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## TOP NEWS

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### UPI NewsTrack TopNews

#### Romney wins Iowa Straw Poll

AMES, Iowa, Aug. 11 (UPI) -- Former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney Saturday won the Iowa Straw Poll, while former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee finished second.

The event appeared to have voting machine problems when organizers announced the results would be delayed.

"I've heard machine difficulties. I haven't heard specifically what the difficulty is," Mary Tiffany, a spokeswoman for the Iowa Republican Party, told The Des Moines Register. She said about 1,500 votes needed to be recounted.

When the results were released, Romney had 4,516 votes to 2,587 for Huckabee and 2,192 for Sen. Sam Brownback, R-Kan.

The poll is a combination Republican fundraiser and a chance for presidential hopefuls to break out of the crowded pack. Eight candidates for the 2008 GOP presidential nomination were in Ames, although former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., and an unannounced candidate -- former Sen. Fred Thompson, R-Tenn. -- stayed away.

At least one candidate, former Wisconsin Gov. Tommy Thompson, said he would drop out of the race if he did not come in first or second in the poll.

Romney made a huge effort for the straw poll, while Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, a libertarian, had an army of enthusiastic volunteers working the event to keep his name in front of people.

#### Endeavour astronauts on space walk

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla., Aug. 11 (UPI) -- The first spacewalk of the current space shuttle Endeavour mission went ahead smoothly and ahead of schedule Saturday, [NASA](#) reported.

Pilot Charles Hobart used a robotic arm to move the S5 truss into place at the International Space Station. Spacewalkers Rick Mastracchio and Dave Williams then bolted the truss into place at the end of the Starboard 4 truss segment.

Earlier, NASA reported that a small piece of debris that hit Endeavour during liftoff left a small divot in a heat shield.

Astronauts will conduct a closer examination of the gouge Sunday so NASA engineers can analyze how much heat might reach the shuttle's underlying structure during re-entry, The [New York Times](#) said Friday.

NASA said the astronauts could repair the damage during one of their planned spacewalks.

Endeavour docked with the space station Friday afternoon in a "flawless rendezvous," said mission flight director Matt Abbott.

A new system through which the shuttle draws power from the space station will allow Endeavour to stay docked at the space station for 10 days or longer. A decision on extending the mission to 14 days is to be made Sunday.

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#### Immigration rules painful for economy

WASHINGTON, Aug. 11 (UPI) -- The agriculture, hospitality and healthcare industries are bracing for change as the U.S. government cracks down on the hiring of illegal immigrants.

"There will be some unhappy consequences for the economy out of doing this," Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff told The Los Angeles Times in a story published Saturday.

The changes will tighten work-site enforcement, add border agents and increase penalties for employers who hire illegal workers, Chertoff said, noting businesses should have seen the crackdown coming after the Senate failed to pass [immigration reform](#) this year.

"We have been crystal clear about what the consequences would be," Chertoff said.

Businesses, unions, immigrant advocates and religious leaders object to the new rules, while opponents of comprehensive immigration reform embrace them, the newspaper said.

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#### Lutherans vote to allow gay clergy

CHICAGO, Aug. 11 (UPI) -- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America Saturday voted to refrain from disciplining clergy in committed same-sex relationships.

The vote at a national assembly in Chicago came the day after the gathering's delegates voted against removing the requirement that gay clergy remain celibate, The Chicago Sun-Times reported. In practice, gay clergy will apparently face no consequences within the 20-year-old grouping -- the largest Lutheran denomination branch in the United States.

"It's a huge victory," said Jeremy Posadas, a delegate from Decatur, Ga. "The gospel of inclusion has won and we're going to keep winning."

Other delegates were less enthusiastic.

"This decision does not reflect the will of the people, but of bishops and clergy who disregard God's word," said the Rev. Mark Chavez, a leader of Lutheran CORE -- a coalition that seeks to preserve traditional authority within the church.

The issue of gay clergy is a wrenching one in a number of denominations. The consecration of an openly gay Episcopal bishop has come close to splitting both the U.S. church and the worldwide Anglican Communion.

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### Taliban release two hostages

KABUL, Afghanistan, Aug. 11 (UPI) -- Two female hostages, both of them ill, were released Saturday as a gesture of good will, said Taliban militants holding 21 South Koreans in Afghanistan.

Yousuf Ahmadi, a Taliban spokesman, told Xinhua, the official Chinese news agency, the women had been freed and were expected to arrive in Ghazni soon. The Taliban said it would free the two as a gesture of good will at the beginning of face-to-face negotiations with South Korean diplomats.

The Taliban's original demands still must be met to secure the release of the rest of the hostages, he said.

Taliban militants kidnapped 23 South Korean Christian aid workers July 19. Two male hostages since have been killed and the kidnappers have threatened to kill more, if 21 Taliban fighters are not released from prison.

Taliban and South Korean negotiators began meeting face-to-face Friday in Ghazni Province, near where the hostages are believed to be held in small groups, BBC News reported Saturday.

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