

Vitter riding high despite `very serious sin' with D.C. madam

by [Bruce Alpert](#)

October 27, 2010

WASHINGTON (RNS) When Sen. David Vitter admitted in 2007 to a "very serious sin" after his phone number appeared on the list of a Washington escort service, the "family values" Louisiana Republican's political career was suddenly on life support.

The man who had made his name decrying public corruption and demanding that President Bill Clinton resign for lying about an affair with a White House aide was forced to confess to using the services of prostitutes.

But three years later, independent polls have consistently shown Vitter comfortably ahead of his Democratic challenger, maintaining a double-digit lead heading into next week's elections.

Asked by "Daily Show" host Jon Stewart in September how Vitter could be ahead in the polls, Democratic National Committee Chairman Tim Kaine replied: "Now that's a tough one. I don't know why. Louisiana seems real forgiving."

Some supporters say Vitter's personal conduct isn't nearly as important as his opposition to the president's legislative agenda, which they oppose and, in some cases, abhor. Others say they embrace the biblical admonition for personal forgiveness and redemption.

For James Bulliard, president of Cajun Chef Products in St. Martinville, La., support for Vitter is a no-brainer. "He is not going to vote for any of those outlandish Obama programs, and he says what he means and means what he says," Bulliard said.

Bulliard said he's counting on Vitter to oppose any efforts by Democrats to allow the Bush tax cuts for people earning \$250,000 or more to expire.

"I'm doing pretty well, though don't tell President Obama, he'll probably want to take credit," Bulliard said. "But I'm far from what anyone would consider rich. And Vitter will vote to retain those tax cuts."

Asked why she wrote a \$500 check to the Vitter campaign, Penny Ellis of Covington, retired from public relations work, said: "I'm a conservative and a Republican and he is, too."

"He has sinned, as he has said, but for the most part he is a decent man," Ellis said, and said Clinton's and Vitter's transgressions aren't the same. Vitter "was lonely. He made a mistake," she said. "But he kept his family together. He's got a lovely wife."

Becca Fox, a registered Republican from New Orleans, isn't as forgiving.

"I feel he is a hypocrite," said Fox, a former stay-at-home mom who now operates a lingerie store in New Orleans. "I really cannot stand it when somebody proclaims himself as a big family values proponent and then pulls the stunt he did and doesn't take personal responsibility. He should have resigned."

Joy Moore, 72, of Oberlin, said for her it comes down to the concept of personal forgiveness.

"I'm sure every day he regrets what he did. I just can't try to judge him myself," Moore said, offering up the biblical verse: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone."