ROMNEY TO VISIT GREENVILLE

GOP candidate in town today for fundraiser, won't appear in public

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Greenville Republicans voted overwhelmingly for Newt Gingrich in South Carolina's presidential primary, but that isn't stopping Mitt Romney from swooping into town today for some quick campaign cash.

The $25,000-a-couple fundraiser at a downtown restaurant will give Republicans who backed other candidates during the primary a chance to show their remorse to Romney face to face.

One of the guests, however, won't have to do that. Gov. Nikki Haley campaigned hard for Romney during the primary and will join him at the fundraiser, said her spokesman, Rob Godfrey.

About 70 people are expected to attend, said Carl Sobocinski, owner of Soby's, the Main Street restaurant where the fundraiser is planned.

"We've been working on it for a couple of weeks, getting the menu and everything ready," Sobocinski said. "We've got Secret Service all over the last couple of



GOP presidential candidate Mitt Romney arrives in Columbus, Ohio, on Wednesday for a campaign stop. Romney will be in Greenville today for a fundraiser at Soby's. MARY ALTAFFER/AP

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days, interviewing everybody and checking out all the spots in the building."

One of Greenville's leading Republicans, former ambassador David Wilkins, said South Carolinians should feel privileged for the attention from Romney with the battle for the White House now in high gear.

"You can imagine the demands on his time right now with less than 90 days before the election," said Wilkins, who backed Rick Perry during the primary but switched to Romney after Perry dropped out at the last minute.

Romney isn't expected to do any public campaigning, but that shouldn't ruffle any feathers, said Chip Felkel, a local public affairs consultant and Republican campaign veteran.

"We don't get a lot of attention in South Carolina post-primary anyway, so that's nothing new," Felkel said.

As for Gingrich's trouncing of Romney during the Jan. 21 primary, garnering more than 40 percent of the vote, compared to less than 28 percent for Romney, Felkel shrugged it off: "That was then. This is now."

Romney attended fundraisers in Charlotte and Birmingham on Wednesday.

He arrives in Greenville amid fresh attacks from state Democrats, who released an advertisement Wednesday attacking the former Massachusetts governor for flip-flopping.

Columbia lawyer Richard Harpootlian, state Democratic chairman, said Romney favored gun control, abortion rights and a mandate for health care as governor, only to switch those positions when he started running for president.

"Because winning is more important than anything else to the South Carolina Republicans, they've ignored the fact that this guy is not a conservative," Harpootlian told GreenvilleOnline.com.

State GOP Chair Chad Connelly said Harpootlian and the Democrats can only criticize because they're "teetering on the edge of irrelevancy."

"They can't run on Obama's failed administration, so they attack us," Connelly said.

A spokesman for the Romney campaign wouldn't release details of the candidate's schedule.

Romney comes to Greenville having just announced his vice president, Congressman Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, and less than two weeks away from the Republican National Convention in Tampa.

Democrats gather for their national convention next month in Charlotte.

