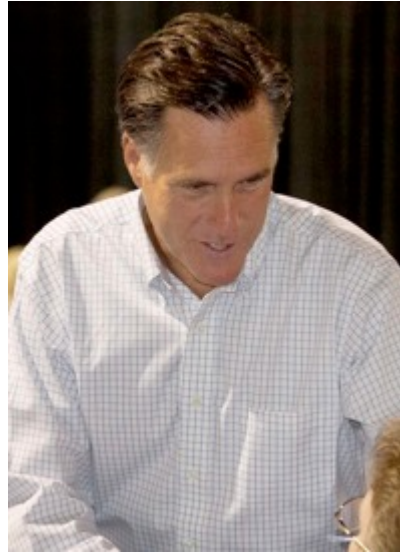




Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on June 3, 2011

Palin, in N.H., Rains on Romney's Parade

The Romney announcement had long been anticipated. The Palin appearance was a well-kept secret and thus a surprise. The unexpected is news. Palin seemed to arrive out of nowhere and appeared to be suddenly nipping at the heels of the frontrunner. She became, at least in some newspapers, the bigger story. She was all over page one of the only statewide daily, the [New Hampshire Union Leader](#). Romney's announcement was on page three.



Given the history of the party primaries in New Hampshire, where the national press spends no small amount of time covering the *Union Leader's* coverage of the candidates, that was no small accomplishment for the former Alaska Governor, who the day before suggested Romney was foolish to make his announcement while she was doing her bus tour.

Romney didn't mention Palin or any of his other potential rivals, like announced candidates Ron Paul, Newt Gingrich, Herman Cain, and Tim Pawlenty, as well as yet unannounced candidates Palin and former Utah Governor John Huntsman, most recently the Ambassador to China. But the front page of the *Union Leader* was a busy place Friday, as even Palin's celebrity tour had to compete with the [death of former New Hampshire Governor Walter Peterson](#). Still, the Palin party got an eye-catching, above-the-fold spread on the front page, with an appealing photo of the former Governor and daughter Piper, age 10, leaving a Seabrook restaurant on their way to a clambake. The summer of 2011 has begun. And the presidential election of 2012 is only 18 months away.

Palin's bus tour started in Washington, D.C., and has worked its way up the East Coast, stopping at historic sights along the way, including the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia and Paul Revere's home in Boston. She insists the tour is not about her possible presidential campaign, but is about reminding people of the greatness of America and its history. Still, the 47-year-old ex-Governor and former beauty pageant winner was not at all camera shy or wary of microphones, as she demonstrated at an impromptu press conference at the clambake she attended.

"There is not a need to transform our country," she insisted, taking aim at a theme Obama rode to the White House as the "hope and change" candidate in 2008. There is a need, she said, "to revive what's good about our country." She also declared the Tea Party movement "beautiful" and said she was "proud to be a part of it."

Romney admitted to the crowd in Stratham that his heart was breaking, but not over Sarah Palin. "It breaks my heart to see what is happening in this country," Romney said, citing a stagnant economy that has, he said, 16 million Americans out of work. Appearing in his new, more casual style without a tie,



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the former principal of Bain Capital and multimillionaire businessman said he could and would create jobs, something President Obama has failed to do, despite the optimistic predictions he made about the effects of the \$787 billion stimulus bill a Democratic Congress passed and the new President signed early in 2009. That the economy is still stagnant in the midst of a slow and "jobless recovery" two and a half years later is the main point of virtually every Republican candidate's campaign for President.

The Democratic incumbent "has failed America," said Romney, who finished second to John McCain in the 2008 New Hampshire primary, despite having been the Governor of a neighboring state and a part-time resident of the Granite State at his summer home in Wolfeboro. He is clearly the frontrunner in New Hampshire at this point, but is not as clearly the frontrunner nationally. Should Romney hit a "bump in the road" in New Hampshire this time, it could be fatal to his candidacy, since his popularity in Massachusetts has waned as voters there have soured on the mandatory health insurance plan Romney, as Governor, guided through a Legislature dominated by Democrats. While seemingly popular when it passed, the law, which requires citizens to purchase medical insurance or pay a fine or "fee," has become a sore point with voters, who have noticed its similarity to the healthcare plan President Obama and the Democratic Congress enacted on the national level. In a special election for U.S. Senate in January, 2010, Republican state Sen. Scott Brown, basing his campaign largely on a pledge to oppose the Democratic plan in Washington, scored a huge upset win over Attorney General Martha Coakley for the U.S. Senate seat that had been held by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy for nearly half a century. It was the same seat held by Sen. John F. Kennedy from January 1953 until he went to the White House in January 1961.

But Brown's electrifying win came despite the fact that he had, as a state Senator, voted for a healthcare bill remarkably similar to the one he was opposing in Washington. Romney has frequently been called on to explain the difference between "ObamaCare," which he vows to repeal, and RomneyCare, which was the centerpiece of his accomplishments in a single four-year term as Governor of the Commonwealth. Obama administration spokesmen have gone out of their way to praise the former Bay State Governor for leading the way on healthcare reform, praise that surely will not help Romney as he tries to win Republican primaries.

Should Romney stumble in New Hampshire and come up with a less-than-convincing victory in the Massachusetts primary later on, his Northeast setbacks will leave him ill-positioned to follow a Southern strategy in the South Carolina primary, usually held within a week to 10 days after New Hampshire, and in other states in Dixie. In a region where Republican politics tend to be solidly Baptist, the candidate's Mormon religion could be a drawback. Perhaps that's why, seeing Romney as the apparent frontrunner, former Arkansas Governor and Fox News talk-show host Mike Huckabee is hinting he may reconsider his decision to stay out of the current quest for the key to the White House. Huckabee, an ordained Baptist minister, has a strong following among "values" voters in the party and in 2008 was the surprise winner of the Republican caucuses in Iowa, which precede the New Hampshire primary by eight days.

Though a strong family man with a devoted wife and large brood of children and grandchildren, Romney, 64, is held suspect by social conservatives for his previous stands in favor of abortion "rights" and the homosexual, or "gay," agenda as Massachusetts Governor and even earlier when he was the unsuccessful GOP candidate for Senate in 1994. In that race, Romney told a "gay" activist group that he would be better able to advance their cause than his opponent would. His opponent was Sen. Edward M. Kennedy.



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Between his failed Senate bid and his governorship, Romney took over the scandal-plagued 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah, and was credited with turning things around and leading the games to success. He has pledged to do the same with the nation's economy, starting on Inauguration Day, January 20, 2013.

Former New Hampshire Gov. John H. Sununu, who served as chief of staff to President George H.W. Bush from 1989-91, said the Romney campaign has obviously learned a few things from the 2008 experience. "I think they're getting sharper on message, and I think they're rightly focusing on the concern that America has about jobs and spending and taxes. All the candidates will try to do that," Sununu told the *New Hampshire Union Leader*. "Whatever one does it best will get the support of the people."

Sununu, who stepped down as Republican State Chairman earlier this year, has not yet endorsed any candidate. Neither has Kevin Smith, executive director of Cornerstone Action, a conservative group focused mainly on family-related issues. Smith, whose organization is best known for its opposition to abortion and gay marriage, is also on board with the "jobs, jobs and more jobs" theme for the 2012 campaign. Romney, he said, "needs to prove that he's the right guy to lead the country at a time when unemployment is still very high and the deficit continues to grow. He needs to show that he's up for the job."

Photo of Mitt Romney: AP Images



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