

RELEASE IN FULL

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**Subject:** Dems start bailing on Weiner

## POLITICO

### Dems start bailing on Weiner

**By:** Jonathan Allen

June 8, 2011 03:03 PM EDT

Rep. Anthony Weiner's grip on his House seat grew far more tenuous Wednesday as he was hit with the release of another graphic picture purported to be of his genitals, the public revelation that his wife is pregnant and a flood of calls from prominent Democrats for him to resign.

It's up to Weiner to decide whether he'll ride out a scandal that grows more intense, and more embarrassing, by the day. For now, Weiner is resisting the calls. "He is not resigning," said a Democratic insider who spoke with him.

But pressure is steadily building from within Democratic ranks for him to call it quits and end the saga of the first Twitter-made political sex scandal.

Two former Democratic National Committee chairmen, former Pennsylvania Gov. Ed Rendell and former Virginia governor and current Senate candidate Tim Kaine, have called on Weiner to tender his resignation, as has Rep. Allyson Schwartz, the Pennsylvania Democrat who runs the recruitment and candidate-services operations for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

"Having the respect of your constituents is fundamental for a member of Congress. In light of Anthony Weiner's offensive behavior online, he should resign," Schwartz said in a statement given to POLITICO Wednesday afternoon.

"I think this picture puts it over the limit, and I think he has no choice but to resign," Rendell told Chris Matthews on "Hardball" Wednesday evening. "What I think Anthony Weiner should do is, he still has a lot to offer, he should resign, he should get treatment, and I mean real treatment, maybe inpatient treatment, and if he can rehabilitate himself, can he someday down the road in New York run for office? Maybe, maybe. But he's got to resign. He owes it to the party, he owes it to Congress, and he owes it to the issues he fought for."

The dam is breaking on Weiner as he battles to save his career from a sex scandal made for the Internet age: In addition to the two former DNC chairmen, six House Democrats and two Democratic senators had called for his resignation by Wednesday evening. Democratic sources told POLITICO that members of Weiner's staff were looking into new job opportunities. Some New York Democrats are starting to float the names of potential Weiner successors. Had the House been in session, the dam could have given way completely.

Two weeks ago, Weiner was a progressive crusader who had built a following through frequent television appearances and a special mastery of the social media tools Facebook and Twitter. As it turns out, his undoing was rooted in his facility with those Internet-age instruments. Now, colleagues said, he has embarrassed not only himself but his constituents and the institution of Congress. He has provided endless fodder to late-night comics while ruining a political future that seemed destined for the New York mayor's office.

In short, some say, he can no longer be effective.

But Weiner, witty, brash — and arrogant — has said he has no plans to go away quietly. In an unusually emotional, detailed and freewheeling New York news conference Monday, he admitted that he had sent sexually explicit photographs and text messages to six women over three years, including since he married Huma Abedin, a top aide to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, last summer. He said he would stay in Congress and remain married to Abedin, who is just ending the first trimester of her pregnancy.

Compounding the fundamental damage of the sex scandal, Weiner lied about it — repeatedly and proactively — for more than a week. Because there is no indication that he had physical contact with any of the women and has not campaigned in the past as a champion of sexual prudence, it is likely that it is the lie — the coverup — that has hurt him the most.

He seemed at times to relish the opportunity to dissemble in the days after conservative Andrew Breitbart first published a photograph of Weiner's bulging gray boxer-briefs in late May. Weiner said his Facebook account had been hacked, that he was the victim of a "prank" — even though the picture was captured from a platform called yfrog and linked in a message he sent from his Twitter handle. In truth, he had inadvertently posted the message, intended for a female college student in Washington state, to a publicly accessible website.

Breitbart, pushing for vindication, published text messages Weiner had exchanged with another woman. He said he had a photo of Weiner's naked manhood in reserve if the New York Democrat didn't confess to the online relationships and lying about them.

Weiner did just that on Monday.

But that didn't end the affair.

By Tuesday, a handful of political voices called for him to resign — most prominently, Kaine and House Majority Whip Eric Cantor (R-Va.).

By Wednesday, the floodgates were ready to open.

Schwartz delivered the first blow from a lawmaker with ties to the Democratic leadership. It was direct: She suggested Weiner no longer has the respect of his constituents. How would the Philadelphia lawmaker know that? She grew up in nearby Flushing, N.Y.

Other House Democrats who called for Weiner to step aside: Niki Tsongas of Massachusetts, Larry Kissell of North Carolina, Michael Michaud of Maine, Joe Donnelly of Indiana and Mike Ross of Arkansas, according to various news reports. Democratic Sens. Patrick Leahy of Vermont and Mark Pryor of Arkansas also said it is time for Weiner to go. White House spokesman Jay Carney declined to comment on the matter, as did Missouri Sen. Claire McCaskill.

Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.), a 15-year veteran of the House, told Lawrence O'Donnell on MSNBC that he doesn't "see how you serve effectively after this amazingly egregious behavior."

"Lying to the public, I think your credibility is shot and I think Anthony would be better served moving on to something else," Blumenauer said.

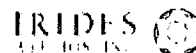
Earlier Wednesday, radio shock jocks "Opie & Anthony" — Gregg Hughes and Anthony Cumia — posted a photograph of a man's genitals taken from an image on Breitbart's phone of a picture reportedly taken by Weiner himself. The radio duo later said they secretly took the picture and posted it online without consulting Breitbart, who had previously promised not to release the image because Weiner had copped to his actions.

Weiner's camp didn't deny that it was a picture of him.

"As Rep. Weiner said on Monday when he took responsibility for his actions, he has sent explicit photos. To reiterate, he has never met any of these women or had physical contact with them," Weiner spokeswoman Risa B. Heller said. "As he said, he deeply regrets the pain he has caused. With the full support of his wife, he is working on righting these wrongs with his family and his colleagues."

House Democratic leaders have urged the Ethics Committee to initiate an investigation into whether Weiner broke any House rules — one of which is to behave in a manner that reflects well on the institution.

*Jake Sherman, David Catanese and Carrie Budoff Brown contributed to this report.*



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