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2 Utahns to court Hispanics

By **Lisa Riley Roche**

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Two Utahns are among the 41 members of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney's National Hispanic Steering Committee, the campaign announced Monday.

Marco Diaz and Joe Reyna are part of the committee charged with advising Romney on matters of importance to the Hispanic community and, of course, helping the former leader of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City court Hispanic votes.

The pair were "identified as leaders in their communities, Joe obviously in the business community and Marco for his efforts for the Republican party in Utah," said Alex Burgos, director of speciality media for the Romney campaign.

Reyna is regional president of Zions Bank and chairman of the Utah Hispanic Chamber of Commerce board of directors. He was a key organizer of former Mexican President Vicente Fox's visit to Utah last year.

Diaz is a former chairman of the Utah Republican National Hispanic Assembly and was just elected vice chairman of the National Republican Hispanic Assembly, the first Utahn to hold an office with the national group.

The naming of two Utahns by Romney shows that although the state's Hispanic community is small in size, its Republican members "have been able to work hard and get the message out" to both the national party about the importance of Hispanic voters and to those voters about what GOP candidates have to offer them, Diaz said.

"The Hispanic vote is up for grabs," Diaz said, describing Romney as the candidate who "really recognizes the importance of the Hispanic vote in this election."

What Romney offers them, Diaz said, is "strong family values and traditional values and his ability to get things done."

Burgos said Romney believes his campaign's focus on strengthening the family, the economy and the military appeal to Hispanics. The values shared by Romney and the Republican party, Burgos said, "resonate very strongly with Hispanics."

Romney is already reaching out to Hispanic voters through a Spanish-language Web site, www.mittromney.com/espanol, that features a welcome video in Spanish from the youngest of his five sons, Craig.

The candidate told members of the Hispanic Republican Convention on Sunday that Hispanics are "quintessentially American" and said they are "hardworking, seek education, love God, love their families and value freedom."

Burgos said Romney "is proud to count on the support of Hispanics in Utah. It just demonstrates his popularity in the state among all communities." Polls show Romney has a commanding lead in Utah and the state ranks only behind California in contributions to his campaign.

Fourteen of the steering committee are from Florida. Others are from Texas, Arizona, California, Illinois, Georgia, Virginia, Michigan, New Jersey, Louisiana, Connecticut, Oklahoma, Kansas, New Hampshire, Ohio, Maryland, Wisconsin and Missouri.

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