**Sanford Transcript** (text only – no segmentation)

SANFORD: I won’t begin in any particular spot. Let me just start with -- I -- I don’t see -- where’s Gina Smith?

(UNKNOWN): She’s not here.

SANFORD: Not here? OK. I had a conversation with Gina Smith this morning, when I arrived in Atlanta, and I told her about my love for the Appalachian Trail (ph). I used to organize hiking trips, actually, when I was in high school. I would get a soccer coach or football coach to act as chaperon and then I’d get folks to pay me 60 bucks each, or whatever it was, to take the trip, and then off we’d go and have these great adventures on the Appalachian Trail (ph). And I told her of adventure trips both in college. I was a campus representative for the Eastern Airlines and could fly free, which meant I’d fly different places around the world, get myself a job, carry $100 of emergency money and either find a job there with the locals and come back or come on home. I told her about my years in Congress and early years in the governorship of different adventure of leaving and traveling different places. Because what I have found, in this job, is that one desperately needs a break from the bubble, wherein every word, every moment is recorded -- just to completely break. And I’ve found that to be true in trips to the farm or in trips other places further afield. And all of those things were true. I talked about the profound frustrations that I’ve felt over this last legislative session, in the battle that was in place with regard to the stimulus package, the $700 million in play, and how, at an emotional level, I found it exhausting. I tried to make as good a stand as I could -- not for a further political office. What was interesting, it was always viewed, are you doing this to climb some further political office? It was always based on that idea that I genuinely believe that that action would be bad for the taxpayers, and made the stand as I did. So all those things we talked about this morning were true, but they’re not the whole story. And that’s obviously why everybody’s gathered here right now. And so let me lay out that larger story that has attracted so many of you all here. I’m a bottom-line kind of -- kind of guy. I lay it out. It’s going to hurt, and we’ll let the chips fall where they may. In so doing, let me first of all apologize to my wife Jenny and our four great boys, Marshall, Landon, Bolton, and Blake, for letting them down. One of the primary roles, well before being a governor, is being a father to those four boys who are absolute jewels and blessings that I’ve let down in a profound way. And I apologize to them. And I don’t like apologizing in this realm, but, given the immediacy of you all’s wanting to visit and my proximity to them, this is the first step in what will be a very long process on that front. I would secondly say to Jenny, anybody who has observed her over the last 20 years of my life knows how closely she has stood by my side, in campaign after campaign after campaign and literally being my campaign manager, and in raising those four boys and in a whole host of other things throughout the lives that we’ve built together. I would also like to apologize to my staff because, as much as I did talk about going to the Appalachian Trail (ph) -- that was one of the original scenarios that I’d thrown out to Mary Neil (ph) -- that isn’t where I ended up. And so I let them down by created a fiction with record to where I was going, which means that I had then in turn, given as much they relied on that information, let down people that I represent across this state. And so I want to apologize to my staff and I want to apologize to anybody who lives in South Carolina for the way that I let them down on that front. I -- I want to apologize to good friends. Tom Davis came over to the house. He drove up from Beaufort. And he has been an incredibly dear friend for a very long time. In my first race for governor, he moved up and he lived in the basement of our house for six months, and we called it Jurassic Park because it was the kids’ dinosaur sheets and all kinds of different folks were living there in the campaign. And he gave of his time and his talent and his effort for ideas that he believed in, to try and make a difference in those ideas. And so I, in a very profound way, have let down the Tom Davises of the world. On the ride over here, I called the house, and in the background, I could hear my parents-in-laws, who had come up to be with Jenny, and I’ve let them down. I had the most, you know, surreal of conversations a number of weeks ago with my father-in-law, laying some cards on the table. And he was incredibly gentlemanly, as you cannot imagine, in saying here were some things that I was struggling with with regard to where my heart was, where I was in life -- those different kinds of things. And I let him down. I’ve let down a lot of people. That’s the bottom line. And I let them down, and in every instance I would ask their forgiveness. Forgiveness is not an immediate process. It is in fact a process that takes time, and I’ll be in that process for quite some weeks and months and I suspect years ahead. But I am -- I am here because if you were to look at God’s laws, there are in every instance designed to protect people from themselves. I think that that is the bottom line with God’s law -- that it’s not a moral, rigid list of dos and don’ts just for the heck of dos and don’ts. It is indeed to protect us from ourselves. And the biggest self of self is, indeed, self. That sin is in fact grounded in this notion of what is it that I want, as opposed to somebody else. And in this regard, let me throw one more apology out there, and that is to people of faith across South Carolina, or for that matter, across the nation, because I think that one of the big disappointments when, believe it or not, I’ve been a person of faith all my life, if somebody falls within the -- the fellowship of believers or the walk of faith, I think it makes it that much harder for believers to say, “Well, where was that person coming from?” Or folks that weren’t believers to say, “Where, indeed, was that person coming from?” So one more apology in there. But I -- I guess where I’m trying to go with this is that there are moral absolutes, and that God’s law indeed is there to protect you from yourself. And there are consequences if you breach that. This press conference is a consequence. And so the bottom line is this, I -- I’ve been unfaithful to my wife. I developed a relationship with a -- which started out as a dear, dear friend from Argentina. It began very innocently, as I suspect many of these things do, in just a casual e-mail back and forth, in advice on one’s life there and advice here. But here recently over this last year it developed into something much more than that. And as a consequence, I hurt her. I hurt you all. I hurt my wife. I hurt my boys. I hurt friends like Tom Davis. I hurt a lot of different folks. And all I can say is that I apologize. I -- I -- I would ask for your -- I guess I’m not deserving of indulgence, but indulgence not for me, but for Jenny and the boys. You know, there are a team of cameras and crews and all those sorts of things camped out down at Sullivan’s Island. And I would just ask for a zone of privacy, if not for me, for her and the boys. As we go through this process of working through this, there are going to be some hard decisions to be made, to be dealt with. And those are probably not best dealt with through the prism of television cameras and media headlines. You know, I am committed to that process of -- of walking through with Jenny and the boys, with the Tom Davises of the world, with the people of South Carolina in -- in saying “where do we go from here?” I -- I would simply say I go back to that simple word of asking for forgiveness. I -- just as a declarative statement, one more before we open up for a couple of questions, and then I’ll move on. I’ve tried to think of, you know, first steps -- one of the first steps is clearing out more time as we go through this process of -- of reconciliation and figuring out what comes next. I’m going to resign as chairman of the Republican Governors Association. I’m going to tender my resignation. One, because I think it’s the appropriate thing to do, given other governors across this nation and my role as chairman of the RGA. And two, frankly, just from the standpoint of time. You know, if I think about this process, not only does it begin at the family level, but it begins with the family of South Carolinians. And so that means me going one by one and town by town to talk to a lot of old friends across this state in -- in what I’ve done and -- and me asking for their forgiveness. That will take time -- time that I probably can’t devote to the RGA.