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GIULIANI'S LEARNING CURVE.



(Photo: Rudy Giuliani (L) and Gene Hart, Greenfield, Iowa, August 15, 2007)

The Atlantic's [Matt says](#) "something's amiss when Rudy Giuliani spends 6,000 words on foreign policy and doesn't mention Pakistan at all." That's not the only thing that's amiss about Giuliani's recent moves in the political arena.

After catching Giuliani yesterday at the Nodaway Diner in Greenfield -- a town in Southwestern Iowa so small it boasts about a ["European-Style Square"](#) -- and then again at the State Fair, I'm starting to think Giuliani's campaign for the presidency has basically two main planks, both of which happen to involve giving the G.O.P. base the exact answers it wants on top issues, but that it's somewhat neglectful about everything else. To begin with, Giuliani's forthright pro-wall stance on border security and illegal immigration is a threshold trust issue for voters who rank such issues as their top priorities. His multi-pronged approach on the issue begins, "First, build a fence." That's what he told State Fair goers, and that's what G.O.P. voters in the state have repeatedly told me they want someone to do. He's also pro-English, and was met with vigorous applause for saying at the fair, "We want people to come here who want to learn to read and write and speak English." And he is willing to be the exact kind of law and order hardliner such voters crave. "Anyone who is in this country from a foreign country who commits a crime should be thrown out," he said. "Throw them out." Second, Giuliani promises voters an aggressive military posture. "I believe America should be on the offense against terrorism," he said at the State Fair. "America doesn't lose. America wins. America prevails."

So far, these stances -- and they are stances, not programs or plans, per se -- have been enough to vault Giuliani into the lead in national polls, but it's not at all clear they will be enough Iowa, New Hampshire, or South Carolina, where voters want a candidate who is willing to run a ground-level race, rather than one from 50,000 feet. In Iowa, Giuliani did not

seem terrifically up to speed on other issues of the day, or to have done a huge amount of homework or organizing heading into the state.

For example, rather than lunching with a local functionary in Greenfield during his five-stop, one day tour, Giuliani lunched with an old friend from New York City, **Gene Hart**. Hart lives out in Omaha, Nebraska, but he went to Manhattan College with Giuliani, and made plans to drive all the way to Greenfield to meet him for lunch. "We go back to 1962," he said. And so the tiny Greenfield event began with Giuliani quietly lunching with someone not from Iowa, while his New York staff sat at the diner's counter, eating pie a la mode and thumbing their BlackBerries. "He's not doing speeches," Loren Knauss, a Pottawattamie County Supervisor and Giuliani's Southwest regional chair, explained. "He's just coming in to shake hands." After lunch, Giuliani, dressed as if heading to a natty reception in the Hamptons, shook hands with the small number of locals in the diner, then sat and methodically autographed campaign fliers while taking questions from a table full of people that included a local reporter and a representative from the advocacy group [Iowans for Sensible Priorities](#), which has been dogging all the candidates. Including Giuliani, the group numbered less than 10. Giuliani discussed the threat of a nuclear Iran, earmarks, gun policy, and infrastructure investment, and also exclaimed over the amount of corn he'd seen on the way to the rural town on a road that passed between fields. Is it the ethanol biofuel that's driving all this corn? he asked. The Iowans politely said they didn't think so. And wasn't the harvest date "pretty soon"? Giuliani further inquired. The Iowans informed him that it wouldn't be until November. Sensing they might think him a rube, the former mayor quickly explained that on Long Island, "they pick it about now, in late August."

Still, it was a line of questioning that made Giuliani look as if he were either coasting and slightly out of it, or else had made a calculated decision to treat the people of Iowa the same way he treated historically important constituency groups in New York City which he believed had too great a hold on power and needed to be resisted -- along with their ["shakedown"](#) Straw Poll -- as much as coddled.

--Garance Franke-Ruta

Posted by Garance Franke-Ruta on August 16, 2007 04:20 PM

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