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The Next Step for Liberty: Mark Sanford 2020

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In 2016, the Libertarian Party put forward the most solid third-party ticket since Theodore Roosevelt's 1912 bid for a third term. It was the first ticket made up of two multi-term governors since Thomas Dewey and Earl Warren's 1948 bid for the Presidency. It was the most successful third-party candidacy since billionaire Ross Perot's 1996 campaign. The ticket took 3.4% of the popular vote with under 12 million dollars on hand, a massive success that, while not revolutionary, is a sign of the success a unique and experienced ticket can make. Looking to 2020, who should we as libertarians support to lead our cause and further build our movement?

Why not Mark Sanford?

Mark Sanford was a congressman who term-limited himself after six years. He then went on to be a two-term governor of South Carolina, in 2010 being ranked by the Cato Institute as the best governor in America and "a staunch supporter of spending restraint and pro-growth tax reforms". He was expected to be one of the strongest 2012 Republican prospects before his notorious 2009 controversy involving an affair with a woman he had fallen in love with (and is reportedly still together with) and the resulting fall from grace. In 2013 he would return to Congress in a special election in the state's first district with the endorsement of Ron Paul. This is a liberty-minded man with some experience in government and years of built up influence.

Sanford's former chief of staff Tom Davis has said about Sanford, "The thing you have to understand about Mark is that he's both quirky and professorial about his beliefs—a lot like how Ron Paul was." He's been a proud fighter when it comes to issues of government transparency, debt, deficits, and spending. In his first stint in the House, Sanford was one of its sharpest fiscal hawks. Most of Sanford's political opponents in South Carolina tended to call him a libertarian pejoratively. Sanford would respond that "I'm an unabashed conservative" ... "and sometimes being accused of being a libertarian, to which I say, 'I'm guilty, I love liberty.'" Sanford's liberty-minded streak was so intense that in 2006 a Republican in South Carolina endorsed

Sanford's gubernatorial opponent on the grounds that "Mark Sanford is a libertarian, he is not a Republican and he is not a leader, and he won't work with people to get something done." This ire was likely a result of how when he was governor of South Carolina, Sanford would veto hundreds of measures sent to him from the Republican-dominated legislature – reminiscent of Gary Johnson's governing style that earned him the nickname of "Governor Veto."

Speaking of Gary Johnson, Sanford said he admired his work and the way he approached things as governor, and has said that the two were quite similar when it came to their positions on spending, the legislative process, and taxpayer issues. Sanford also, like Johnson, allowed citizens five minute appointments to speak with him. It's no small wonder then why Gary Johnson actually asked Sanford to be his running mate in 2016.

Looking at a broad range of stances Sanford has taken, there's a lot for libertarians to like about him. He's for a restrained foreign policy, having opposed Clinton's War in Kosovo and voted against the 1998 resolution – the conspicuously named "Iraq Liberation Act of 1998" – that made regime change in Iraq official policy of the United States. He wanted to reassert the legislature's powers on matters of war following decades of executive concentration of authority. To put it in perspective, President Trump was for the Iraq War despite his repeated claims to the contrary, but Mark Sanford was not only against the Iraq War but he was also against the moves that inched America towards the conflict. There is no doubt Sanford was an opponent of the Iraq War, saying that "I don't believe in preemptive war" & "For us to hold the moral high ground in the world, our default position must be defensive."

He's called the public education system a Soviet-style monopoly and is a strong supporter of school choice. Sanford, in his first term as governor, pushed for the adoption of a \$2,500 voucher program for parents who took their children out of the public school system and sent them to private schools. He supported the NRA-backed Castle Doctrine enabling one to use force to protect their home. Though he did not take action on the drug war, he was less-than-fond of the Columbia Sheriff targeting Michael Phelps for his marijuana use. He's even been critical of the Federal Reserve, a subject that despite the efforts of the Paul family has still remained outside the mainstream in terms of political discussion. He cut the top income tax rate for small businesses from 7 percent to 5 percent in 2005. In 2007 he cut the state's sales and income taxes. He pushed for the state to adopt a flat tax, tried to abolish the state's corporate income tax, and pushed for the adoption of a legal cap on budget growth as well, though those proposals never took off.

In 2004, Mark Sanford line-item vetoed 106 parts of the state budget and the Republican legislature overturned 105 of those vetoes. The following day, in a protest of pork barrel spending, Sanford went to the State House with a pig under each arm. Lawmakers were enraged that pig crap had gotten on the carpet and marble floor, though few had concerns about the crap that had gotten on Sanford's jacket and shoes. The pigs' names were pork and barrel, and together with the governor the point had been made – the taxpayers had lost during that budget battle.

Mark Sanford has also been a strong opponent of Obamacare. He has been Senator Rand Paul's chief partner in the House of Representatives. The Sanford-Paul bill includes many policies libertarians tend to support including the sale of insurance policies across state lines, the

legalization of cheap insurance, and tax-deductible health savings accounts. The Sanford-Paul bill has garnered the support of the Freedom Caucus, proof enough that the measure is the real deal. As a political statement, the bill says to the rest of the GOP that they cannot just kick the can down the road on Obamacare.

Many Republicans have been cowering in fear at the prospect of angry crowds attending their town halls – Mark Sanford let his hour long town hall stretch to nearly four hours so that he and Senator Tim Scott could appropriately address their constituents. The only other congressman to act in such a fashion has been Libertarian darling Justin Amash. After the first hour, Sanford faced the crowd alone as Scott had to attend a funeral. Indivisible Charleston’s leader Joe Preston was incredibly surprised by how accommodating Sanford was, saying that “It blows my mind.” The town hall would have gone on for longer if the police officers on duty didn’t have shifts that ended at 12; Sanford wanted to be accommodating to them. One aid tried to stop the town hall at 11:57, but Sanford would stop her and insist that since he said it was going to 12 the event was going to 12. As Donald Trump and right-wing talking heads insist that angry crowds at rallies have been artificial – hired by George Soros or some other conspiratorial leftists – Sanford went on National Television and said that “This wasn’t an artificial crowd” & “This wasn’t manufactured.”

In the age of Trump, Sanford has remained one of the last holdouts against national populism within the Republican Party. To an extent, tactically and ideologically, Sanford is seen as being a leader of the resistance against Trump. Universally, Sanford has been said to look forward to future conflict with the President. Justin Amash has said that “Sanford will never back down.”

Mark Sanford has never lost a campaign. Even in 2013, when the NRCC cut off all funds to his campaign and he was written off as guaranteed to lose, Sanford went on to win the congressional race. Nowadays there’s speculation that he may try to unseat South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster in 2018 or Senator Lindsey Graham in 2020 and as of the end of 2016 he has a couple million in his war chest in his federal and state-level accounts. When asked about Sanford running for governor, his friend and former staffer Carl Blackstone said that “Deep down he’s an adventurer, he likes to try different things. So quite frankly you’ve got to look at other races.” Having been free to do as he likes after his political death post-2009, abandoned by the national party, and up for something new, libertarians should consider reaching out to Mark Sanford about leading the ticket in 2020.