

Former SC Gov. Mark Sanford Seeks to Return to Old House Seat

By: Paul Stanley - January 14, 2013

Former South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford, who for most of his three terms in Congress slept on his office sofa to save money, is expected to announce that he plans to run for the 1st Congressional District seat that was vacated by Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC).

The race for Scott's House Seat may end up being a crowded field. In addition to Sanford probable entry, St. Rep. Chip Limehouse of Charleston has announced his intention to run and former St. Sen. John Kuhn is also expected to announce his candidacy prior to the Jan. 28 deadline.

Sources say that Sanford's former wife Jenny, who was on Gov. Nikki Haley's short-list for Jim DeMint's former seat, will not be running for the House seat. She said that she and her former husband "have come to an understanding" about his decision to return to Washington and that his sons are supportive of his efforts.

Sanford, who after serving in Congress from 1995-2001 went on to serve two terms as South Carolina's governor, became embroiled in controversy when he disappeared for several days in June 2009. After initially claiming he was hiking, he later admitted he was in Argentina visiting a woman whom he was having an affair with. When the story became national news, Sanford held a press conference and asked for forgiveness from his family and constituents.

He resisted calls to step down and continued to serve out his second term, being succeeded by the current chief executive, Haley. Sanford and his wife Jenny were divorced the following year. They have four sons.

Last week reporters spotted Sanford while looking for possible campaign locations. When asked if he thought voters would look past his prior personal struggles, he replied, "That's obviously the verdict of what an election like this would be about."

In 1994, Sanford began his political career by running for what is the old 1st Congressional District that included much of Charlestown, extending northward to Myrtle Beach. In an unusual move by congressional and political standards, he served only three terms because of a campaign commitment he made during his first term, returning to the real estate business he left.

In 2002, he decided to run for governor, defeating Lt. Gov. Bob Peeler in the GOP primary before ousting Democratic incumbent Jim Hodges, 53 to 47 percent.

Sanford's congressional and gubernatorial careers were largely defined by his fiscal conservatism, often breaking ranks with his own party. For example, in 2009 he publicly announced he would not accept stimulus funds being made available by the Obama administration. But after an extended battle that ended up in the state's Supreme Court, he was forced to accept the funds.

In 2010, the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, ranked Sanford as the best governor in America in their 2010 fiscal policy report card, describing him as "a staunch supporter of spending restraint and pro-growth tax reforms."

After his second term as governor ended in January 2011, he returned to his family farm in Beaufort County, S.C., and became a paid contributor for Fox News Channel.

Sanford's campaign focus will be on the nation's looming debt crisis and related fiscal issues.