

Romney Says GOP's Not 'Party of the Rich,' But 'of Those Who Want to Be Rich
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By Emily Friedman

JACKSON, Miss. — At a fundraiser at a country club in Mississippi this evening that was expected to raise a record-breaking \$1.7 million, Mitt Romney defended the Republican Party against its reputation as the “party of the rich” explaining that really, it is a party focused on helping the poor.

“We’re accused, by the way — in our party — of being the party of the rich,” Romney said. “And it’s an awful moniker, because that’s just not true. We’re the party of people who want to get rich. And we’re also the party of people who want to care to help people from getting poor. We want to help the poor.

“We also want to make sure people don’t have to become poor,” Romney said. “And we know what it takes to keep people from becoming poor.”

This was Romney’s second fundraiser of the day, his first in Louisiana raising at least \$2 million, bringing the campaign’s tally for the day to \$3.7 million.

Romney himself seemed taken aback by the night’s success, which a campaign aide said a finance analyst had determined was the single largest political fundraising event in Mississippi’s history.

“This is a real gathering. I can’t believe the success tonight as I heard how much you have raised and I appreciate that very, very much — it means a great deal for me,” he said. “I know you’re not doing it for me, or even for my party, you’re doing it for the country.”

At his first fundraiser of the day, Romney told the guests — who each had to have contributed \$50,000 to the campaign to attend — that it was likely the “most expensive lunch” they’ve ever had. At the event in Mississippi, Romney gave a nod to those handing out refreshments to the group as an example of people who are struggling in the Obama economy.

“I know that people in this room are probably doing relatively well, relative to folks across this country. But not everyone in America is doing so well right now, it’s tough being middle class in America right now,” Romney said. “The waiters and waitresses that come in and out of this room and offer us refreshments, they’re not having a good year.

“The people of the middle class of America are really struggling. And they’re struggling, I think, in a way because they’re surprised, because when they voted for Barack Obama, he promised them that things were going to get a heck a lot of better,” Romney said. “He promised hope and change and they’re still waiting.”

During the primary election, Romney was criticized for a remark in which he suggested he wasn’t as worried about the very poor as he is about other struggling Americans.

"I'm in this race because I care about Americans," Romney told CNN in February, on the morning after winning the Florida primary. "I'm not concerned about the very poor. We have a safety net there. If it needs repair, I'll fix it."

Romney tried to explain his remarks, saying, "I've said throughout the campaign my focus, my concern, my energy is going to be devoted to helping middle income people, all right?"

"We have a safety net for the poor in, and if there are holes in it, I will work to repair that," he said. "And if there are people that are falling through the cracks, I want to fix that. Wealthy people are doing fine. But my focus in the campaign is on middle income people. Of course I'm concerned about all Americans — poor, wealthy, middle class — but the focus of my effort will be on middle income families who I think have been most hurt by the Obama economy."

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