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JAKE SCHRICKLING/THE BATTALION

Alex Hamilton, a junior history major and an employee of the Student Recreation Center, sets a route on the climbing facility Wednesday afternoon.

Gov. Bush plans D.C. fundraising trip

WASHINGTON (AP) — Texas Gov. George W. Bush travels to the nation's capital Thursday for a pair of fundraisers expected to add more than \$750,000 to his already-bountiful campaign coffers.

Up for re-election and touted as a topflight GOP presidential prospect in 2000, Bush is tapping his father's D.C. network of friends before jetting off to Denver the next day for another money-raising stop.

Bush aides, who work assiduously to dampen speculation that their boss is positioning himself for a White House run, say nothing should be read into the fact that he is turning to Washington heavy-hitters to fund his Texas race.

"They are people who are concerned about having good people who practice good government, which is what Governor Bush does as the governor of Texas," said campaign spokeswoman Mindy Tucker.

The first D.C. event is a \$500-a-person reception at the swank Willard Hotel. The reception is chaired by two Bush siblings, sister Dorothy Bush Koch and brother Marvin, along with their spouses.

Some well-known Washingtonians who served the elder Bush in the White House are on the organizing committee, including former Transportation Secretary Andrew Card, domestic policy adviser Deborah Steelman and presidential spokesman Marlin Fitzwater.

From the Willard, Bush moves halfway across town to the equally tony Four Seasons Hotel for a \$5,000-per-person dinner.

Again, a heavyweight roster of Bush administration luminaries figures on the organizing committee, including former White House counsel C. Boyden Gray, Commerce Secretary Barbara Hackman Franklin and Fred Malek, who managed the elder Bush's presidential campaign.

"It should not surprise mutual friends of mine that dad's are supporting me," the governor said recently.

Friday, he's off to Denver for another fund-raising event in campaign. Last month, he raised money at a pair of California fundraisers.

Bush already has raised an estimated \$15 million for his reelection, dwarfing the \$2.5 million so amassed by his Democratic opponent, Garry Mauro.

Mauro will follow his trip to Washington next week with fundraisers with a couple of friends: Bill and Hillary Clinton also headlined campaign events for him last year. Vice President Cheney will travel to El Paso next week to raise money for Mauro.

Before hitting Washington, Bush will make an appearance in North Carolina to raise money for Sen. Lauch Faircloth, one of the Senate's most conservative members. After the D.C. swing, he is scheduled to travel to Albuquerque to assist New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson's campaign.

In the past, Bush has raised money in Texas for his brother Jeb, who is running for Florida governor, and in Ohio for Sen. John McCain, who is touted as a possible presidential contender in 2000. He has also traveled to California, Virginia and Ohio to raise money for gubernatorial nominees.

"He's made the commitment to help his Republican colleagues and gubernatorial colleagues around the country, and that's what that," Tucker said Wednesday.

As for whether future state fund-raising events are planned, either for himself or others, she said: "I really don't know. This is as far as anything is planned for Texas."

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