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Mike Huckabee Launches Republican Bid for President

He cites his record as Arkansas governor to make point that he can work with both political parties

Rebecca Ballhaus

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[Mike Huckabee](#) formally launched his second presidential campaign in Hope, Ark., Tuesday by citing his 10-year record as governor of Arkansas as evidence of his ability to work with a Democratic legislature and his efforts on behalf of working-class Americans.

A day later, a fiscal conservative advocacy group is set to start a \$100,000 ad campaign criticizing that record, in particular the tax increases enacted while he was governor. The Club for Growth ads, which will air in the early-nominating states of Iowa and South Carolina, cite Mr. Huckabee's 'D' rating from the conservative Cato Institute.

The attack underscores Mr. Huckabee's challenge as he makes a case that relies heavily on his tenure as governor. The crowded GOP field includes several other current and former governors, including [Jeb Bush](#) of Florida and Scott Walker of Wisconsin, who argue their executive experience makes them best equipped for the presidency.

In the 2008 election, when some conservatives also criticized his record on taxes and spending, Mr. Huckabee won the Iowa caucuses but dropped out of the race two months later.

Since his last campaign, Mr. Huckabee has used a syndicated radio show and a weekly Fox News program to build a reputation as a social conservative who opposes abortion and same-sex marriage. In recent years, he has published 12 books and frequently injected himself into cultural debates as a voice for evangelical voters.

Some of his comments have drawn ridicule from both parties, such as his suggestion last year that Democrats were pushing women to think they couldn't "control their libido." Republican National Committee chairman Reince Priebus criticized Mr. Huckabee's choice of words and said his comments didn't reflect the party's stance.

As governor, Mr. Huckabee adopted relatively centrist positions as he contended with a Democratic-controlled legislature. He approved some tax increases, including a hike in the gasoline tax to pay for road construction, while others passed despite his opposition. He also signed a \$91 million tax cut—one of the largest in the state's history—that was championed by Democratic legislative leaders, and now points to more than 90 other tax cuts during his tenure.

Mike Huckabee isn't among the list of Republican frontrunners for 2016, but WSJ's Jerry Seib explains why his political stances will matter to a large portion of the Republican party. Photo: AP

In Arkansas, Mr. Huckabee also signed laws extending health insurance coverage to low-income children and increasing the sales tax to fund conservation efforts, and supported policies favorable to undocumented immigrants. Those policies were criticized in 2008 by his GOP rivals. On Tuesday, Mr. Huckabee was vague on immigration, saying the issue needed to be addressed but declining to offer policy details.

Other elements of Mr. Huckabee's tenure as governor also offers his rivals fodder. [Mitt Romney](#), who in 2012 became the GOP nominee, in 2008 criticized the governor's record on crime, particularly his role in seeking the release of prisoner Wayne DuMond, who raped and killed a woman 11 months after being paroled. Parole board members said they had been pressured by Mr. Huckabee to release the prisoner, which he denied during his 2008 campaign. And in 2009, a prisoner whose sentence Mr. Huckabee commuted nine years before killed four police officers in Washington state.