



**Perry Diaz**

# *PerryScope*

**By Perry Diaz**  
Sacramento, California

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## *Triple Whammy Hits GOP*

**SACRAMENTO, CALIF., July 7 (PinoyGlobal)** - Beset by discontent within its ranks after suffering one of its worst -- if not the worst -- defeats in its history, the Grand Old Party of Abraham Lincoln was hit with a triple whammy in a recent bizarre turn of events.

First, it was Sen. John Ensign of Nevada. Then, it was Gov. Mark Sanford of South Carolina. And finally, it was Gov. Sarah Palin of Alaska. All three are on the top of a short list of Republican presidential wannabes for the 2012 elections.

On June 16, 2009, Sen. John Ensign, admitted to having an extramarital affair with a married campaign aide. In a flash, his dream of pursuing higher office was shattered. Respected by Republicans as a social conservative and a stern advocate of family values, Ensign's confession before a group of reporters in Las Vegas shocked Capitol Hill which has been rife with speculation that he had an eye for the presidency. A born-again Christian, the 51-year old Ensign is an active member of Promise Keepers, an evangelical group whose mission is "to ignite and unite men to become warriors who will change their world through living out the Seven Promises." One of Promise Keepers' core beliefs is a commitment to "building strong marriages and families through love, protection and Biblical values." Evidently, that was a promise which Ensign did not keep.

For someone who had chastised former President Bill Clinton and former Idaho Senator Larry Craig for their

own sex scandals, Ensign opened himself to charges of hypocrisy. On June 17, the Las Vegas Sun reported an unnamed Republican operative as saying, "People have survived extramarital affairs, but he's got a hypocrisy problem to deal with. He's got a serious hypocrisy problem."

But all is not lost for Ensign. After his public confession, his wife issued a statement saying, "Since we found out last year we have worked through the situation and we have come to a reconciliation ... With the help of our family and close friends our marriage has become stronger." Ensign got his second chance to repair his marriage. As to whether he is going to remain in politics after his term ends in 2012 is predicated on what he would do to regain the public's trust.

On June 24, 2009, Gov. Mark Sanford, in a press conference, admitted to having an extramarital affair with Argentine Maria Belen Chapur in Buenos Aires. In my last week's article, "For Love of Maria," I said, "He was on top of the world: he had a loving and politically savvy wife; four promising sons; and was Chairman of the Republican Governors Association, a position that earned him a "ticket" for a possible run for the White House. Had he played his cards right, he could have been the front-runner for the Republican presidential primary in 2012. But for love of Maria, that dream was shattered... forever."

But in an emotional -- albeit remorseless -- interview with the media a week later, Sanford admitted that he visited Maria more times than what he admitted to a week ago. He

said that he would die “knowing that I had met my soul mate.” He also admitted that they met at a dance spot in Uruguay eight years ago, not in New York during the 9/11 attacks. But one sentence says it all when he said, “This was a whole lot more than a simple affair, this was a love story -- a forbidden one, a tragic one, but a love story at the end of the day.” That’s dreadfully poignant.

But in spite of Sanford’s professed love for Maria, his wife Jenny issued a statement which says: “The real issue now is one of forgiveness. I am willing to forgive Mark for his actions. We have been deeply disappointed in and even angry at Mark. The Bible says, “In your anger do not sin.” (Psalm 4:4) In this situation, this speaks to the essence of forgiveness and the critical need to channel one’s energy into positive steps that uphold the dignity of marriage and the family, and lead to reconciliation over time. My forgiveness is essential for us both to move on with our lives, with peace, in whatever direction that may take us.” Jenny is willing to forgive. But is Mark willing to forget his romantic affair with Maria? Time will tell.

Calls for his resignation as governor were made but he stood his ground saying that he is “fit to govern and has no plans to resign.” He vowed to finish the remaining 18 months of his term.

But it is a different story for Gov. Sarah Palin who announced last July 3, 2009 that she will not seek reelection in 2010 and will resign as governor of Alaska because -- listen to this -- she didn’t want to be a “lame duck” for the remainder of her term. Her sudden and unexpected announcement struck the Republican Party like a freezing Alaskan tsunami.

Washington political pundits were speculating that Palin could be preparing herself to run for the U.S. Senate or the presidency. While it might appear -- for now -- as a cunningly planned move, her decision to quit the governorship midway could create a backlash that could put an end

to her political life. As someone once said, “A winner never quits and a quitter never wins.” And once her image of a “quitter” sinks in on people’s mind, she would never regain her political power; thus, relegating her as a non-entity in US politics. That’s worse than being a “lame duck.”

There were also speculations that a scathing article published in the Vanity Fair magazine -- which, among other things, called Palin “the sexiest and the riskiest brand in the Republican Party” -- could have a devastating effect on Palin’s psyche. However, the day after her announcement, she laid the “groundwork” to take a larger role -- and calls it a “higher calling” -- to unite the country along her brand of conservatism. Can she do it as a private citizen from her home in Wasilla, Alaska or is she going to storm Washington, DC and establish a command base for her crusade against the non-believers of what she stood for? That remains to be seen.

With the departure of Ensign, Sanford, and Palin from the 2012 presidential derby, the Republican Party is hit with a triple whammy that virtually demolished the party’s competitiveness against the hitherto formidable Obama political machine.

Today, leaderless and rudderless, the Republican Party is awash in a turbulent sea of uncertainty. Recently, Newt Gingrich has been identified as a “top contender” for a presidential run in 2012 and that he “is already planting some seeds in Iowa, New Hampshire.” Can Gingrich -- who will be 69 years old in 2012 -- run the gauntlet and survive the tortuous “punishment” a presidential candidate must endure?

Can the Grand Old Party survive this recent triple whammy? Or would it become, as some pundits say, the “Grand Obsolete Party” which needs to be retooled to meet the challenges of a 21st century America?