

Mark Sanford

Mark Sanford (R-SC) was elected governor of South Carolina in 2002 and was reelected in 2006. Under the state's term limits law, he cannot run for reelection in 2010.

Gov. Sanford:

- Abused his office for his personal benefit and the benefit of his friends
- Violated campaign finance laws by failing to report in-kind contributions and improperly converting campaign funds for personal use
- Subordinated his responsibilities to his pursuit of an extramarital affair
- Endangered his state's economy by threatening to refuse stimulus funds

CHARGE ONE: ABUSE OF OFFICE

Gov. Sanford has a pattern of abusing his office for his own personal benefit. An investigation by the South Carolina State Ethics Commission established that Gov. Sanford used his position to secure luxury travel for himself, his friends, and his family—all at taxpayer expense.¹ South Carolina law requires that all state employees fly economy class, “except where exigencies require otherwise.”² Nevertheless, since 2005, Gov. Sanford has flown business class no fewer than 16 times and first class at least twice—often on costly international flights—without any work-related justification.³ On a few occasions, such as when Gov. Sanford flew to Paris and Brazil, there was no official business scheduled until the day after his arrival.⁴ Additionally, luxury travel was not unusual; multiple state employees testified that flying business class or better was the Sanford administration standard policy.⁵

Gov. Sanford's abuse of flying privileges was not confined to commercial aircraft. He inappropriately used South Carolina's state airplane fleet for non-official purposes, in clear violation of a state law explicitly forbidding this practice.⁶ On nine different occasions, Gov. Sanford used South Carolina planes to fly himself and/or his family and friends to personal functions, including a birthday dinner for a top supporter, a theme park opening and a haircut appointment.⁷

When state ethics officials wanted to conduct a hearing to review these and other ethics violations, Gov. Sanford signed a consent order with the South Carolina State Ethics

¹ South Carolina State Ethics Commission, Investigative Report Re: Complaint C2010-020, November 18, 2009. (Hereinafter referred to as the Sanford Ethics Investigation).

² Id. p. 10.

³ South Carolina State Ethics Commission, Consent Order Re: Complaint C2010-020, March 18, 2010, pp. 2-9. (Hereinafter referred to as the Sanford Ethics Consent Order).

⁴ Sanford Ethics Investigation, p. 17.

⁵ Sanford Ethics Investigation, pp. 12-13.

⁶ Sanford Ethics Consent Order, pp. 10-13.

⁷ Id.

Commission conceding that the “evidence presented [against him] is factual” and agreeing to pay a fine of \$74,000 as well as restitution and other reimbursements totaling more than \$66,000.⁸

CHARGE TWO: CAMPAIGN FINANCE VIOLATIONS

The State Ethics Commission found that Gov. Sanford violated South Carolina’s campaign finance disclosure laws.⁹ On 61 occasions, Gov. Sanford flew on privately owned aircraft without recording the flights as in-kind gifts, as required by state law.¹⁰ Gov. Sanford’s lawyers—even as they disputed the investigators’ findings—acknowledged that the governor failed to report several flights, and requested that their correspondence about the issue be added to his disclosure filings.¹¹

Gov. Sanford also conceded as “factual” reports that he improperly converted nearly \$3,000 in campaign money for personal use.¹² South Carolina state law prohibits using campaign funds for purposes other than campaigning, with few exceptions.¹³ As a result, the State Ethics Commission found that Gov. Sanford violated the law when he used his campaign funds to pay for direct marketing services, a ticket to the presidential inauguration and a hunting trip to Dublin, Ireland.¹⁴

CHARGE THREE: DERELICTION OF DUTY

On June 18, 2009, Gov. Sanford disappeared for five days without a security detail, lied to his staff about where he was going and remained incommunicado for the duration of his trip.¹⁵ Gov. Sanford later admitted that he had left South Carolina for nearly a week to pursue an extramarital affair with a woman in Argentina.¹⁶

This was not the first time Gov. Sanford traveled to Argentina to pursue his extramarital affair while neglecting his duties as governor.¹⁷ In June 2008, Gov. Sanford arranged to visit Argentina as part of a trade trip to Latin America.¹⁸ Even though U.S. trade policy at the time shunned contacts with the Argentine government in retaliation for renege debt obligations, Gov. Sanford traveled there to meet with Argentine officials and visit his mistress.¹⁹ Gov. Sanford

⁸ Sanford Ethics Consent Order, pp. 19–22.

⁹ Sanford Ethics Consent Order, p. 19.

¹⁰ Sanford Ethics Investigation, p. 28.

¹¹ Sanford Ethics Investigation, p. 29; Mark Sanford’s Lawyer Says 4 Private Flights Unreported, *The Associated Press*, November 27, 2009.

¹² Sanford Consent Order, pp. 13–17, 19.

¹³ Sanford Consent Order, pp. 13–17.

¹⁴ Sanford Consent Order, pp. 15–17, 19.

¹⁵ Versha Sharma, The Missing Governor: A Timeline, *TPM Muckraker*, June 24, 2009; Clif LeBlanc and John O’Connor, Sanford Admits Affair: ‘I’ve Let Down a Lot of People’, *The State*, June 25, 2009.

¹⁶ Id.

¹⁷ Staff Report, Sanford Traveled to Argentina for Taxpayer-Funded Trip, *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), June 25, 2009.

¹⁸ Kevin Hall, Sanford’s Trade Mission to Argentina Contradicted U.S. Policy, *The McClatchy Company*, June 25, 2009.

¹⁹ Id.; Staff Report, *The Post and Courier*, June 25, 2009.

later admitted to meeting his mistress during the trip and agreed to refund taxpayers for the cost of the trip.²⁰

In response to the scandal, the Republican-dominated South Carolina legislature censured Gov. Sanford for “dereliction of duty” and “official misconduct,” but did not vote to impeach him.²¹

CHARGE FOUR: REFUSING STIMULUS FUNDS

Gov. Sanford campaigned vigorously against President Barack Obama’s stimulus bill.²² As governor, he endangered the state’s stimulus funds by refusing to file the preliminary paperwork to accept the money, reversing himself only as the deadline approached.²³ He became the last governor to apply for the money.²⁴ Additionally, despite the fact that South Carolina had the nation’s second highest unemployment rate, Gov. Sanford sought to prevent the state legislature from accessing \$700 million in stimulus money.²⁵ The matter ended up in litigation²⁶ and the South Carolina Supreme Court eventually forced Gov. Sanford to accept the contested \$700 million.²⁷

²⁰ Id.

²¹ Roddie Burris, John O’Connor and Gina Smith, How Sanford Avoided Impeachment, *The State*, December 20, 2009.

²² Mark Sanford, Why South Carolina Doesn’t Want ‘Stimulus’, *The Wall Street Journal*, March 21, 2009.

²³ James Rosen, Sanford Gives In on Stimulus, Will Seek Funds for S.C., *The McClatchy Company*, April 3, 2009.

²⁴ Id.

²⁵ Id.

²⁶ Yvonne Wenger, Sanford Hands Off Decision, *The Post and Courier* (Charleston, S.C.), June 2, 2009.

²⁷ Tom Cohen and Peter Hamby, South Carolina Governor Trumped, Must Take Stimulus Money, *CNN Politics*, June 4, 2009.