

Rubio builds momentum, Cruz campaign slows

By STEVE PEOPLES and NICHOLAS RICCARDI
Associated Press

ELKO, Nevada — Marco Rubio amassed increasing support for his candidacy while Ted Cruz's campaign showed signs of struggle as Republican presidential candidates crisscrossed Nevada on Monday on the final day of campaigning ahead of the state's GOP caucuses.

Cruz told reporters Monday he has asked his campaign spokesman, Rick Tyler, to resign for tweeting a story that falsely alleged Rubio insulted the Bible.

"We are not a campaign that is going to question the faith of another candidate for president," he said, calling Tyler "a good man" and noting that he deleted the tweet once he discovered it was false.

Tyler did not return telephone, text or email messages left by The Associated Press seeking comment.

It's not the first time that Cruz's campaign has been accused by rivals of using questionable tactics. Cruz apologized to GOP hopeful Ben Carson earlier this month after his campaign promoted a news story suggesting that Carson was getting out of the race. Cruz's campaign has also acknowledged creating a website that used a computer program to create a fake picture of Rubio shaking hands with President Barack Obama.

Speaking during a campaign stop in Elko, Nevada, earlier Monday, Rubio criticized Cruz for the incident and asked whether Cruz would fire anyone involved.

"It's every single day something comes out of the Cruz campaign that's deceptive and untrue, and in this case goes after my faith," Rubio told reporters when asked about the incident. "I guess one of their spokespersons apologized, and I accept their apology."

Republican front-runner Donald Trump lashed out at Cruz over Twitter on Monday, saying that Cruz "has now apologized to Marco Rubio and Ben Carson for fraud and dirty tricks. No wonder he has lost Evangelical support!" He reiterated his calls for disqualifying Cruz because of "his fraudulent win in Iowa."

Trump was scheduled to hold two rallies in Nevada — one in Elko and another later in Las Vegas. Trump's campaign manager Corey Lewandowski said Monday that the billionaire businessman has been seeking advice from former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani as he gradually expands his tight inner circle.

Meanwhile, establishment heavyweights continued to back Rubio, with many saying they see him as the candidate who

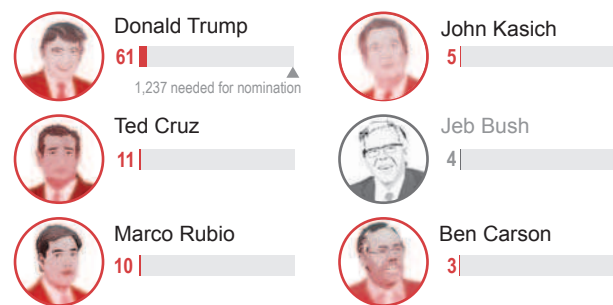


Republican presidential candidate Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., smiles as he speaks at a rally Monday in Reno, Nev. AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez

ELECTION '16

GOP delegate count

Donald Trump won the South Carolina Republican primary, increasing his delegate lead and forcing rival Jeb Bush to end his campaign.



Latest state results: Feb. 20

SOUTH CAROLINA — percentage of vote (delegates won)

99% OF PRECINCTS REPORTING



Next contest: Feb. 23

Nevada Republican Caucuses

SOURCE: AP Election Services

can unite a disharmonious Republican Party. Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson and Utah Sen. Orrin Hatch were the latest to endorse Rubio. South Florida's three Cuban-American members of Congress also said that they shifted their support to Rubio, having previously supported for former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush's now defunct bid.

Former Sen. Bob Dole told ABC News on Monday that he too had been backing Bush, but he's now supporting Rubio because "he wants to grow the party as opposed to Cruz. I don't know what he wants to grow."

Since Friday, Rubio has added 12 new Congressional or gubernatorial endorsements, while Trump and Cruz have added none.

While five men officially remain in the race for the

Republican nomination, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy billed it as a two-man contest between Trump and Rubio. Speaking to MSNBC's "Morning Joe" Monday, McCarthy said Trump's victory and Rubio's second-place finish in Saturday's South Carolina primary dealt a blow to Cruz's strategy to win the nomination. The California congressman predicted voters in Florida, Rubio's home state, would determine whether Rubio continues or Trump easily rolls on to the nomination.

Cruz on Saturday characterized a two-man contest as well — between him and Trump. But Rubio, who campaigned in South Carolina alongside the state's GOP Gov. Nikki Haley, has continued to capitalize on the momentum from his second-place finish.



Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks at a campaign event Sunday in Atlanta. AP Photo/David Goldman

Trump's favorite excuse? It was just a 'retweet'

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Donald Trump has repeated inaccurate and racially charged crime statistics, reposted pledges of support from white supremacists and retweeted dubious questions about the citizenship of his presidential rivals to an online following of more than 6 million people on Twitter alone.

His response when challenged? To dismiss it all as nothing more than harmless "retweets."

Unlike any presidential candidate before him, Trump has fueled his campaign for the Republican nomination with a seemingly endless series of eyebrow-raising statements. It's a strategy unavailable to a conventional politician but seemingly tailor-made for the billionaire businessman and master marketer.

"We've gone from a 24-hour news cycle to a 24-second news cycle," said GOP consultant Kevin Madden. "So right when you think Trump is about to endure a concentrated level of scrutiny for a false statement or the latest outrage, he is on to the next controversy."

Yet Trump's pattern of repeating things that are false, or just unseemly, and then refusing to take responsibility, would undoubtedly pose a challenge should he move into the White House — where a president's casual utterance or late-night tweet could move financial markets or spark a diplomatic incident.

Trump's latest example came on Saturday, hours before he won the South Carolina GOP primary to cement his status as the Republican presidential front-runner. He quoted a supporter on Twitter who was questioning rival Marco Rubio's eligibility to run for president, even though the Florida senator was born in the U.S.

BRIEFLY

New U.S.-Russia plan sets Syria ceasefire for Saturday

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States and Russia agreed Monday on a new cease-fire for Syria that will take effect on Saturday, U.S. officials said.

They said the former Cold War foes, which are backing opposing sides in Syria's civil war, agreed on all the terms and conditions for the "cessation of hostilities" between Syrian President Bashar Assad's government and armed opposition groups. Those sides still need to accept the deal.

The truce will not cover the Islamic State, the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front and any other militias designated as terrorist organizations by the U.N. Security Council. Both the U.S. and Russia are still targeting those groups with airstrikes.

An announcement is expected after Presidents Barack Obama and Vladimir Putin speak on the matter by telephone Monday, according to the officials, who weren't authorized to speak publicly on the matter ahead of time and demanded anonymity.

The timing of the cease-fire is only days ahead of Moscow's proposal earlier this month for it to start on March 1. Washington rejected that offer at the time, saying it wanted an "immediate cease-fire" and not one that would allow Syria and its Russian backer to make a last-ditch effort for territorial gains in the Arab country's north and south.

Winds blow small amount of radiation onto highway

RICHLAND, Wash. (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency says the uncontrolled spread of small amounts of radioactive waste at Hanford after a Nov. 17 windstorm is alarming.

The winds pushed specks of contamination beyond Route 4, the public highway from Richland out to the Wye Barricade entrance to Hanford.

The *Tri-City Herald* reports that tests found no contamination on the public highway. And the Department of Energy concluded that workers and the public are not at risk of exposure.

But the EPA in a letter says the uncontrolled spread of contamination "is a matter that is alarming to EPA and requires further investigation and discussion."

It has given the Energy Department until the third week of April to prepare a report on its loss of control of radioactive material.

'Motor Voter' law adds 10,000 Oregon voters

BEND (AP) — A new law that automatically registers eligible voters in Oregon has added nearly 10,000 voters to the rolls since Jan. 1.

The *Bulletin* reports that the system registers voters after they obtain or renew their driver's license, permit or identification card.

Officials with the Secretary of State's Office say it is expected to take eight years for the DMV to contact nearly every eligible voter in the state as licenses and IDs come up for renewal.

Oregon has had high voter turnout in recent elections. Deschutes County Clerk Nancy Blankenship says it will be interesting to see if the newly registered voters come out to the polls in November.

Uber acknowledges getting complaints about shooting suspect

By JEFF KAROUB
Associated Press

KALAMAZOO, Mich. — The Uber ride-hailing service acknowledged Monday that it received complaints about erratic driving by the suspect in the random shootings that killed six people in Kalamazoo, and a prosecutor said the man admitted carrying out the attacks.

As authorities pieced together Jason Dalton's actions, the prosecutor said he picked up Uber fares after the first shooting and probably got more riders after the subsequent shootings.

Dalton, the 45-year-old former insurance adjuster, appeared briefly in court by video link and was charged with six counts of murder. A judge denied him bail.

During a talk with investigators, Dalton waived his right against self-incrimination and confessed his role in the Saturday night shootings, Kalamazoo County Prosecutor Jeff Getting said.

Dalton admitted "that he took people's lives," Kalamazoo police Det. Cory Ghiringhelli told the court. The murder charges carry a manda-

tory life sentence. Michigan does not have the death penalty.

An Uber passenger said he called police to report that Dalton was driving erratically more than an hour before the shootings began.

Matt Mellen told Kalamazoo television station WWMT that he hailed a ride around 4:30 p.m. Saturday. He said driver Jason Dalton introduced himself as "Me-Me" and had a dog in the backseat.

Mellen sat in front. About a mile into the trip, Dalton got a phone call, and when he hung up, he began driving recklessly, blowing through stop signs and sideswiping cars, Mellen said.

"We were driving through medians, driving through the lawn, speeding along, and when we came to a stop, I jumped out of the car and ran away," Mellen said. He said he called police and that when he got to his friend's house, his fiancée posted a warning to friends on Facebook.

Uber said riders complained Saturday about Dalton's driving. When alerted to unsafe driving, company policy is to contact the driver. But Uber officials would not

say whether anyone at the company spoke to Dalton, deferring to law enforcement.

Dalton passed a background check and became a driver on Jan. 25. He had given about 100 rides, the company said.

Since Dalton's arrest, several people have come forward to say that he picked them up for Uber in the hours after the first attack. The Associated Press could not confirm those accounts.

Kalamazoo County Sheriff Richard Fuller said Uber is cooperating with law enforcement officials, and he believes the company will "help us fill in some timeline gaps."

Investigators are particularly interested in communication between Dalton and Uber, as well as customers he might have driven, the sheriff said.

The attacks began outside the Meadows apartment complex on the eastern edge of Kalamazoo County, where a woman was shot multiple times. She survived.

A little more than four hours later and 15 miles away, a father and his 17-year-old son were fatally shot

while looking at cars at a car dealership.

Fifteen minutes after that, five people were gunned down in the parking lot of a Cracker Barrel restaurant. Four of them died. A 14-year-old girl survived with a head wound and was hospitalized in critical condition.

Police and prosecutors have not provided a motive. The victims had no apparent connection to the gunman.

Getting dismissed the idea that Dalton was seeking a particular person when authorities say he shot the first victim. The prosecutor said Dalton called the woman by a different name only "to get her attention" before shooting her outside of her apartment.

Questions about motive and Dalton's frame of mind are "going to be the hardest to answer for anybody," Fuller said. He expects some answers to emerge in court, but he doubts they will be satisfying.

"In the end, I ask people, because I keep hearing this question of why, 'What would be the answer that would be an acceptable answer for you?' They have to think about it for a moment, and they say, 'Probably nothing.'"