

Mitt Romney takes the credit - you and I pay the bills

February 10, 2012 - Mike Maneval

In attempting to make the case for his presidential aspirations, former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney often cites his management of the 2002 Salt Lake Olympics as an accomplishment and testament to his leadership. Rarely, it seems, is this claim challenged. More frequently challenged by critics are his defenses of his health care reform policies as an accomplishment that qualifies him to serve as president.

But while Romney takes the credit, who actually paid the bills for these accomplishments?

As the New York Times reported in 2007, the Salt Lake Olympics accepted "about \$342 million in federal money to plan and stage the Winter Games." Romney, the Times report noted, "also got behind some huge projects that he admitted at the time and in his book were not 'must haves' for the Olympics, especially a light-rail system in Salt Lake City." The Romney-managed games also took \$33,000 for a horse adoption program and picked up the tab for shuttle buses, drug testing, parking lots, and upgrades to Salt Lake City International Airport's lighting. All in all, the Times reported, Romney's Olympics cost America's taxpayers \$50 million more than the Atlanta Olympics six years earlier. Much of the funding was secured through the use of "earmarks," a funding device Romney now attacks on the campaign trail.

Additionally, as Massachusetts state treasurer Timothy Cahill notes, Romney's attempt at health care reform uses federal subsidies to keep "the state afloat financially. Indeed, a June study from the Beacon Hill Institute concluded that "the state has been able to shift the majority of the costs to the federal government," " as detailed in commentary by Doug Bandow for RealClearPolitics.com back in September. Federal subsidies either from taxpayers today, or, more likely, taxpayers in the future paying down the national debt.

So while Romney takes to the campaign trail to take credit for the leadership of managing a series of athletic competitions or signing a health care reform plan based on government mandates, voters from Maine tomorrow to - should he win the nomination - all 50 states

come November that it's the American taxpayer that actually paid the bills for Romney's "accomplishments."