Adam Hasner Fundraiser Pitches Tax Increases in D.C.

Al Hoffman calls for Republican compromise to break the debt-deficit gridlock
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A heavy-hitting fundraiser for GOP Senate candidate Adam Hasner wants Republicans to "embrace the principle of compromise" and back a tax increase to break the debt-deficit deadlock in Washington, D.C.

Al Hoffman Jr., a high-profile and longtime party fundraiser, urged in a New York Times op-ed:

"Rather than go to their martyrdom as ideological purists, [Republicans] should open the door to tax increases -- but only if every $1 in new taxes is applied to deficit reduction and is matched by at least $4 in real spending cuts, including entitlement reform."

Decrying "an irrational and corrupt system of tax loopholes," Hoffman assails hard-liners who reflexively oppose tax increases as a way to reduce the nation's debt and deficit.

In attacking anti-taxers, Hoffman sounds more like President Barack Obama than Hasner, who has vociferously vowed to vote against any tax hikes if elected to the U.S. Senate. The Delray Beach Republican was among the first GOP candidates to sign the "cut, cap and balance" pledge.

Hoffman, a former U.S. ambassador to Portugal, could not be reached at Republican National Committee headquarters, where he is also helping to raise funds for the party.

The Floridian, who served as national co-chairman of George W. Bush's presidential campaigns in 2000 and 2004, could not be located through his former company, WCI Communities.

Hasner spokesman Rick Wilson said in a statement:

"We're proud to have Ambassador Hoffman's support, but unlike Senator George LeMieux, who has largely hid from the debt-ceiling debate, Adam has been unequivocal in his opposition to any resolutions which would increase taxes or which do not include
cutting spending, capping spending and balancing the budget."

LeMieux spokesman Brian Seitchik declined to comment on Hoffman's op-ed, which appeared in the July 13 edition of the Times.

Kevin Wagner, a political science professor at Florida Atlantic University, said it's not unusual for philosophical differences to arise in campaigns.

"If you're going to run, you need money, and Hoffman is an important fundraiser. Not everyone is going to agree 100 percent of the time," Wagner said.

"Is what was written a reflection of Hasner? I suspect not. He's positioned himself as a tea party candidate. It's hard to run in a primary without adopting an uncompromising stand," Wagner added.

Other observers suggest that Hasner sees the GOP primary boiling down to a contest between himself and LeMieux. With candidates such as Mike McCalister and Craig Miller chipping away at his tea party support, Hasner needs money to compete.

The drive for cash will intensify if more hopefuls jump into the race. Millionaire businessman Nick Loeb has said he is considering a run. In the meantime, on the sidelines, ex-candidate Mike Haridopolos teasingly tweeted Thursday: "Glad to know principled, tested conservatives are still looking at entering the U.S. Senate race."

As of the end of the second quarter, Hasner reported raising $565,439 compared with LeMieux's $951,557. LeMieux, who was appointed by former Gov. Charlie Crist to fill out Mel Martinez's term in 2009-2010, listed $840,274 cash on hand while Hasner declared $472,313.

By those accounts, Wagner sees the need for pragmatism on Hasner's part -- even if the words don't come directly out of the former Florida House majority leader's mouth.

"If he's going to limit donors to dyed-in-the-wool conservatives, he's going to have a hard time winning," the professor predicted.