

Congressman Mark Sanford Telephonic Town Hall Meeting

February 15, 2017

Observer: Barbara Griffin

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Below is a non-partisan summary of the questions and comments provided by members of the public and Congressman Sanford's responses and comments. This report does not attempt to reflect verbatim comments or responses and should not be interpreted as such.

Overview: On February 15, 2017, U.S. Representative for South Carolina's First Congressional District Mark Sanford held a telephonic town hall meeting that lasted about 1 hour and 45 minutes. This followed a press conference held by Congressman Sanford and U.S. Senator Rand Paul from Kentucky announcing their proposed healthcare plan to replace the Affordable Care Act should the Congress repeal the Act. A copy of the joint announcement and features of the proposal are available at:

<https://sanford.house.gov/ObamacareReplacementAct>

Content of Discussion:

Opening Comments: Congressman Sanford announced an in-person town hall will be held on Saturday, February 18 at the City of Mount Pleasant's Town Hall in Building C at 9:00 AM and invited the public to attend.

The Congressman provided a brief overview of the proposed health care act that would be driven by the market place and consumer choice. He anticipated the Congress would be addressing several major issues in the coming year. They include, among others:

Health Care	Tax Reform	The Federal Budget
Transportation	Trade	Sequestration
Immigration & the Proposed Wall on the Southern Border of the United States		

Most of the callers thanked the Congressman for conducting the town hall.

Participation: The number of callers was not reported; however 22 were able to speak, ask question or make comments.

Below is a summary of the questions/comments:

President Trump & Russian Connection	1	
President Trump & Ethics and Truth	5	
Health Care	6	
Environment & EPA	2	
Monsanto Merger re: Seeds for farming	1	
Security Leaks	1	
Tax Reform & Regulations	1	
Border Wall between Mexico & US	1	
US Troops to Syria	1	
General Public Trust	1	
OMB - Congressman Mulvaney		1
Size of Government	1	

Without reporting each question and answer, below is a summary of the concerns and Congressman Sanford's general responses:

Questions, Comments and Responses:

President Trump & Russian Connection: A caller expressed concern regarding potential improprieties and whether that will be fully investigated:

Response: Congressman Sanford stated it is a matter of public record that Intelligence has determined the Soviet Union did attempt to impact the United States presidential election. The question has been posed as to whether President Trump (and/or his team) was involved at the time or has had other inappropriate communication since. At this stage, law enforcement and appropriate committees are engaged. Congressman Sanford did not see a Congressional Committee or Congressional investigation at this time.

President Trump & Ethics and Truth: Five callers expressed concerns regarding whether the public can believe what is being communicated and stated.

Response: Congressman Sanford stated the people should expect honesty. He stated this happens on both sides of the isle. The Founding Fathers were concerned about honesty. George Washington warned about the potential to focus on "parties" rather than issues and that could lead to dishonesty. The Congressman said he wrote an op-ed suggesting there were major issues that needed to be addressed and that "Twitter Wars" were not how the public's business and issues should best be addressed. Also, the

Congressman called for President Trump to release his tax returns as he promised he would do during the campaign.

Health Care: Six callers questioned the wisdom and necessity to Repeal and Replace the Affordable Care Act rather than Repair and Replace; concerns about cost increases they experienced under the ACA; ACA was damaged by lack of support in some states; pre-existing medical conditions; portability of coverage; and others questions.

Response: *Congressman Sanford stated it is understandable that many people are concerned. However, it is very hard if not impossible to make the desired changes in a piecemeal manner. He discussed those people with pre-existing conditions would likely have a 2-year phase in to address one area of concern. Another change is that access to health care coverage will not be employment-based but rather market based which should create greater portability and choice of level of care for the public. He stated his believe there is a fundament flaw in the ACA and once addressed it largely impacts the majority of the provisions.*

Environment & Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): Two callers expressed concern about protecting the environment; possible dissolution of the EPA; the Keystone Pipeline (and other pipelines);

Response: *Congressman Sanford indicated he did not support the total disbanding the EPA. Stated the EPA (and other agencies) should not go outside of the legislative process on matters not previously authorized for the agency. The Congressman stated he had a strong conservation record, and, like Theodore Roosevelt believes protecting America extends to natural resources.*

Monsanto Merger with Bayer and Seeds for Farming: A Caller expressed concern about the cost and safety impacts of a potential merger which could “corner the market” on about 70% of seeds for farming.

Response: *Congressman Sanford indicated the caller was better informed on the subject and asked the caller to provide him with more information. He further indicated there are agencies, such as the EPA that look into impacts to the environment, health and safety and related matters, etc.*

Security Leaks: One caller was concerned about security leaks and the threat he believed they posed to the nation.

Response: Congressman Sanford stated he shared concerns about the integrity of the government's business. Stated a concern that it is a growing issue for our time and goes to the heart of the security of the nation. Continuing and expanded efforts will be needed by the intelligence community; security and law enforcement.

Tax Reform, Trade & Regulations: A caller expressed support for tax reform and a reduction in regulations. The caller was also concerned about money being lost to American firms.

Response: *Congressman Sanford stated he understood the frustration of the caller. The Congressman stated the Trade issue is complex. If the US imposes, as an example, a 20% tax on imported goods, the cost would ultimately be borne by the American consumer. With regard to other aspects of the question, the Congressman stated he opposed incentives and believed all businesses should be treated the same. He stated he supported Kevin Brady for the Ways and Means post. He stated he believes Tax Reform will be a major undertaking and that Kevin Brady has good ideas. He stated he believes the tax brackets will be reduced from 7 to 3.*

Border Wall between Mexico & the US: One caller expressed concern about the viability and cost of building a wall.

Response: *Congressman Sanford stated he supports the wall but more particularly border security. States a wall will not solve all concerns and cannot be 100% successful. Rather, he said, there should be a major effort to deter and slow down illegal immigration. Additionally, how the wall would be paid for is yet undetermined with the Administration saying it will be about \$12 Billion and other sources suggesting \$24 Billion or more.*

US Troops to Syria: One caller expressed concern regarding a reported plan to deploy American troops "on the ground" in Syria.

Response: *Congressman Sanford stated that unless there are unforeseen events, he opposes American troops in Syria. States US should return to the Powell Doctrine which involves: clear objectives; providing tools and resources necessary to achieving the objectives; and prompt disengagement once the objectives have been achieved.*

General Public Trust: One caller expressed a general concern about truth in government and public trust.

Response: *Congressman Sanford stated this is a matter of concern. He must focus on those things he can do. He listed several actions he believes demonstrate his commitment to transparency and public communication.*

OMB and Congressman Mulvaney: One caller inquired regarding the status of Congressman Mulvaney heading up OMB.

Response: *Congressman Sanford indicated there are "politics on both sides." He stated he believed you need to: pick a team; provide them with the tools; and hold them accountable for reaching the objectives. He stated he supports Mulvaney.*

Size of Government: One caller expressed concern about what he perceived as the size, waste and overlap in government.

Response: Congressman Sanford stated he shares concern about the size of government; efficiency; waste and redundancy.