Medal of Honor winner and Hiawatha native Staff Sergeant Salvatore Giunta on Tuesday returned to Iowa and thanked his friends, family teachers, and armed-services veterans for making him what he is.

"I think so much of what we strive to do now is just simply fill the shoes of the men and women who have walked before us and have shown us the path to what right looks like," Giunta said during a ceremony at the State Capitol. "Those words and this state have made me who I am."

Governor Chet Culver signed a proclamation during the ceremony declaring Tuesday as Staff Sergeant Salvatore Giunta Day in honor of Giunta's heroism while deployed in Afghanistan in 2007. About 200 people attended the event.

Written by Lynn Campbell Friday, 26 November 2010 12:40

"For your courage, bravery and selflessness, on behalf of all lowans, we thank you very much," Culver said.

Brigadier General Tim Orr, adjutant general of the Iowa National Guard, called it a unique day in history because Giunta is the first living winner of the award since the Vietnam War. Giunta received the award earlier this month from President Barack Obama during a ceremony at the White House.

"We want to say thank you for your sacrifice, your service, and the fact that you are making a difference," Orr said.

Giunta, the 54th Iowan to receive the Medal of Honor, said he is holding the medal for service members who lost their lives in the line of duty.

"I wear this for them," Giunta said. "This isn't mine; I'm just holding on to it for right now. ... For those men and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice so we can live in this country and we can sit and live in this beautiful state and feel protected here at home, this is for them."

#### **Huckabee Woos Iowa Social Conservatives**

Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee on Sunday congratulated Iowans who successfully ousted three state Supreme Court justices and said it "may have been the most important election in America" on November 2.

"I am here also today to congratulate the people of Iowa for their decision in what was a remarkable election, an election that resonated all across America," Huckabee said. "And that is to say that the judicial branch is – as are all branches of government – subject to the ultimate bosses in a society like ours, the people."

Written by Lynn Campbell Friday, 26 November 2010 12:40

Huckabee, the winner of the 2008 Republican Iowa caucuses, was in Des Moines to deliver the keynote address at the Iowa Family Policy Center's annual "Celebrate the Family" fundraiser at a church in Beaverdale. Organizers said the event drew a crowd of more than 1,500 people.

The former Arkansas governor gave no clues whether he would seek the Republican nomination for president again in 2012, but said he is definitely not on a timetable.

Though 2012 was not the focus of his keynote, the former Arkansas governor did reflect some on his 2008 campaign and the difficulties he encountered. Huckabee said that he felt faith-based voters are taken less seriously.

"Faith-based voters are sometimes sneered at, laughed at," Huckabee said. "I got used to it during the presidential debates. I would go to the debates and some of the candidates would get 16, 18, 20 minutes to talk. I'd get three or four. And when I'd finally get a question it would be, 'Oh, let's throw you a religious question.' Somehow they overlooked the fact that I had governed a state longer than anyone on the stage for either the Democrats or the Republicans. ... It was, 'You were a pastor.'"

Huckabee said he is not ashamed of being a pastor because it means he understands the lives of people. "But it was a way of trying to denigrate that somehow people of faith are just a little bit intellectually inferior to people who don't believe anything," he said.

Huckabee also said many of America's economic problems can be tied to problems with the family. In what he called "the dad deficit," Huckabee said roughly \$300 billion is spent by the federal government each year to prop up single-parent households whose fathers walked out. He also asserted that many of the personal traits that led to the failure of the banking industry and to the economic downturn are taught at the family level.

"I don't care how much we change the tax code and tax policy; we will never be able to get our economy righted because what has wronged it is not just an economic issue," he said. "It is an issue that goes to the very heart of what the family leader is, like it or not."

Written by Lynn Campbell Friday, 26 November 2010 12:40

The approximately 1,500 who attended Sunday's event matched the number that attended the Republican Party of Iowa's Ronald Reagan Dinner in September headlined by former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, another potential 2012 Republican presidential candidate.

## Palin Returning to Iowa

Palin's new book *America by Heart* will be released Tuesday, and she'll return to lowa on Saturday for her third visit in the past year.

Palin will be at the Borders bookstore in West Des Moines from 6 to 9 p.m. Saturday. She'll also make a stop at the Walmart Supercenter store in Spirit Lake from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Thursday, December 2. The stops come as part of her nine-day, 16-stop signing tour.

#### **Iowa GOP Gets New Executive Director**

Chad Olsen, the veteran Republican operative who led the Republican Party of Iowa's 2010 coordinated-campaign operations as its Iowa Victory Director, is the new executive director of the party.

No formal announcement was made, but Olsen and Republican Party of Iowa (RPI) Chair Matt Strawn acknowledged that Olsen was confirmed by the State Central Committee on November 13.

Olsen is a father of two who lives in Panora. He's worked as the Iowa GOP's Victory Director since mid-April and previously worked in the Iowa GOP's political department. He was a key organizer of the 2008 Iowa caucuses, directed Steve Forbes' Iowa campaign in 2000, led Steve Sukup's primary gubernatorial campaign in 2002, and was the state director for Tommy Thompson's presidential exploratory committee in 2007.

Strawn announced earlier this month that Jim Anderson, the party's executive director and a

Written by Lynn Campbell Friday, 26 November 2010 12:40

former deputy political director at the Republican National Committee, would leave lowa after about a year in the job to return to Washington, DC. Prior to that, Jeff Boeyink served as executive director before leaving to become Terry Branstad's campaign manager.

# Activist Karger Looks to Raise Awareness of Gay Issues with Presidential Run

California gay activist Fred Karger used a visit to Des Moines to try to establish his credentials as a potential 2012 Republican presidential candidate, naming a state director for his exploratory committee and launching his first statewide cable TV ad.

"The fact that if I run, I would be the first openly gay candidate in the history of the country, gives me a reason to be here," Karger said during a sparsely attended press conference at the Embassy Suites in downtown Des Moines. "I'm doing it to raise the issue of LGBTQ equality, to set an example. ... I'm probably not going to win it."

Karger, 60, launched a 90-second TV ad called "Independence Day" that's airing on Fox News in Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, the Quad Cities, Mason City, Ames, Burlington, and Fort Dodge. He said he paid less than \$1,000 to air the ad for less than a week.

He also named Nathan Treloar as state director of his exploratory committee. Treloar is a former communications director for the Republican Party of Iowa and a former House Majority Fund finance director who also worked on Greg Ganske's U.S. Senate campaign and on Bob Vander Plaats' first gubernatorial campaign.

This was Karger's fifth trip to lowa this year. He said he'll decide in the next several months whether he'll throw his hat in the ring.

Karger, who was an activist on Proposition 8 in California, has never run for office but said he's run dozens of campaigns. He acknowledged that he made four contributions totaling \$2,300 to Democrat Hillary Clinton's 2008 presidential campaign and also backed former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, his second choice.

Written by Lynn Campbell Friday, 26 November 2010 12:40

"I'm not walking away from that," he said. "I've supported Republicans and Democrats, not just voting but with my checkbook. I was a Hillary Clinton supporter last time. I was so disenchanted with the Republican Party that I didn't support any of the Republicans, but I liked her."

Karger, who calls himself an "independent Republican," stood in front of a banner that read "Fred Who?" and insisted that he's a serious and credible candidate. He said he hopes to attract the 37 percent of independent voters in lowa and 42 percent of independent voters in New Hampshire who are unhappy with the two parties and have instead gone to the center.

"I think that the public is kind of hungry for that type of leadership right now," he said. "I hope to bring back a lot of people that have left."

This weekly summary comes from <u>lowaPolitics.com</u>, an online government and politics news service. Reporter Andrew Duffelmeyer and other correspondents contributed to this report.