



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on December 28, 2011

Newt Says Paul Supporters Not "Decent" Americans

When Newt Gingrich said he would not vote for rival candidate Ron Paul if Paul wins the Republican presidential nomination, Gingrich may have forfeited whatever support he might receive from a sizable number of conservative and libertarian voters if the former Speaker of the House is himself the nominee.



Gingrich answered with an unqualified "No," when asked if he would vote for Paul if the 12-term Texas congressman were to emerge as the party's standard-bearer. "I think Ron Paul's views are totally outside the mainstream of virtually every decent American," Gingrich said Tuesday on CNN's [The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer](#).

By its very nature the comment appears to impugn not only Paul, but his legions of supporters as well. The people who support Ron Paul share his views on most or all of the issues the candidate has been espousing in this and in previous campaigns. If those views are "outside the mainstream of virtually every decent American," then the unavoidable implication of Gingrich's statement is that "virtually" everyone who holds such views is not a "decent American." Should Gingrich emerge from the primary battles as the nominee, even those Paul supporters who hold the former speaker in "minimum high regard" might be loath to support the nominee who has, in effect, called them indecent.

Gingrich's indictment falls also on voters who are, for various reasons, backing other candidates, but who share many of the views espoused by Paul. Paul's insistence on non-intervention in the internal affairs of other nations, for example, seems to have more appeal to today's war-weary electorate than it did to Republican primary and caucus voters four years ago, when most of the antiwar voters were drawn to the Clinton-Obama battle in the Democratic primaries. But Paul's message appears to be resonating with likely voters in this year's Iowa Republican caucuses, as polls show him in a virtual three-way tie with Gingrich and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney with less than a week to go before the January 3 voting. In Iowa, as in other locales, Paul has evoked the most enthusiastic applause in several debates with his call to bring American troops home not only from Afghanistan and



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Iraq, but from overseas deployments in 130 countries around the world.

Paul has also emphatically opposed forcing a military confrontation with Iran over that nation's possible development of a nuclear weapon. That is one reason Gingrich insists Paul won't be nominated, much less elected. "He's not going to get the nomination. It won't happen," Gingrich said. "The people in the United States are not going to accept somebody who thinks it's irrelevant if Iran gets a nuclear weapon."

But while Gingrich and the other GOP candidates all, with the exception of Paul, speak as though there can be no doubt Iran is on the verge of developing such a weapon, both U.S. and international intelligence reports indicate it is far from certain. A report last month by the International Atomic Energy Agency expressed concerns about a "possible" weapons development program in Iran. And in "clarifying" a recent statement by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta that Iran *may* be capable of producing a nuclear weapon within the next year, Pentagon press secretary George Little appeared to throw cold water on his boss's speculation.

"The secretary was clear that we have no indication that the Iranians have made a decision to develop a nuclear weapon," Little said. If so, it would seem equally "clear" that there is "no indication" that Iran is going to pose a nuclear threat to anyone anytime soon, since a non-nuclear nation does not become a nuclear power overnight. What is unclear is how imposing the "crippling sanctions" against Iran that Romney calls for or threatening military action with "all options on the table," as Obama and all of the Republican candidates but Paul do, will cause Iran to abandon its plans for a nuclear bomb if, in fact, it has any. It is even more unclear how Paul's unwillingness to provoke a war with another Middle East nation over what it may or may not do with a weapon it may or may not have at some point in the indefinite future is somehow "outside the mainstream of virtually every decent American." Most Americans old enough to vote in 2012 will remember that the Iraq War was launched on the pretext of eliminating weapons of mass destruction that were never found during more than eight and a half years of America's military occupation of Iraq.

Gingrich, who accused Paul of "a systematic avoidance of reality," also raised the issue of racist comments found in the Ron Paul financial advice newsletters published in the 1990s. "I think it's very difficult to see how you would engage in dealing with Ron Paul as a nominee," Gingrich said, "given the newsletters, which he has not yet disowned." In fact, Paul has disavowed the racist statements, said he didn't write them and that he was unaware of them until long after they were published. The former speaker's comments drew a predictably swift and hard-edged rebuttal from the Paul camp.

"Frustration from his floundering campaign has Newt Gingrich showing who he really is: a divisive, big-government liberal," Paul Campaign Chairman Jesse Benton said. "Newt has a long record of standing against conservatives, dating back to his support for liberal Nelson Rockefeller over Barry Goldwater, so this sort of childish outburst is nothing new."

Indeed, the controversy does carry echoes of the 1964 nomination battle, when Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona defeated Gov. Nelson Rockefeller of New York and wrested the nomination from the liberal "Eastern establishment" wing of the Republican Party. In the general election campaign, several liberal-to-moderate Republicans, including Rockefeller and New York Senators Jacob Javits and Kenneth Keating, refused to campaign for or with Goldwater or even say they would vote for him. With the party badly divided and Goldwater already derided by some of his fellow Republicans as a radical, President Lyndon Johnson won in a landslide.



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In this case, Gingrich isn't waiting for the outcome, or even for the first caucus or primary. He has announced, nearly a year in advance, that he won't vote for Ron Paul if Paul is the nominee. Should Gingrich win the nomination, Paul and his supporters will likely return the compliment.

Photo: Republican presidential candidates, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, left, and Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, arrive for a Republican presidential debate in Sioux City, Iowa, Dec. 15, 2011: AP Images



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