

# MITT GETS SQUEAMISH ABOUT TITHING

Some weeks ago, I suggested one of what I suspect are several reasons why Mitt won't release his taxes had to do with his Mormon tithe.

Add in the practice—which even an outsider like me saw when I lived in UT and worked for a predominantly Mormon company in the 1990s—of gossip about tithing, notably whether Mormon colleagues tithed pre- or post-tax. That's another reason why Reid may have a better sense of what Mitt's tax practices look like than DC pundits might guess on face value.

Finally, though, there's this. If one of the reasons Mitt is hiding his tax returns does have to do with under-tithing (as the returns Mitt released may suggest), and not just his business practices and tax shelters, remember that both CO (2.15%) and especially NV (over 5%) have larger Mormon populations than average. Nate Silver considers NV the state with the biggest return on investment per voter (CO is 6th). These are lean Democratic states that Mitt might need to win if Obama's attacks on Bain outsourcing continue to turn the race in the manufacturing swing states (though if Mitt doesn't win FL and VA, it may be moot anyway). Driving down the Mormon enthusiasm for Mitt might be one way to boost Obama's chances.

In an interview with Parade Magazine (as reported by the Salt Lake City Tribune), Mitt now says tithing is one of the reasons (he calls it a "downside") he won't release his tax returns.

Mitt Romney says in a new interview that one of the reasons he's distressed about disclosing his tax returns is that everyone sees how much money he and his wife, Ann, have donated to the LDS Church, and that's a number he wants to keep private.

"Our church doesn't publish how much people have given," Romney tells Parade magazine in an edition due out Sunday. "This is done entirely privately. One of the downsides of releasing one's financial information is that this is now all public, but we had never intended our contributions to be known. It's a very personal thing between ourselves and our commitment to our God and to our church."

Oh no you don't, Mitt Romney!

Mitt has repeatedly dodged how low his 13% tax rate is by demanding that people add in his charitable donations, most of which (his partial tax return release so far reveals) consists of donations to his church.

At his news conference, Romney suggested that his charitable contributions should also be taken into account. "Every year, I've paid at least 13 percent, and if you add, in addition, the amount that goes to charity, why the number gets well above 20 percent," Romney said.

...As if 20% is an appropriate tax plus charity for a man worth over a quarter billion in the first place!

But Mitt is basically asking to have it both ways; to plead privacy because his charitable giving is between him and the Mormon Church, but at the same time to ask that we consider that charitable giving in the sum of what he has given back to society. Taxes are a public debt. Mitt wants to count his tithe among his public

debt (meaning Mitt wants to count, among other things, the millions his Church has spent on denying equality to gays as a public good). But now he wants to point to his tithe to excuse why we can't know how much he has paid in his public debt.

Too much time as a Private Equity looter has fried Mitt's brain about what is public and what is private.