



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on June 10, 2011

Newt's Staff Resigns, Campaign in Turmoil

Speculation is rampant about what the walkout of the staff people for Gingrich means for the GOP presidential race, but it leaves things even more wide open than they were before, with several candidates waiting to take part in the first New Hampshire debate of the presidential campaign season Monday night, June 13, at Saint Anselm College in Manchester. Southern New Hampshire and much of the rest of New England have endured severe thunderstorms of late, and perhaps one or more of the candidates is waiting for a thunderbolt from on high to signal that the man and the moment have met and the anointed candidate has been illuminated by a flash from on high.



On the other hand, a lightning bolt might signify heaven's displeasure with one or more of the contenders. At the same venue in 2007, former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani was attempting to explain his pro-choice position on abortion in light of his Catholic faith when a lightning bolt came fearfully close. Other candidates instinctively moved away from the controversial New Yorker, leaving heaven's archer and Mayor Giuliani each to speak for himself.

The mass resignation in the Gingrich camp was said to be "a team decision." National Review Online quoted one unnamed source as saying: "We just had a different direction in which we wanted to take the campaign." Usually it is the candidate who determines the direction of the campaign, or at least that is what we are supposed to believe. But Gingrich took his own direction when he set off with his wife last week on a cruise of the Greek isles, not a likely place to find Iowa, New Hampshire, or South Carolina voters. At last report, no primary for the Republican presidential nomination has been scheduled for the Greek isles.

Other phrases coming out of what's left of the Gingrich campaign make it sound like Newt's third divorce: "irreconcilable differences," "incompatibility," etc. Gingrich, having been through two messy divorces is married to his third wife, presumably the one who accompanied him on the Greek cruise. His marital difficulties, memories of his abrupt resignation from Congress in 1998 following charges of ethics violations, and his recent criticism of the federal spending plan advanced by fellow Republican Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, chairman of the House Budget Committee, have all contributed to a rocky start to the Georgian's presidential campaign. He has also become the butt of jokes by late-night comedians, owing in part to the news about a \$500,000 debt at Tiffany's in New York. Jay Leno explained the debt by deadpanning that the thrice-married Gingrich "buys engagement rings in bulk."

It is early to be writing the political obituary of any presidential hopeful. John McCain, after all, was being counted out at this point in 2007 and went on to clinch the nomination early in 2008. But this could be the last hurrah for Gingrich, 67, who joined the Congress in 1979 and worked his way up to



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Speaker of the House after he co-authored the GOP Contract With America for the congressional elections of 2004 and engineered the first Republican takeover of the House of Representatives in 40 years. He did not prevail as he had apparently expected in direct confrontations with President Bill Clinton, but the two worked together to pass bipartisan legislation on welfare reform, trade agreements, and reducing deficits to produce balanced budgets and even surpluses (using government accounting methods) that were later washed out in the spending spree of the allegedly conservative administration of Republican George W. Bush.

Gingrich is, according to widespread belief, too polarizing a figure to unite the party and the nation behind his presidential bid. That plus the marital problems have led to the commonly heard complaint that he carries "too much baggage" for a run at the White House.

Perry has been talked about as a contender, but had earlier ruled himself out for 2012. Whether he remains on the sidelines in light of Gingrich's latest difficulties remains to be seen. Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee has indicated he may reconsider his decision to stay out of the race, and it is unknown if Gingrich's campaign problems will affect his decision. While Gingrich is not generally viewed as a regional candidate, the Georgian does hail from the South and Huckabee may see an opening there. Perry is also a Southerner as well as a Westerner, given that Texas was part of the Confederate States of America and there is no part of the United States, save territorial waters in the Gulf of Mexico, due south of Texas.

The South has been crucial to Republican presidential campaigns since 1968 and the current frontrunning Republican candidate, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, will likely run into difficulty south of the Mason-Dixon line, given his Mormon faith and the liberal stand he took on abortion and homosexual rights during his political career in liberal and heavily Democratic Massachusetts.

Rep. Michele Bachmann of Minnesota, meanwhile, has not yet declared her candidacy, though she has been included in the candidates forum, or debate, set for Monday night in New Hampshire. Though a northerner from the Midwest, Bachmann's conservative stand on fiscal and social issues could make her competitive with Huckabee, Gingrich, and others in the conservative South. Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, meanwhile, continues to hover around the perimeter of the campaign and has not yet indicated if she will jump in. The Republican vice presidential candidate in 2008, Palin has pursued celebrity in other venues since then, resigning as Governor, giving speeches, endorsing candidates for Congress and starring in a reality TV show and a movie about Alaska.

Photo of Newt Gingrich: AP Images



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