Will Tim Pawlenty go from honestly boring to a lying bore?

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Tim Pawlenty formally announced his candidacy for president this week and did so with a promise that may come to haunt his run in a way more seriously than the bland and boring verdict his earlier putative campaign suffered.

In a YouTube announcement about the announcement and the next day in Iowa in the actual announcement, Mr. Pawlenty made much ado about telling the American people the truth.

To demonstrate his commitment to honesty, Mr. Pawlenty told Iowans that he would end ethanol subsidies.

The chutzpah is admirable, but pledging to do something does not prove honesty, and thus the potential problem with Mr. Pawlenty’s strategy.

Explicitly basing a campaign on telling the truth is troublesome because keeping, not making a promise, is noteworthy. Even more problematic is that making honesty the bedrock of a campaign is an open invitation to scrutinize everything you say, and a bludgeon for your critics when you inevitably misstep on the long and grinding campaign trail.

Mr. Pawlenty’s veracity has already been taken to task.

Dana Milbank at The Washington Post called out Mr. Pawlenty for abandoning his endorsement of David Brooks’ assertion that the era of small government is over while talking to Rush Limbaugh.

Mr. Pawlenty agreed with that idea, as well as a cap and trade policy and importing price-regulated prescription drugs from Canada back in 2006 when he wanted to remain governor of a blue state.

Faced with Limbaugh the Hut’s influence over the red states, Mr. Pawlenty rushed to “clarify” his earlier stances.

Every candidate and her words are vetted, of course. And while the pettifoggery inherent in the business of politics chafes many, the necessity of stitching together enough support from a disparate group of interests for a nomination explains if not endorses talking out of both sides of your mouth.

Moreover, candidates should be able to modify or even change their positions on issues. What is good policy for one state at one time may not necessarily work for the entire country at another.

But by trying to distinguish himself as the candidate that does not resort to politically expedient truth massaging, Mr. Pawlenty may have raised an insurmountable bar for himself while enabling his critics to add the battering ram “this from the supposed “truth” candidate” to every dubious statement surely to be made.

Add eight years in office in blue Minnesota to eighteen months of speaking to red audiences and Mr. Pawlenty may be in for a pummeling.