



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on August 12, 2011

## **GOP Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney**

The Cato Institute reported of Romney's 2003 proposals as Massachusetts Governor:

He scared some conservatives when he said that he was opposed to tax increases but he couldn't rule them out. His first budget, presented under the cloud of a \$2 billion deficit, balanced the budget with some spending cuts, but a \$500 million increase in various fees was the largest component of the budget fix.

However, the "fees" were really taxes — i.e., they had nothing to do with actual costs incurred by government services they provided. Romney's claim of not raising taxes is based upon a simple deception: He called his tax increases "fees." During the 2008 presidential campaign, NBC's *Meet the Press* host, the late Tim Russert, exploded Romney's claim that he hadn't proposed tax increases as Governor:



*Mr. Russert:* The AP says it this way: "When Romney wanted to balance the Massachusetts budget, the blind, mentally retarded and gun owners were asked to help pay. In all, then-Gov. Romney proposed creating 33 new fees," [and] "increasing 57 others." The head of the Bay State Council of the Blind said that your name was "Fee-Fee"; that you just raised fee after fee after fee. That's a tax.... A fee's not a tax?

*Gov. Romney:* A fee — well, a fee — if it were a tax, it'd be called — it'd be called a tax. But...

*Mr. Russert:* Governor, that's, that's gimmick.

*Gov. Romney:* No, it's, it's reality. It is. But — and I have no — I'm not trying to hide from the fact we raised fees. We raised fees \$240 million.

Romney argued with Russert: "But a fee is different than a tax in that it's for a particular service." Of course, Romney increased fees upon gun owners (gun permits) and for people who needed duplicate licenses. Neither of these is a "service" that the government provides; they are simply licenses needed to comply with government-established mandates. The independent FactCheck.org noted that "the Massachusetts Department of Administration and Finance says that fee increases during Romney's tenure added up to \$260 million per year, with another \$174 million raised from closing some corporate tax 'loopholes.'" The independent Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation puts the revenue total of fee hikes and tax loophole-closings at between \$740 and \$750 million a year."

And Romney continues to defend his biggest tax increase, the Massachusetts' healthcare reform that has served as the model for the ObamaCare national legislation. The 2006 Massachusetts healthcare law required employers to offer employees health insurance (or face a withering fine) and also set a fine



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for individuals who did not purchase insurance.

At the June 13, 2011 debate in New Hampshire, Romney said that the problem with ObamaCare is that “it raises \$500 billion in taxes. We didn’t raise taxes in Massachusetts.” Taxes on insurers and healthcare providers were raised with Romney’s original healthcare reform proposal to create a \$700 million fund to pay for heavily subsidized insurance plans for the poor. And FactCheck.org noted that RomneyCare was funded in part by a \$1 per pack tax hike on cigarettes (enacted by his successor, Democrat Deval Patrick) and heavy federal subsidies. In addition, RomneyCare increased taxes on employers and workers who don’t purchase insurance. In 2011, the fine for the individual mandate is as much as \$1,212 per year, which is added directly onto the income taxes of non-compliant state residents. This fine will eventually rise to more than \$3,500 per year as the law continues to be phased in.

Romney’s June 2011 statement about taxes contradicts what the former Massachusetts Governor admitted in a March 7, 2010 interview on *Fox News Sunday*. Romney acknowledged that the Massachusetts plan is based upon huge tax increases: “If they don’t buy insurance, they’ll find that their taxes are higher. The employer mandate is pretty soft. An employer pays — I think it’s \$295 a year if an employee doesn’t have insurance that they bought on their own or if they bought through the company.” The employer mandate is \$295 per employee, meaning that it is a tax of thousands of dollars on most noncompliant companies.

Despite the overwhelming evidence that Romney proposed multiple tax increases as Governor of Massachusetts, he continues to get a hall pass from most of the major media about his record of promoting tax increases.

The RomneyCare championed by the Massachusetts Governor in 2006 is nearly identical to national legislation enacted in 2010, mandating all of the major provisions that are present in ObamaCare:

- Mandating individual healthcare (and a fine for not purchasing insurance);
- Mandating employer healthcare for employees (and a fine for non-compliance);
- Banning insurers from exempting “pre-existing conditions” from policies;
- Mandating that young adults may stay on their parents’ plan until age 26;
- Creating government regulated “insurance exchanges”; and
- Instituting heavy subsidies for the poor to purchase insurance.

Yet the costs of Massachusetts’ RomneyCare are out of control. An April 2011 Blue Cross/Blue Shield Foundation Report on Massachusetts healthcare reform says that Massachusetts has the highest healthcare costs in the nation, and those costs are expected to nearly double by 2020.

On issues other than healthcare and taxes, Romney has a record of being either a liberal-left Republican or — at best — an opportunistic flip-flopper. Romney does condemn deficit spending under the Obama administration on his presidential campaign website. But the “fiscal responsibility” championed by Romney on that same campaign website does not contain one specific spending cut proposal other than to repeal ObamaCare.

So what spending would Romney propose cutting to balance the budget? Voters are left to guess, as Romney will not tell them.

Romney supported the TARP bank bailout in 2008, a bailout that sparked the Tea Party movement’s ire



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at the use of taxpayers' money to bail out a few super-rich banks that lost risky gambles on a real estate market bubble. Romney continues to say that the TARP bailout was a good deal today, but has tried to modify his stance by saying that Obama implemented the law poorly. In essence, Romney has defended the principle of corporatism — bailout of super-rich banks with the tips of waitresses and cab drivers — while condemning those who managed the corporatism.

On the political Left, former Democratic National Committee staffer Matt Ortega has put up the particularly clever website [MultipleChoiceMitt.com](#), which quotes Romney on both sides of more than a dozen issues. Front and center in "Multiple Choice Mitt" is Romney's rhetoric on the abortion issue. During his 2002 run for Governor of Massachusetts, Romney's position on abortion was identical to Ted Kennedy and the rest of the liberal Democrats in the state: "Let me make this very clear: I will preserve and protect a woman's right to choose," Romney said during the 2002 gubernatorial debates with Democratic candidate Shannon O'Brien. Since going on the campaign trail for President in 2008, Romney has claimed a conversion to the pro-life side of the issue.

Romney is a graduate of Brigham Young University, as well as Harvard Business School and Harvard Law School. As a businessman, he helped resolve a scandal in the 2002 winter Olympics, and is the richest candidate in personal wealth (after remarkable financial success in the Boston-based Bain Capital). He is a member of the Mormon Church.

Romney has raised some \$18.2 million in campaign contributions during the second quarter of 2011 for the 2012 election cycle, easily outpacing all of his primary opponents (Rep. Ron Paul's \$4.5 million is second-best). His contributions are primarily from large donors.

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