



GOP Presidential hopeful Mitt Romney greets supporters during a campaign stop at Keiser University, Sarasota Campus, Wednesday. GRANT JEFFERIES/gjefferies@bradenton.com

Posted on Thu, Jan. 24, 2008

Big-time politics comes to LWR

By JAMES A. JONES JR.
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When the tall man with the matinee looks, crisp white shirt and blue tie exited the banquet room into the lobby of Keiser University, he got the movie star treatment.

The crowd swept up to him, snapping away with cell-phone cameras and holding out campaign brochures to be autographed. Others in the back of the lobby stood on chairs, some holding little children, craning for a better view.

National politics had made its way to Lakewood Ranch in the person of Republican Mitt Romney, who had just finished a stump speech, seeking votes in Tuesday's Florida presidential primary.

Most of the focus was on the troubled economy, with the message that Americans, working together, could solve their problems.

"There is worry, an anxiety. I am concerned, but we don't have to be anxious," Romney said, promising that there are solutions to the quagmire of problems.

Many of those problems - dependence on foreign oil, health care beyond the means of many, doubts about the viability of Social Security - stretch back decades.

The room was full of Romney faithful, or at least those considering voting for him.

Caroline May, who recently moved to Lakewood Ranch, was in the latter category.

"There are a lot of big issues out there," May said.

She came away liking what Romney said, his vitality and his focus on the strength of the country. But she also is considering voting for John McCain.

Diane Rosensweig, of Sarasota, brought her daughter, Mary, a student at Cardinal Mooney High School, to hear and see Romney.

Rosensweig said she had been leaning toward Rudy Giuliani but found him too liberal on social issues and decided she will vote for Romney.

Bryan Tupper, 24, of Bradenton, came away with Romney's autograph on his baseball mitt. Romney used the big "R" on the Rawlings glove to complete his signature.

"Mitt Romney is my guy, but I started off as a Giuliani guy," Tupper said.

Alan Morris, of Sarasota, said he probably won't vote for Romney.

"He's a nice guy and he speaks well," Morris said, "but he doesn't strike me as the kind of tough guy who can take on the Clinton machine."

Morris said he sees that toughness in his candidate of choice, Giuliani.

Frances Rice, chairman of the National Black Republican Association in Sarasota, had no such doubts as she watched Romney shaking hands and greeting voters with "How are you? Good to see you," as he worked his way out of the lobby to his tour bus.

"I already voted for him," said the early voter. "I like his policies."



Mitt Romney visits Keiser University



LAKWOOD RANCH - Presidential hopeful Mitt Romney stumped for votes in Lakewood Ranch Wednesday. He spoke at Keiser University to a group of supporters.

He talked to us about his economic stimulus plan. "It creates long-term growth incentives, keeps our tax rates down for individuals. For businesses, it ends illegal immigration. It makes sure we get off independence of foreign oil, that's costing us a billion dollars a day or more," said Romney.

In front of a sign that read "Economic Turnaround", Romney discussed ways to strengthen the economy. He talked about family values and immigration. He told us he realizes taking Florida on January 29th is key. "Well, Florida is really critical I think to all of us seeking the Republican nomination. It comes at a critical time. There have been 6 tests, 6 states so far that have gone. I've won three of them. If I win Florida it's a really a very big move for me so I care a lot about Florida."

One mother of four is ready to head to the voting booth. "I've been waiting a long time to support a candidate that I really believe in. I believe in everything he is. He stands for and lives what he stands for. He's a family man who believes in family values," said Romney supporter Tami Fox.

Some at the rally are worried Romney can't take the heat from the left. "I really think if you want a Republican elected, Rudy's the only one who has the ability to attack and withstand their attacks," said voter Alan Morris.

Romney knows he is in the final sprint to the finish line. "I'm going to be here every day until the primary"

And other presidential hopefuls are gearing for their campaign stops on the Suncoast. On the Republican side, Rudy Giuliani will talk with supporters this Friday at 8:15pm at the Ritz Carlton in Sarasota. Mike Huckabee is visiting the same day. He'll be at Michael's On East in Sarasota at 4:30pm.

And as for the Democrats, Hillary Clinton is planning a visit to a private residence in Sarasota on Sunday the 27th. That will be at 3:30pm.



STAFF PHOTO/ROB MATTSON

Presidential candidate Mitt Romney waits to address students and faithful as he is introduced prior his speech before close to 200 people at the Keiser University and Everglades University campus in Sarasota, Fla., Wednesday afternoon, January 23, 2008.

ROMNEY'S POSITIONS ON KEY ISSUES IN STATE

National Catastrophe Insurance: Open to the idea but against imposing unreasonable costs on states that are less exposed to natural disasters.

Offshore oil drilling: Supports "reasonable approaches to offshore drilling." Says federal government and states should work together on plans to open new offshore drilling sites "to balance American energy production and independence with environmental protection."

Right to die: Believes cases like Terri Schiavo's "should normally be left in the hands of the courts" and not solely left up to families to decide.

Climate change: As Massachusetts governor, backed out of regional pact to curb carbon dioxide emissions from power plants because it did not cap the higher energy costs it might place on business and consumers. Says energy independence is the way to deal with global warming.

NASA funding: Supports current funding levels and believes "that a strong nation should have a strong space program."

Everglades: Supports federal funding for Everglades restoration and would "work to ensure that the appropriate funding is authorized and actually spent on restoring this great national treasure."

Alternative energy: Supports increased funding into research and development of any technology that will reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil

Cuba: Supports current U.S.-Cuba policy.

Immigration: Opposed McCain's immigration bill, although he called it reasonable in 2005. Supports building a border fence with Mexico and stationing National Guard troops there. Calls for tamper-proof ID card so only legal immigrants can work. Opposes policy allowing legal immigrants to host extended families in U.S.

-- Associated Press

01/23/2008

ENGAGEMENT

On Sarasota visit, it's Romney the businessman

By ANNA SCOTT

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SARASOTA -- Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney raised his voice and extended his hand to mark the point.

"I will not need briefings on how the economy works; I know how it works," Romney told a gathering Wednesday in Sarasota. "I've been there. I think it's time to have a president who understands the economy, understands jobs, understands why jobs come and go."

As he travels throughout Florida in the days leading up to Tuesday's primary, Romney is employing the same strategy that helped him win Michigan, pitching himself as the only candidate with the business savvy to steer the country from recession and fix government programs like Social Security.

Addressing students and supporters at Keiser University, he promised to deliver "the strongest economy in the world" and invoked his 25 years working in the private sector. Having spent only four years in public office as governor of Massachusetts, he has spent the least amount of time in office of any of the Republican presidential candidates.

Romney and his supporters consider that an advantage. "I like to say being in politics for four years was not long enough to badly affect me," he said to applause.

The former governor's success on the campaign trail has been volatile, with groups of voters coming to his side, only to be wooed by other candidates as the Republican field began to shift dramatically. But now Romney's bid is showing signs of traction, partly, political experts said, because the timing was finally right for his message.

The economic climate became a national focal point in the past month, with President Bush releasing a stimulus plan and voters saying the economy, namely jobs and the rising cost of insurance, were their most important concerns.

The message has resonated in Florida particularly, where the collapse of the housing market has led to state budget gaps and job losses.

Polls show Romney, with a primary victory and two caucus wins already under his belt, among the leaders here. The closed primary could also give him an edge over Arizona Sen. John McCain, who won New Hampshire and South Carolina partly because of his popularity among independents.

Giuliani told a crowd last week in Fort Myers. "I had to help straighten out the economy of New York City, and our policies worked."

Romney, who has been criticized for being overtly political in his quest for votes, named his Florida bus tour "Change begins with us," a theme popularized when outlier candidates former Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas and Democratic Sen. Barack Obama won the Iowa caucuses earlier this month.

"Washington is fundamentally broken," Romney said Wednesday. "Sending the same people back, just in different chairs, isn't going to change anything."

He stressed that "new faces and a private-sector approach" could solve the health care crisis, insuring everyone without a government takeover. "You don't want the guys who managed the Katrina cleanup managing health care, you want the dynamics of the free market enterprise system."

Romney was a vice president of a management consulting firm before founding Bain Capital, a venture capital and investment firm, in 1984. He was the lead organizer of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City.

His plan to boost the economy includes cutting taxes to allow consumers to spend more, eliminating payroll taxes for workers over 65 and helping small businesses buy equipment to help maintain jobs and create new ones.

So many supporters lined up to hear his speech that the majority of them were ushered into an overflow lobby to watch on television. Some were impressed by the promise of an economic turnaround.

Kip Underwood, an electrical engineer living in Sarasota, was undecided but is leaning toward Romney.

"I like that he has a business background," Underwood said. "Having 25 years of experience, that kind of leadership would be great for a president. I like McCain, but he's been in Washington for a long time."

Others worried that, despite his bounce in the polls and a message that sticks, it will not be enough to win the nomination or, ultimately, the presidency.

"He's a proven winner and everything he's touched from day one has been a success," said Milton Thrasher, a Romney volunteer. "What he lacks is that charm that people gravitate toward. He's so cerebral."

Alan Morris decided to vote for Giuliani after hearing Romney's presentation.

"He's a decent man, but he has no idea what the Clintons are like, what

Washington is like," Morris said. "Giuliani is the only one who can get down in the dirt with them. No question, Romney's qualified to do the job, probably more than any of them. But he's a calm speaker. He's a nice man. I'm afraid politics isn't designed for people like him."

Staff writer Carol E. Lee contributed to this report.

BRADENTON HERALD

Bradenton.com



GOP Presidential hopeful Mitt Romney speaks to supporters during a campaign stop at Keiser University in Sarasota Wednesday morning. GRANT JEFFERIES/gjefferies@bradenton.com

Posted on Thu, Jan. 24, 2008

Romney hits East Manatee

By STACEY EIDSON
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An hour before Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney was scheduled to address a crowd at Keiser University in Lakewood Ranch, there was not a seat left in the house.

With about 150 supporters crowded in the university's banquet room to hear the former governor of Massachusetts speak Wednesday morning, college officials were forced to ask more than 50 additional guests to wait outside in the lobby.

As Romney entered the packed room with Elvis Presley's "A Little Less Conversation" booming from the speakers, he promised to deliver more action and less talk when it comes to turning around the country's economy.

"It is almost at a tipping point, where we could go south with the economy getting weaker and weaker or we can instead rebuild our growth," Romney said, adding that he has called on Congress to immediately implement an economic stimulus plan. "A lot of families are

feeling a real economic squeeze."

While talk of a pending recession continues to grow, Romney said voters across the country are concerned about the job market, the rising cost of health care and the instability of the stock market.

"With the news of the stock market having been very turbulent the last few days and down across the world, there is concern that somehow we are going to go into a global recession of some kind. This is a worry," he said. "I can tell you, I'm convinced that we don't have to be anxious. America can be strong. Our economy can lead the world as it has for so many years, but it is going to take some changes."

Those changes will have to come in the form of new leadership in Washington, Romney said.

"Washington is fundamentally broken," he said. "I'm convinced that sending the same people back, just in different chairs, is not going to change anything."

For years, politicians in Washington have talked about creating affordable health care, becoming energy-independent and securing the country's borders, but they have yet to achieve those goals, Romney said.

In the case of becoming energy-independent, Romney said it has been discussed since President Jimmy Carter was in office.

"Were you born when Jimmy Carter was president?" Romney asked a group of students from Keiser University, one of whom shook her head no. "See, we've got folks here that weren't born when we had presidents talking about doing that, and yet it hasn't happened."

After spending 25 years in the private sector before becoming governor of Massachusetts, Romney said he has the experience and just enough understanding about politics to lead the country into financial stability.

"I became governor for four years. I joke that being in politics for four years was not long enough to badly infect me," Romney said, as the audience cheered.

Speaking directly to about 50 students studying radiology, nursing and medical assisting who were sitting in the front rows of the audience and wearing scrubs, Romney said he is committed to making sure everyone in the country has access to health insurance.

"We had about 450,000 people in my state who were uninsured," Romney said, referring to Massachusetts. "I signed a bill about a year and a half ago, and now that it has been in place, we have signed up 300,000 people that didn't have insurance."

The same results can be achieved across the country without having government take over health care, he said.

"Let me tell you, you really don't want socialized medicine," Romney said. "You don't want Hillarycare."

Stacey Furbay, 22, a radiology student at Keiser University, said she decided two weeks ago that she was going to support Romney for president.

"This is my first year getting involved in political issues, so it was very nice to hear from Gov. Romney himself what is actually going on," she said.

Ray Yepez, another radiology student who is an undecided voter, said he has seen some of the candidates on television but wanted to hear what Romney had to say in person.

"To be honest with you, I don't know that he really stands out apart from whatever anyone else is saying. They all seem to be saying about the same thing," he said. "So, I'm still undecided."

But Tiffany Kallevik, of Bradenton, said Romney addressed many of the critical issues that she is concerned about as she prepares to vote on Jan. 29.

"I agree with Gov. Romney that the economy is the foundation," she said. "And his strong family values, combined with that economic basis, I think will really be able to propel the nation forward."

Attending the event with Kallevik were her friends, Wendy Crane, of Ellenton, and Lorraine White, of Sarasota, who believe Romney is stronger than his Republican rivals: hopefuls Sen. John McCain of Arizona, former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee and former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

"I think Romney has the good conservative views that we are missing in some of the other candidates," Crane said. "I'm afraid McCain is trying to redefine conservatism."

White agreed, adding that she has some major concerns about Huckabee, as well.

"Huckabee to me is scary," she said. "I think of another Jimmy Carter when I see Huckabee. For me, Mitt Romney is the whole package. But I want Mitt to take the mitts off and get a little more aggressive. Now is the time."

Stacey Eidson, Herald reporter, can be reached at 708-7908.

BRADENTON HERALD

Bradenton.com

Romney makes campaign stop in LWR

HERALD STAFF REPORT

Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney became the latest candidate to visit the Manatee-Sarasota area.

The "Change Begins With Us" Mitt Romney Bus Tour arrived at Keiser University in Lakewood Ranch for an appearance about 9: 25 a.m. today.

Romney, a former governor of Massachusetts, spoke to an overflow crowd, focusing heavily on the economy at a time when there is worry about jobs, the stock market, health care and insurance.

"We don't have to be anxious, but we need to make some changes in Washington," he

said.

Romney told students some of the long-standing problems have been around since before they were born, including lack of energy independence, affordable health care and sustainable Social Security.

Other presidential hopefuls expected to visit Sarasota this week include former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee and former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani.

Democratic hopeful Hillary Clinton is expected to attend a private fund-raiser in Sarasota. Due to party rules, Democratic candidates are forbidden to actively campaign in Florida prior to the state's Jan. 29 primary.

Romney says free market will improve health care

By [MICHAEL C. BENDER](#)

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

SARASOTA — Republican Mitt Romney expanded his health care message today while visiting with medical students at Keiser University.

The former Massachusetts governor also had stops scheduled this afternoon at the Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute before returning to Broward County tonight to prepare for the debate tomorrow in Boca Raton.

"You really don't want socialized medicine," Romney told the crowd of about 150 at the university. "You don't want Hillary-care you don't want the guys that managed the Katrina clean-up managing health at the hospital.

"Instead, you want the dynamics of the free enterprise system, the free market system working for health care as it has in the past."

But despite roughly 80 nursing, radiology and other medical students in the audience, the former venture capitalist and consultant did not stray far from his message of stimulating the economy.

His \$233 billion economic package includes a proposal that would let the Federal Housing Administration offer larger loans to homeowners and lower the required down payments for borrowers.

Romney repeated his refrain that "Washington is broken," but couched it by telling the crowd, "We do have a great government."

"But that's not the source of our strength," Romney said. "The source of our strength is the American people."

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ELECTION 2008 | PRESIDENT

Romney Touts His Business Experience, Economic Savvy

By ANNA SCOTT
NYT Regional Media Group for the Lakeland Ledger

SARASOTA | Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney raised his voice and extended his hand to mark the point.

"I will not need briefings on how the economy works - I know how it works," Romney told a gathering Wednesday in Sarasota. "I've been there. I think it's time to have a president who understands the economy, understands jobs, understands why jobs come and go."

As he travels throughout Florida in the days leading up to Tuesday's primary, Romney is employing the same strategy that helped him win Michigan, pitching himself as the only candidate with the business savvy to steer the country from recession and fix other complicated government programs like Social Security and health care.

Addressing students and supporters at Keiser University, he promised to deliver "the strongest economy in the world" and invoked his 25 years working in the private sector. Having spent only four years in public office as governor of Massachusetts, he has spent the least amount of time in office of all the Republican candidates.

Romney and his supporters consider that an advantage. "I like to say being in politics for four years was not long enough to badly affect me," he said to applause.

Now Romney's bid is showing signs of traction, partly, political experts said, because the timing was finally right for his message.

The economic climate became a national focal point in the past month, with President Bush releasing a stimulus plan and voters saying the economy, namely jobs and the rising cost of insurance, were their most important concerns.

The message resonates in Florida, where a housing market collapse has led to state budget gaps and job losses.



Presidential candidate Mitt Romney reaches to shake the hands of students and faithful following his speech before close to 200 people at the Keiser University and Everglades University campus in Sarasota on Wednesday afternoon. Romney is running neck-and-neck with John McCain, Mike Huckabee and Rudy Giuliani in the Republican primary, which will be decided when polls close on Jan. 29.

Wednesday, Jan. 23, 2008 at 11:36 a.m.

Romney: 'I will not need briefings on how the economy works'

By ANNA SCOTT
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About 200 people turned out to see Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney speak at Sarasota's Keiser University this morning. The speech started at 9 a.m. — by 8:15 the room was full and attendees were guided into a lobby to watch the talk on a television screen.

Romney, former governor of Massachusetts, arrived in Florida Saturday and is travelling the state on a bus tour his campaign calls "Change begins with us." He is fighting a four way race in Florida with former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Sen. John McCain, and Gov. Mike Huckabee from Arkansas.

This morning's talk was the last time Romney is expected to be in Sarasota before the primary Jan. 29. His primary

message: his private sector experience will help him transform Washington and strengthen the economy.

"I spent 25 years in business and I was governor for four years," he said. "I will not need briefings on how the economy works. I've been there. And I think it's time we have a president who understands the economy, understands jobs, knows why jobs come and go, knows how we can be competitive around the world."

BRADENTON HERALD

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Posted on Wed, Jan. 23, 2008

Romney: Strength comes from the economy

By STACEY EIDSON

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LAKEWOOD RANCH - As talk of a pending recession continues to grow, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney told a standing-room-only crowd at Keiser University that the key to the country's future is a solid economy.

"If you want to have a strong military, you have got to have a strong economy," he said. "If you want a strong family, if you want kids to be able to come out of the home and get great jobs, you need a strong economy."

After spending 25 years in the private sector before becoming governor of Massachusetts, Romney said he has the experience and just enough understanding about politics to lead the country into financial stability.

"I became governor for four years. I joke that being in politics for four years was not long enough to badly infect me," Romney said, as the audience cheered. "I will go to Washington using the experience I have in the private sector to strengthen our economy. Both in the short-term and long-term. I will fight to make sure that we have the strongest economy in the world."

With the right leadership, Romney said the United State's future is much brighter than its past.

"I do not subscribe to the Washington-style pessimism that you see," he said. "I subscribe to what Ronald Reagan said, that we will always be the shining city on the hill."

More than 50 students from Keiser College studying radiology, nursing or medical assisting sat in the front rows of the audience wearing bright green, burgundy or blue scrubs.

Stacey Furbay, 22, a radiology student at Keiser University, said she decided two weeks ago that she was going to support Romney for president.

"This is my first year getting involved in political issues, so it was very nice to hear from Gov. Romney himself what is actually going on," she said.

Ray Yepez, another radiology student who is an undecided voter, said he has seen some of the candidates on television, but wanted to hear what

Romney had to say in person.

"We found out yesterday that a presidential candidate was going to be here and it is probably the closest I'll ever be to one, so I said, 'Let's go take a look at him,'" Yepez said. "To be honest with you, I don't know that he really stands out apart from whatever anyone else is saying. They all seem to be saying about the same thing. So, I'm still undecided."

But Tiffany Kallevik of Bradenton said Romney addressed many of the critical issues that she is concerned about as she prepares to vote on Jan. 29.

"I agree with Gov. Romney that the economy is the foundation," she said. "And his strong family values, combined with that economic basis, I think will really be able to propel the nation forward."

Stacey Eidson, Herald reporter, can be reached at 708-7908.



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Thursday, Jan 24, 2008

Posted on Wed, Jan. 23, 2008

Analysis: Florida can clarify GOP race

By LIZ SIDOTI

Associated Press Writer

The aftermath of the South Carolina primary brought some measure of clarity to the muddled Republican presidential race.

Florida could well sort it out.

In the four days since they stumbled in the first-in-the-South primary, Fred Thompson dropped out and Mike Huckabee made clear that money is extremely tight, his campaign little more than a token effort. That leaves John McCain and Mitt Romney fighting it out while Rudy Giuliani, who has staked his candidacy on the state, trails in winner-take-all Florida as the focus shifts to the slumping economy.

"We will have a pro-growth, pro-economic, low-tax, low-spending agenda when I'm president," McCain said Wednesday during an economic round-table with local business officials in the warehouse of a company that makes hot tubs and spa equipment.

"I know why jobs come and go," Romney argued in this central Florida city earlier this week, emphasizing his 25 years in the private sector.

Not to be outdone, Giuliani said Wednesday in Estero on Florida's southwest coast: "I was tested dealing with an economy that was in very bad shape when I became mayor of New York City."

The three Republicans are canvassing the vast and diverse state in the six days leading up to Tuesday's primary, running TV ads and targeting areas where they believe they can pick up the most votes.

A new poll out Wednesday showed the race a dead heat between McCain, with 25 percent, and Romney, with 23 percent, while Giuliani and Huckabee trail at 15 percent. More than a quarter of the likely voters surveyed - 27 percent - said they still may change their minds. The survey was sponsored by the St. Petersburg Times, The Miami Herald and Bay News 9.

Florida is different than previous contests: Only registered Republicans can vote in the primary, the state offers the winner a hefty 57 delegates to the GOP convention and it serves as a gateway to the Feb. 5 de facto national primary day when some two dozen states vote.

Up for grabs are Thompson backers looking for an alternative after he abandoned his bid on Tuesday.

Associated Press polling suggests that they would scatter across all the candidates, though it appears Romney would get the largest share. That

could be bad news for Giuliani, who attracts more moderates than conservatives, and McCain, who won the South Carolina primary in part because three candidates split the far-right vote.

To a certain extent, Huckabee supporters, can be picked off too.

The former Arkansas governor rallied evangelicals to win Iowa but didn't prevail in South Carolina. That left his shoestring campaign hungry for cash. Some staff left; others aren't getting paid. Huckabee said he probably won't advertise in Florida and his thin schedule includes only brief stops at airports. His support, surely, will take a hit.

"Fewer people are going after the conservative wing of the party," said Rich Galen, a former Thompson adviser. "Without Thompson or Huckabee in the race in the Florida, there's a clear path for Romney to run to the right of Giuliani and McCain."

Endorsed Wednesday by former GOP candidate Duncan Hunter, Huckabee seems to be competing not for the nomination but rather to be seen as the newest leader of the evangelical wing of the party - and to have a say at that convention, if not thereafter.

Thus, the Florida race is essentially between three men - and the outcome will be critical for each.

"It's campaign-changing for all of them because a win or a second or a third has a different impact on the long-term viability of their candidacies," said Christopher LaCivita, an unaligned Republican strategist.

Among the big Florida unknowns: whether Republican Gov. Charlie Crist will endorse, and the impact of absentee voters who can comprise up to 30 percent of the vote.

-MCCAIN:

The Arizona senator came to Florida with momentum from New Hampshire and South Carolina. But those two wins were fueled in part by independents, and the Florida primary is Republican-only. That's a potential roadblock.

So are cash-flow issues. He's on the air with moderate-to-heavy levels of TV ads in most parts of Florida but, nonetheless, has been forced to spend part of the week holding private fundraisers to pump more money into his buys and prepare for the next contests.

Polls in some upcoming states show McCain leading Giuliani, who once held the advantage in California and New York. But a loss in Florida would

make it difficult for McCain to compete aggressively in what will be an expensive TV campaign. A win would cement his image as the GOP front-runner and produce loads of positive - and free - media coverage as well as a likely cash windfall.

-ROMNEY:

The former Massachusetts governor won hard-fought Michigan as well as scarcely contested Wyoming and Nevada. He found a message that works - fixing the economy - and he's sticking to it, hammering his credentials in TV ads and at campaign events. That could give him an edge among Florida's significant elderly population concerned about retirement accounts and investments.

Romney's personal wealth gives him a significant advantage over his rivals. He's running heavy levels of ads most everywhere - and he has money to spare - as he courts economic conservatives and seeks to peel off Thompson and Huckabee supporters.

Because of his money, Romney wouldn't be dead if he doesn't win Florida. He could live another week to compete on Feb. 5. A win would make him hard to beat.

-GIULIANI:

The former New York mayor has lost six straight primaries and caucuses - and has pinned his entire candidacy on a Florida win. Anything short of that would effectively end his bid.

Money is an issue. Senior aides have forgone their paychecks this month, and Giuliani has spent much of his time this week at fundraisers as he seeks to stay competitive on TV.

He hopes to benefit from his support for an issue important to Floridians - a national catastrophe insurance fund. He's the only Republican to outrightly support the issue, a top federal priority for Crist.

But a firefighters union angry over his performance on Sept. 11, 2001, are sending direct mail critical of Giuliani and have been dogging him on the campaign.

EDITOR'S NOTE - Liz Sidoti covers the Republican presidential race for The Associated Press.

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BOSTON GLOBE



Republican presidential hopeful, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, greets supporters during a campaign stop at Keiser University in Sarasota, Fla., Wednesday, Jan. 23, 2008.

boston.com

THIS STORY HAS BEEN FORMATTED FOR EASY PRINTING

AP Associated Press

Romney counts on business resume to reassure voters

By David Espo, AP Special Correspondent | January 23, 2008

SARASOTA, Fla. --With recession fears growing, Mitt Romney's latest television ad is part resume, part resolve. And all reassurance.

"I know how America works because I spent my life in the real economy," says the man who made millions as a venture capitalist. "My plan will make America strong."

No mention of John McCain, Rudy Giuliani or Mike Huckabee, Republican presidential rivals whose campaign credentials lean heavily on government service. The point is unmistakable, all the same.

The ad is the most visible element of Romney's strategy for the final week of the Florida primary. After a series of early campaign setbacks and one notable triumph, the former Massachusetts governor and aides have concluded that even in a state with relatively low unemployment, economic anxiety is his best hope for a victory that could finally set him on a path to the nomination.

"I won't need a briefing on how the economy works. I've been there. I know how the economy works," he told an audience on Wednesday to applause.

Not surprisingly, his Republican rivals are loath to let his claim go unchallenged.

"Of all the people running for president of the United States, I've had the most experience in turning around a government and turning around an economy," Giuliani said earlier this week. "I actually accomplished that in New York City," the former mayor added.

McCain's aides recently circulated a one-page compilation of reports, many from the media, that said Massachusetts state spending rose sharply and economic growth lagged during Romney's four years as governor. One recalled his refusal to take a position on President Bush's tax cuts in 2003.

In fact, Romney the politician can seem awkward trying to acknowledge the economic anxiety that is manifest in opinion polls.

"I do believe that among our citizens there's a growing concern about our economy as they see the dollar slide, the stock market slide," he said recently before listing more common concerns such as mortgage foreclosures and job losses.

And on Tuesday, as the markets braced for a sell-off that would send stock prices plummeting, he mixed in some professional investment advice. "If I were at home I'd be calling my broker and looking for opportunities to buy," he said.

Whatever his earlier position on tax cuts, Romney now preaches their virtue.

On Saturday, he issued an economic stimulus plan totaling \$233 billion, half again as big as anything President Bush and congressional leaders had been discussing.

Its centerpiece is tax breaks for businesses investing in new equipment, an essential element, he says, for the creation of jobs.

It also included an individual income tax rebate of \$400 to get money into the economy quickly, as well as a permanent reduction in the current 10 percent income tax bracket to

7.5 percent, designed for longer-term economic growth.

Under his plan, millions of lower-paid workers who pay payroll taxes but no income tax would not receive rebates. "I don't give it to people who don't pay taxes," he told one audience, which applauded in return. Aides also cited studies they said cast doubt on whether lower-income workers had used earlier rebates to stimulate the economy by purchasing consumer goods.

Romney's decision to emphasize his business background comes at a pivotal point in the battle for the nomination. Many conservatives have never warmed to him, wary of his previous support for abortion rights and gay rights. Huckabee's rise in Iowa and McCain's New Hampshire comeback made Romney odd-man out in the first two events of the year.

He rebounded smartly with a victory in the Michigan primary, where he campaigned on a promise to try and bring back the thousands of auto industry jobs that have been lost in recent years.

A Michigan native, he also stressed his personal ties to a struggling state with the highest unemployment in the country.

Without the same economic-based appeal, but without the personal connection, he stumbled the following week in high-unemployment South Carolina, where McCain won and Huckabee came in second.

Now Florida looms as the final single-state test before the campaign goes national with more than 20 primaries and caucuses on Feb. 5. With former Tennessee Sen. Fred Thompson out of the race, Huckabee out of money and Giuliani in desperate need of a victory, the winnowing process is under way.

Ironically, Florida presents Romney with a personal business decision to make.

He has poured \$35 million or more of his own funds into the race. While he has outspent his rivals on television in Florida, until Wednesday he had not advertised in Miami, the state's most expensive media market. According to officials who spoke on condition of anonymity, aides have urged him to do so, and in recent days asked him to commit another \$400,000 or so from his personal funds to finance the effort.

None of the behind the scenes maneuvering plays out in public, though.

Instead, Romney's aides produced a new campaign backdrop within hours after the Federal Reserve cut interest rates and the stock market plunged on fears of recession.

"Economic Turnaround," it read. ■



The New York Times

Romney Leads in Ill Will Among G.O.P. Candidates



Within the circle of contenders for the Republican presidential nomination, Mitt Romney has become the most disliked. Still, he says he views his rivals as friends.

By [MICHAEL LUO](#)

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TAMPA, Fla. — At the end of the Republican [presidential debate](#) in New Hampshire this month, when the Democrats joined the candidates on stage, [Mitt Romney](#) found himself momentarily alone as his counterparts mingled, looking around a bit stiffly for a companion.

The moment was emblematic of a broader reality that has helped shape the Republican contest and could take center stage again on Thursday at a debate in Florida. Within the small circle of contenders, Mr. Romney has become the most disliked.

With so much attention recently on the sniping between Senators [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) and [Barack Obama](#) on the Democratic side, the

almost visceral scorn directed at Mr. Romney by his rivals has been overshadowed.

“Never get into a wrestling match with a pig,” Senator [John McCain](#) said in New Hampshire this month after reporters asked him about Mr. Romney. “You both get dirty, and the pig likes it.”

[Mike Huckabee](#)’s pugilistic campaign chairman, Ed Rollins, appeared to stop just short of threatening Mr. Romney with physical violence at one point.

“What I have to do is make sure that my anger with a guy like Romney, whose teeth I want to knock out, doesn’t get in the way of my thought process,” Mr. Rollins said.

Campaign insiders and outside strategists point to several factors driving the ill will, most notably, Mr. Romney’s attacks on opponents in television commercials, the perception of him as an ideological panderer and resentment about his seemingly unlimited resources as others have struggled to raise cash.

Mr. Romney’s campaign contends that the hostility is driven by the fact that he has aggressively sought to win the early primaries, setting himself up as the chief antagonist, first, to Mr. Huckabee in Iowa and then to Mr. McCain in New Hampshire.

Mr. Romney continues to be a mountain in the paths of both men, as well as [Rudolph W. Giuliani](#), to the nomination.

A spokesman for the Romney campaign, Kevin Madden, said, “I think it’s largely driven by the fact that everybody’s taught to tackle the guy on the field with the ball.”

But the New Hampshire debate was striking in that it amounted to a gang tackle of Mr. Romney, even though Mr. McCain was leading in polls in the state.

“The glee the other candidates go after Romney with is really unique,” said Dan Schnur, a Republican strategist who worked on Mr. McCain’s presidential campaign bid in 2000 but is not affiliated with any campaign now.

A senior adviser to Mr. Romney, Ronald C. Kaufman, pointed to his vast personal fortune and upstart status in the political world as breeding resentment.

“They think he didn’t pay his dues,” said Mr. Kaufman, who argued that Mr. Romney had done so by working tirelessly in his campaign.

In stark contrast to Mr. Romney, Mr. McCain seems to be universally liked and respected by the other Republican contenders, even if they disagree with him.

Mr. Schnur used a schoolyard analogy to compare Mr. Romney, the ever-proper Harvard Law School and Business School graduate, to Mr. McCain, the gregarious rebel who racked up demerits and friends at the Naval Academy.

“John McCain and his friends used to beat up Mitt Romney at recess,” Mr. Schnur said.

Although Mr. McCain has now started to draw some cautious challenges from Mr. Giuliani in Florida, he has a longstanding friendship with him, dating from 1998, when they first met.

Mr. McCain also seems to have fallen into a mutual nonaggression pact with Mr. Huckabee, who has been almost fawning in his compliments for Mr. McCain and dripping with contempt when discussing Mr. Romney.

Mr. McCain has drawn criticism as being excessively personal in striking back at Mr. Romney. So he has tried to play down any notion that he harbors special animosity toward him, saying he simply does not know him well.

But Mr. McCain’s advisers, whose distaste for Mr. Romney is vivid, say Mr. McCain has been irked by what they perceive as misleading attacks and Mr. Romney’s willingness to say anything to be elected.

“He doesn’t play by the same rules the rest of us do,” said Charlie Black, a senior McCain strategist.

McCain aides were positively gleeful last week as they watched replays aboard their campaign bus of a heated back and forth between Mr. Romney and an Associated Press reporter who challenged an assertion about the influence of lobbyists in his campaign.

Nevertheless, before he criticizes rivals, Mr. Romney often pauses to say that the man is a “friend,” and he seems to believe it.

Mr. Giuliani endorsed Mr. Romney in his race for Massachusetts governor in 2002 and campaigned for him. Mr. Romney got to know Mr. McCain while running the 2002 Winter Olympic Games and went to Washington to seek federal money.

Mr. Romney probably knows Mr. Huckabee the best, aides said, as the two were governors at the same time and ran into each other often through the Republican Governors Association and the [National Governors Association](#).

Paradoxically, sometimes the enmity between them appears to be the sharpest.

Aides to Mr. Huckabee say he did not get to know Mr. Romney very well as a governor, finding him distant at meetings. The aides said they were also irritated that Mr. Romney did not call after Mr. Huckabee’s victory in Iowa.

Mr. Romney shrugged off any tension with his rivals when asked about it.

“You know,” he said, “in this process, people have a real battle for success. But I consider these guys friends.”

Elisabeth Bumiller contributed reporting from Orlando, Fla.