

Mark Sanford is running for president in 2020. Here's everything we know about the candidate and how he stacks up against the competition.

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Who is Mark Sanford?

Current job: Politician and author.

Age: 59

Family: Sanford married his first wife, Jenny, in 1989 and the couple has four sons. The Sanfords divorced in 2010 after Mark admitted to cheating on his wife with a mistress in Argentina. Sanford and his mistress got engaged in 2013 but called off the engagement a year later.

Hometown: Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Political party: Republican

Previous jobs: Congressman representing South Carolina's 1st district; governor of South Carolina.

Could Sanford win the Republican nomination?

Sanford is running against President Donald Trump, former Illinois congressman Joe Walsh, and former Massachusetts Gov. Bill Weld for the Republican nomination for president.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but the reality is that Sanford is probably not going to be the Republican nominee for the presidency in 2020.

In general, as leader of the Republican Party a candidate like Trump has considerable home-field advantage when it comes to orchestrating the primary process, and the presidency offers unparalleled awareness numbers that Sanford will not share.

There is an appeal among some Republicans for a challenger to Trump. INSIDER conducted a national SurveyMonkey Audience poll in late April that asked Republicans "What best describes your view about the prospects for a Republican primary in 2020?"

Among respondents who identified as at least slightly conservative, 13% said, "I would absolutely support a qualified candidate who challenged President Trump in the Republican primary," 11% said, "I would probably support a qualified Republican candidate who challenged President Trump in the primary," and 18% said, "I support the president, however I am open to other qualified Republican primary challengers."

Potentially, Sanford could tap into that 42%. More likely, he won't be able to leverage that into a winning constituency.

What are Mark Sanford' policy positions?

- On healthcare:
 - Sanford opposes the Affordable Care Act, known as "Obamacare."
 - Sanford said he does not support simply repealing Obamacare and has stressed that Republicans need to come up with a suitable replacement before trying to dismantle the law.
 - In 2017, Sanford and Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul introduced an Obamacare replacement bill that would have lifted restrictions on insurers and increased tax incentives for Americans who purchased healthcare.
 - The bill was endorsed by the ultra-conservative House Freedom Caucus but ultimately flopped.
 - Sanford still supports the plan, which he says would give people "the health insurance they [need], rather than the health insurance the government prescribed."
- On immigration:
 - Sanford supports building a wall along the US's southern border with Mexico.
 - The wall was a key pillar of Trump's campaign platform in 2016 and continues to be in 2020, but Sanford has told reporters he came up with the idea for a wall long before Trump did.
 - "The idea of a thousand people walking across your border is to make a mockery of the notion of rule of law," Sanford said.
 - The former South Carolina governor also supports pressuring US companies and employers to verify that all their workers are in the country legally.
 - Sanford supports penalizing sanctuary cities. But he said he's against separating families who cross the border.
- On climate change:
 - Sanford acknowledges that climate change is a global threat and that manmade activity is its biggest contributor.
 - But he opposes joining international agreements to fight climate change in part because he believes they may be too lenient on countries that have large carbon footprints.
 - He's also against implementing a carbon tax, citing fears of an economic slowdown.
- On campaign finance/election reform:
 - Sanford has not spoken publicly about his views on campaign finance and election reform.
- On abortion:
 - Sanford is anti-abortion and supports legislation that would give more rights to fetuses and embryos.
 - He advocated for a 2007 bill that would have required women to see an ultrasound image of a fetus before having an abortion.
- On LGBTQ rights:
 - Sanford is staunchly opposed to gay marriage and LGBTQ rights, and believes that marriage exists only between "one man and one woman."

- During his first term in Congress, Sanford voted for the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), and he later said he would oppose any efforts to repeal it.
- Sanford also said he would support a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage.
- On education:
 - Sanford is opposed to Common Core.
 - He supports merit pay for teachers and also endorsed voluntary teacher-led school prayer and having the Ten Commandments on display in public schools.
 - Sanford has advocated for abstinence-only sexual education programs.
- On guns:
 - Sanford is a strong supporter of the Second Amendment and opposes most gun control measures.
 - He has called for a national cross-state standard for concealed carry, which means that anyone who has a permit to carry a concealed weapon in one state and is not prohibited from possessing a firearm can carry a concealed weapon in any other state.
- On criminal justice reform:
 - Sanford has not spoken publicly about his views on criminal justice reform.
- On trade:
 - Sanford has been outspoken against Trump's trade war with China.
 - He also said the Trump administration's continued threats of tariffs "are undermining our standing in the world."
- On foreign policy:
 - Sanford is a non-interventionist and is strongly opposed to the US getting involved in other countries' conflicts.
 - He's said that American intervention in foreign wars is "catastrophic."
 - Sanford told PBS that as president, he would not meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and called Kim an "awfully bad actor on the world stage."
 - The North Korean regime "needs to do some things that show verification before we step out in trusting them and meeting with them," Sanford said.
- On taxes:
 - Sanford voted for the Trump tax cut in 2017 and is in favor of abolishing the estate tax.
 - He also vetoed an increase in the tobacco tax when he was governor of South Carolina.
- On jobs and the economy:
 - Sanford built his reputation on being a fiscal hawk and said he's challenging Trump because he wants to bring down the national debt.
 - "The president...has a familiarity and comfort level with debt that I think is ultimately leading us in the wrong direction," Sanford told Fox News.

What are Mark Sanford's political successes?

- Sanford was a political neophyte when he defeated a crowded Republican primary field and faced off against state representative Robert A. Barber Jr. to represent South Carolina's 1st district in 1994. Sanford ultimately beat Barber 66.3% to 32.4%.

- The libertarian Cato Institute recognized Sanford as the most fiscally conservative member of Congress while he served as a representative. The American Conservative Union also gave Sanford a lifetime rating of 92.

What are Mark Sanford's political controversies?

Sanford made national headlines when he disappeared for six days in 2009. He told his staff he was going hiking on the Appalachian trail but later admitted to visiting his mistress in Argentina after a reporter spotted him arriving at Atlanta International Airport on a flight from Argentina.

Sanford also acknowledged that he had "crossed the lines" with several other women while he was married to his wife, but that he'd never crossed "the ultimate line" as he did with his mistress.

In 2009, the South Carolina Ethics Commission charged Sanford with 37 violations, including accusations that he used campaign funds for personal travel and flew first class or business class for government business when he should have flown economy. Sanford ultimately paid a \$74,000 fine for the violations.

Sanford also admitted in a South Carolina Ethics Commission disclosure that he accepted several small gifts in 2011, during his final year as the state's governor.

How much money has Mark Sanford raised?

Sanford announced his primary challenge against Trump this month, so there isn't enough publicly available information on his fundraising. This page will be updated when his campaign releases its numbers for this quarter.

Could Sanford beat the Republican nominee?

This is putting the cart before the horse a bit.

Realistically, any candidate capable of dispatching a sitting president would possess a political acumen that heretofore has been not seen in Mark Sanford, whose crowning political achievement was mounting a modest comeback following a major sex scandal. Were Sanford able to defeat Trump in the primary, at that point anything is possible.