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Hotline Sort: Schock And Awe

By Sean Sullivan
February 28, 2012 | 8:14 AM

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Welcome back to *Hotline* Sort. Romney and Santorum square off in Michigan while Sheldon Adelson pours in more money for Gingrich. Meanwhile, Schock backs Kinzinger over Manzullo, Alabama wrestles with an ultrasound bill and one Democrat is steamed by Bob Kerrey's apparent about-face in Nebraska. Here's today's rundown:

7) Rep. **Aaron Schock**, R-Ill., is backing freshman GOP Rep. **Adam Kinzinger** over veteran Republican Rep. **Bob Manzullo** in Illinois' new 16th District primary. Illinois voters got to the polls on March 20.

6) Sen. **Bob Menendez**, D-N.J., leads state Republican state Sen. **Joe Kyrillos** 44-22 percent in a new Rutgers-Eagleton poll of registered Garden State voters conducted from Feb. 9-11. Kyrillos is the GOP frontrunner and was recently endorsed by Gov. **Chris Christie**.

5) How's this for a little irony: Mormons were no friend of the Republican Party in its early days, even as 75 percent of Mormons tilt toward the GOP. The *Salt Lake Tribune*:

The Republican Party launched in 1854 as an anti-slavery party and quickly seized on growing concern with Mormons in the Utah Territory taking on multiple wives.

The GOP's first party platform in 1856 took direct aim at polygamy, placing it in the same sinister frame as slavery in the hope of cultivating the votes of Christians wary of the spread of these dual threats to the republic.

4) Virginia is not the only state wrestling with controversial abortion-related legislation right now. In Alabama, a Republican state senator said he plans to rewrite an abortion bill to specify that it is the woman's choice whether she wants an internal or external ultrasound before getting an abortion. The prior version of the bill would not let the woman choose. The *Birmingham News* has the [full story here](#).

3) We [reported on Monday](#) that former Democratic Sen. **Bob Kerrey** has done an about face and will run for the Senate in Nebraska, less than a month after he announced that he would not run. His campaign manager from previous races, **Paul Johnson**, [says](#) he has not made a final decision yet but is reconsidering.

One man who is not happy about the news: Democrat **Chuck Hassebrook**, the only announced

Democratic candidate. Hassebrook decided to run after consulting with Kerrey. Here's what he told the *Lincoln Journal-Star*:

"I gave up my seat on the University of Nebraska Board of Regents based on his word," Hassebrook said. "I do not believe he would go back on it."

Daily Kos Elections floats an [interesting possibility](#): Could this whole maneuver have been Kerrey's plan all along? Since incumbents must file -- for any office, even if not their own -- before non-incumbents, meaning the window for GOP Gov. **Dave Heineman** to run has now closed.

2) Today, voters go to the polls in Michigan and Arizona today, with **Mitt Romney** and **Rick Santorum** squaring off. The main focus is in Michigan, and *National Journal's Alex Roarty* [lays out the stakes](#) ahead of today's elections:

The likely best case for Mitt Romney is that he wins the Arizona primary handily, edges past Rick Santorum in Michigan, and lurches ahead to Super Tuesday determined to demonstrate for the first time that he can sustain momentum.

The worst case for the party: Santorum wins Michigan, throwing the nomination race into chaos as Republicans contemplate a social-issues crusader facing President Obama this fall. Santorum would claim to be the new front-runner, and murmurings about recruiting a new candidate would explode publicly.

Stay tuned to NationalJournal.com tonight for analysis and results.

1) **Newt Gingrich** isn't a threat to win anything tonight and won't even be in either state after the polls close. But he apparently hasn't lost the faith of his biggest backer: The *Washington Post* [reports](#) that **Sheldon Adelson** is making another "substantial" donation -- at least on par with the \$5 million he and his family have given before -- to a pro-Gingrich super PAC -- which is launching a TV ad blitz in 4 Super Tuesday states.

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