

The Miami Herald

Posted on Wed, Jun. 24, 2009

Prayers and disappointment for Sanford from Washington

James Rosen
McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Gov. Mark Sanford's Republican colleagues in Washington -- with one conspicuous exception -- offered their prayers and support Wednesday in response to his disclosure of a sexual affair with a woman in Argentina.

The exception was Sen. Jim DeMint, an ideological soul mate of Sanford who shares his hard-edged conservative views.

DeMint delivered a terse verdict on the bombshell news from the State House in Columbia, S.C.

"I'm very disappointed," DeMint told reporters in Washington.

DeMint, a Greenville Republican, and Sanford were leading opponents of President Barack Obama's \$787 billion economic-stimulus plan.

Before Congress passed the stimulus measure in February, DeMint invited Sanford to address a luncheon attended by dozens of Republican senators in the U.S. Capitol. Both men have been cited as possible 2012 presidential candidates.

"He had a big impact on senators by explaining that bailing out states that refused to make necessary fiscal reforms would not help our nation in the long run," DeMint said after the lunch.

Only three Republican senators and no GOP House members voted for the stimulus bill. Sanford went to court in a failed bid to reject \$700 million in stimulus money for his state.

South Carolina's other senator, Lindsey Graham, is a close friend of Sanford who served with him in the U.S. House of Representatives after their 1994 elections.

Graham, a Seneca Republican, offered "any personal support" he could provide to Sanford, S.C. first lady Jenny Sanford and their four sons.

"The Sanford family needs time and space to work through their challenges," Graham said. "I hope they are afforded that opportunity."

Graham expressed hope that Sanford "can continue serving as our state's governor."

Rep. Bob Inglis, another Sanford friend, served with him and Graham in the U.S. House until Inglis' 1998 election loss to then-incumbent Sen. Fritz Hollings in 1998.

"The truth is that none of us is capable of fully living the truths that we proclaim, so each of us is

dependent on grace," Inglis, a Travelers Rest Republican, said.

Calling Wednesday "a day of tears, not of taunts," Inglis said he and his wife had prayed for the Sanford family and will continue to do so.

"I haven't always agreed with Mark's policies or politics, but today I want more than ever to be his friend," Inglis said.

Rep. Gresham Barrett, a Republican gubernatorial candidate from Westminster, said, "We keep the governor and his family in our prayers during this difficult time."

Rep. Joe Wilson, a Lexington Republican, said his "thoughts and prayers are with the Sanford family."

Rep. Henry Brown, a Hanahan Republican, offered "heartfelt thoughts" to the Sanford family.

"I am saddened at the news of this revelation and encourage the people of South Carolina to allow the Sanford family to deal with this matter with the privacy that each of us would hope for," Brown said.

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