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Sanford Touts Fiscal Conservatism in Third TV Ad

By: Sarah Mimms - March 7, 2013

With less than two weeks to go before the special election primary to fill his old seat in Congress, former South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford is up with his third television spot. The ad is another direct-to-camera appeal highlighting the Republican's fiscal record as governor and in the House; it appears to have been filmed along with his previous two spots, which hit on similar themes.

In the ad, Sanford touts his ratings from the National Taxpayers Union and Citizens Against Government Waste, as well as by the CATO Institute, all of which ranked him number-one in saving taxpayers' money. He also notes that he was "the first governor to turn back stimulus money," a decision he made after the Obama administration refused to allow him to use some of the funding to pay off the state's debt. The state Supreme Court eventually forced him to accept all \$700 million in federal stimulus.

The spot will run throughout the First District on both cable and broadcast, in rotation with Sanford's first two ads, according to a release. All three ads are backed by more than \$170,000, Sanford spokesman Joel Sawyer said.

The ad comes just one day after one of Sanford's primary opponents, former state Sen. John Kuhn, criticized Sanford's fiscal record in a television ad of his own. Sanford's campaign immediately pushed back against the ad's claim that he and fellow candidates, state Rep. Chip Limehouse and state Sen. Larry Grooms, supported "a massive earmark spending bill that cost taxpayers \$250 million for special interest projects" in 2003. Kuhn said in a statement that he successfully filibustered the legislation.

Sanford's campaign called the ad "fiction," noting that the bill never passed and that Sanford vetoed it when it was reintroduced in 2004. Sanford's campaign has been touting that veto since at least February as a sign of his opposition to big spending bills. Kuhn's campaign responded, citing a 2003 Greenville News article in which then-Republican state House Speaker David Wilkins said Sanford had pushed for the bill's passage.

Sawyer, in a phone interview, called the article "bogus," noting that Sanford publicly came out in support of an earlier version of the bill, which aimed to bring pharmaceutical jobs to the state, before it was amended to include the excess spending Kuhn cites in the ad. Asked about Kuhn's claim that he approached Sanford personally and asked him to support a filibuster of the bill, Sawyer added: "It's made up."

Notably, Kuhn's ad also features a shot of him exiting what appears to be a church with his family, as the narrator touts his "Christian values" -- a common theme in ads by the candidates opposing Sanford.