

Democrats Revive Attack That Romney Misstated Role at Bain
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By Matt Negrin

Democrats reupped their main point of attack against Mitt Romney today, suggesting once again that the presumed Republican candidate might have committed a felony as the GOP camp refused to play ball.

Last week, Romney demanded in five interviews with the main TV networks that President Obama apologize for his campaign's implication that Romney broke the law by misstating his role at Bain Capital on documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Obama said he would not be apologizing.

The chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, revived the accusation on MSNBC today. Democrats have been helped by a Boston Globe report that said Romney was listed as the head of Bain Capital for three years after he had said he left, in 1999. Romney's maintaining that he had left Bain that year let him escape blame for the outsourcing of jobs that happened at Bain-backed companies after 1999.

"Either Mitt Romney was lying on SEC forms and misrepresenting to his investors — which could be a felony — that he was the sole owner, president, CEO of Bain Capital from 1999 until almost the end of 2001, or he wasn't and represented that he was," Wasserman Schultz said. "It can't be both. And so if he was sole owner, president, CEO, then he is to be held accountable for the decisions that were made for the outsourcing of jobs that took place during that time."

President Barack Obama delivers remarks during a campaign, left, and Mitt Romney, speaks about the Supreme Court's health care ruling.

Romney's campaign has dismissed the felony suggestion as absurd after the Obama campaign official Stephanie Cutter tried it out last week. Romney's spokespeople had nothing new to say about Wasserman Schultz's remark. Even the liberal writers on the New York Times editorial board said that Cutter "did go too far, perhaps, in suggesting Mr. Romney may have legal problems over this issue." The paper said Obama's "criticism is fair," though, because Romney won't disclose his finances.

The Democratic-aligned Huffington Post also reloaded the Bain gun by publishing a new document that shows Romney was listed as a managing member of Bain in late 2002.

Romney said in his interviews last week that he had "no responsibility whatsoever" for what happened at Bain after 1999, even if he was "the owner of the general partnership" that managed Bain. Then on Sunday, one of Romney's advisers, Ed Gillespie, claimed that Romney had stayed at Bain part-time at first, then took a leave of absence, and finally "retired retroactively to 1999."

That's just one front of the background check on Romney. The other is Democrats' demand that Romney release his tax returns beyond 2010.

Romney adviser Kevin Madden told ABC News' David Muir that the candidate doesn't plan on buckling to those pressures, and that he'll release just one more year of his returns — the most recent filing. Romney told Fox News today that he shouldn't have to release more because John McCain, John Kerry and Kerry's rich wife didn't have to.

"She never released her tax returns, and somehow this wasn't an issue," Romney said.

What's clear is that the Obama campaign is directing the media narrative, and it's more about taxes and Bain than the economy. Reporters are now writing about Romney's previous push for opening up tax books — in 2002 his campaign pressed a familiar-sounding "what is she hiding?" line against his opponent, whose husband had connections to Enron.

Even Romney's campaign, which would like the news to be focused on the unemployment rate, has spent a good deal of time responding to the attacks, including a compilation of authoritative neutral voices that have been skeptical of the Obama camp's suggestion that Romney committed a felony.

Is that what the public wants to hear about the most? Hard to say. Obama did a "town hall" today and took seven questions from the crowd; not one of them was about Romney. They were about gay rights, natural gas, small businesses, Girl Scout cookies, Washington, education and employment.

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