



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on January 22, 2012

Gingrich Wins South Carolina, Third GOP Winner In As Many States

"Thank you to everyone in South Carolina who decided to be with us in changing Washington," Gingrich stated in his victory speech that began with flattery for each of his Republican opponents. Gingrich said that President Obama has been the "best food stamp President in American history" and that "I would like to be the best paycheck president in American history."

"We are now moving on to Florida and beyond," Gingrich concluded.

In the end, Romney's loss in the South Carolina primary may be as important as Gingrich's victory. Gingrich's first-place finish tears the GOP nomination process wide open. Gingrich's victory in South Carolina marks the third straight new GOP candidate to win a state: Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum won the Iowa caucuses (after a recount in a close vote), and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney won the New Hampshire primary.



Gingrich's victory shatters the illusion of the inevitability of Romney's eventual nomination as GOP standard-bearer; Romney has been an establishment favorite and the [most heavily funded candidate on the Republican side](#). In South Carolina, Mitt Romney placed second with 27 percent of the vote, Rick Santorum placed third at 17 percent and Ron Paul ran fourth at 13 percent.

The Gingrich victory can only be termed as unlikely, considering the demographic groups who backed the former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives according to [exit polls](#). These polls found that Gingrich won the evangelical Christian vote, even though he has [admitted](#) to carrying on an affair with a staffer half his age during his marriage to his second wife Marianne. In the days before the South Carolina vote, Gingrich had to publicly deal with [charges by Marianne](#) that he had asked her to continue their marriage as an "open marriage." (Gingrich claimed he had never said this, though he [admitted](#) he acted as if his second marriage was an open marriage.)

Gingrich also won self-declared "conservative" voters according to [exit polls](#), even though, the last time held public office, he was ousted from the speakership by a conservative rebellion against his left-leaning policies. The conservative rebellion against Gingrich followed a 1997 vote to reprimand the House Speaker on ethics charges that resulted in a \$300,000 fine for Gingrich. The reprimand noted that Gingrich's tax-exempt foundation had been illegally used to support partisan politics, and that



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Gingrich had lied to House Ethics Committee investigators about those dealings. The House [voted](#) 395-28 on January 21, 1997 to reprimand Gingrich and [fine him \\$300,000](#) for the violation.

The House approved a [statement](#) that said "Mr. Gingrich had engaged in conduct that did not reflect on the creditably on the House of Representatives" and had lied to House Ethics Committee investigators by submitting information that "Mr. Gingrich should have known was inaccurate, incomplete and unreliable."

Gingrich's flouting of tax law and — more importantly — his dishonesty when it became apparent resulted in a wave of condemnation by House conservatives. "Newt has done some things that have embarrassed House Republicans and embarrassed the House," Rep. Peter Hoekstra (R-Mich.) [said](#) after the vote. "If (the voters) see more of that, they will question our judgment." Then-Rep. Mark Sanford (R-S.C.) [told](#) the *Washington Post* back in 1997 that he never would have backed Gingrich for Speaker had he known about his dealings. "When I think of my three boys and what kind of example I want to set for them for leadership in this country, gray is not the example."

The House "reprimand" was essentially a plea bargain by Gingrich and his lawyers, as many in the House wanted to avoid a distracting six-month battle over heavier charges. Gingrich had praised the efforts of the House Ethics Committee as "non-partisan" back in 1997, but by December 2011 he was [telling](#) Fox News' Greta Van Susteren that "this was a Nancy Pelosi-driven effort. They filed 85 charges; 84 were dismissed."

Gingrich was not only corrupt in his personal life and political life, he was also corrupt in his business life. After Gingrich left office in 1999, he formed a consulting company called the Gingrich Group that touted the business model of government-sponsored enterprise Freddie Mac. Freddie Mac helped to blow up the housing bubble and faced bankruptcy without billions in bailout funds by 2008, but in 2006 Gingrich [praised](#) its business model in a propaganda puff-interview on the Freddie Mac website:

I think a GSE [Government-Sponsored Enterprise] for space exploration ought to be seriously considered — I'm convinced that if NASA were a GSE, we probably would be on Mars today.

Certainly there is a lot of debate today about the housing GSEs, but I think it is telling that there is strong bipartisan support for maintaining the GSE model in housing. There is not much support for the idea of removing the GSE charters from Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. And I think it's clear why. The housing GSEs have made an important contribution to homeownership and the housing finance system. We have a much more liquid and stable housing finance system than we would have without the GSEs. And making homeownership more accessible and affordable is a policy goal I believe conservatives should embrace. Millions of people have entered the middle class through building wealth in their homes, and there is a lot of evidence that homeownership contributes to stable families and communities. These are results I think conservatives should embrace and want to extend as widely as possible.

Many have suggested that Gingrich backed Freddie Mac's business model in part because he received some [\\$1.6 million in consulting fees](#) from Freddie Mac.

Gingrich — corrupt in his personal life, his political life, and his business life — has won a state in the Republican presidential nominating process. What does that say about the Republican Party?

Photo of Newt Gingrich: AP Images



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