

At least so claims the *Iowa Republican*, [a website that says it represents](#) “News for Republicans, by Republicans.” If you believe the *Republican*, Pawlenty is doing no more than parroting the talking points of the ethanol industry:

Pawlenty’s announcement speech in Des Moines yesterday was more passionate than some of his other recent speeches. The common theme of the speech was that Americans need to be told the truth when it comes to the problems facing our nation. To prove that he was serious, he boldly called for the end of ethanol subsidies while standing in the shadow of the Iowa Capitol.

The national news media ate it up. The Wall Street Journal wrote, [“Refusing to stick to the script for candidates looking to harvest votes in February’s Iowa caucuses, Mr. Pawlenty has passed an early test of fortitude.”](#) ABC News stated, [“Tim Pawlenty has already staked out a clear plan to, as he puts it, tell “the hard truths,” even if voters don’t want to hear them.”](#)

To many, Pawlenty’s tough talk on ethanol signifies that he’s serious when he says that he’s going to deliver the cold hard truth. The only problem is that this is not the courageous stand that the media is making it out to be.

Pawlenty’s position on ethanol is already where the renewable fuels industry is on the issue. Walt Wendland, the President of the Iowa Renewable Fuels Association issued a statement saying, “The ethanol industry is united behind Senator Chuck Grassley’s legislation to phase down and reform the current ethanol incentive as part of the discussion on all energy programs. We appreciate Sen. Grassley’s leadership on this issue. Governor Pawlenty’s remarks today appear to be in line with Sen. Grassley’s approach for ethanol reform. We welcome his support.”

Now, it’s not really clear whether the Renewable Fuels Association’s spin should be taken seriously. We wouldn’t believe a lobbyist’s spin on other issues, so why here? Besides, the Association doesn’t seem to have any more idea of Pawlenty’s position than anyone else.

But I wouldn't be holding my breath. Just a couple of weeks before his supposedly courageous statement, Pawlenty was at pains to say that ending oil and gas subsidies was "ludicrous." He has quickly abandoned any reality-based position he ever held in deference to his electoral ambitions. I guessed the other day that this was all about attracting east coast support, and it certainly did that.

Thus, although we can't be sure, all the signs point to this being standard Republican socialism-for-the-wealthy, capitalism-for-the-working-class ideology. Maybe that's unduly skeptical.

So maybe it would be good for Iowa reporters to get clarification from Pawlenty — again, and again, and again.