

## WEBCommentary

### **Newt, We Hardly Knew Ye (Part 4)** **Will the Real Newt Gingrich Please Stand Up?**

Lin Franklin

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This is the final Part in a four-part series on just who is the real Newt Gingrich? See [Part 1](#), [Part 2](#) and [Part 3](#) if you've missed them.

Those are my principles, and if you don't like them... well, I have others. ~ [Groucho Marx](#)

Republican presidential candidate Newton Leroy Gingrich is certainly not a fiscal conservative, whether with his own money, campaign contributions, or taxpayer funds. Many already know about his [six-figure](#) credit line at Tiffany's. And, of course, his [seven-figure](#) *second* line of credit at Tiffany's, now closed. This [comedic fodder](#) should concern fiscal conservatives, even though Tiffany's issued a [statement](#) denying any connection between their lobbying efforts and either of the Gingriches.

Also consider during his presidential bid, [spendthrift](#) Gingrich has traveled by private plane, enjoyed fine dining at exclusive restaurants, and visited numerous zoos. (After amassing [\\$452,000.00 in debt](#) for private planes, he finally switched to commercial air travel.) Perhaps if he had spent his campaign funds on campaigning, rather than indulging himself and his wife, he could have built a better organization. We can expect much more of the same, whenever Gingrich is able to arrange luxurious travel on someone else's tab, whether that be the taxpayers or even his own campaign supporters. This penchant may explain why he is still in the race – to continue his [travels](#) at the expense of others.

Something many may not remember is that Gingrich's champagne tastes began long before he was able to afford them. As the new Minority Whip, in 1989 Gingrich helped to *very quietly* push through a [large pay raise](#) for himself and other members. “Mum” was the word about the massive pay hike, including a written agreement between party chairs to not use it as a campaign issue. When his Democratic challenger dared attack him over this in 1990, leading Democrats rallied to Gingrich's defense, actually campaigning for Gingrich in Georgia. Even with their help, he barely held onto his seat.

Gingrich's [salary](#) went from \$90,000.00 per year to \$130,000.00 per year. Many families are able to make ends meet on much less income today, roughly 20 years later. But not Gingrich. In 1992, Gingrich really went overboard on his luxury lifestyle which included chauffeur driven limousines. The problem was that he couldn't afford it and like many of his Democrat colleagues during the infamous [House Banking Scandal](#), simply overdrafted his House Bank account 22 times, over \$26,000.00, to live his high life.

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The anti-incumbent sentiment engendered by the House Banking Scandal helped propel the Republican victories in 1994 at least as much as the vaunted Contract With America. Then-backbencher Rick Santorum was one of the leaders in exposing this scandal that cost Democrats the House. [Santorum](#) accused Gingrich of cowardice in resisting an investigation instead of joining the freshmen in this fight which was politically risky for them, especially without support from the leadership. As [Jonathan S. Tobin](#) wrote, Gingrich's own corruption, more than cowardice, kept him from joining the fray. Once again, Gingrich barely held onto his seat. His campaign that year included promising residents to trust him, then the Minority Whip, to bring home more bacon than his challenger. That was one [promise](#) he actually kept.

I don't care how people spend their own money. I do care how they acquire it. When Gingrich ran for Congress in 1978, his annual salary was \$10,000.00. By 1994 when he became Speaker, his annual earnings had rocketed to \$675,000.00. By the time he left Congress in January 1999, his net worth was estimated at [\\$7.5 million dollars](#).

Gingrich's [wives](#) were also able to obtain lucrative positions, such as Marianne's 1995 job as a representative for the Israel Export Development Company at \$2,500.00 per month plus commissions. At the time, Democrats railed against what they believed was a clear payoff to her husband for his support of the company's Negev Desert project. Gingrich denied any conflict. After all, Marianne had worked for an Ohio planning commission some years earlier and had spent the prior year selling [BeautiControl Cosmetics](#) from her home; both clearly important considerations when seeking someone to handle multi-million dollar international contracts.

Gingrich has long been accused of largely ignored ethical violations and of being “[for sale](#)” to the highest bidder, adjusting his positions to suit whomever was paying him, or his wives. While he was Speaker, Gingrich was the target of a two-year long [criminal investigation](#) by the FBI. [Joseph Trento](#), who broke this story complete with official documents, quotes Marianne Gingrich as saying that it took direct intervention from then FBI Director Louis Freeh to pull the plug on this investigation. Rank has its privileges, it appears.

Influence doesn't just stop pesky FBI agents from snooping around; it can also be very lucrative. After blaming Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae for the housing crisis that wreaked havoc on our economy, Gingrich called for all who had profited from them to be arrested. When confronted with his own \$1.6 million in payments from Freddie Mac, Gingrich laughably claims to have been hired as a “[historian](#).”

Former Freddie Mac officials have a different recollection. One former official is [quoted](#) as saying, “Freddie wasn't spending \$25,000 - \$35,000 a month for years to have somebody give them history lessons on what would have happened in 1945 if Japan had won.” Well, that's just common sense, isn't it?

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[Reportedly](#) hired at a time when conservatives were trying to dismantle Fannie and Freddie, Gingrich's role was to bring conservatives to their cause and to develop arguments to convince conservatives to support them. Richard Syron, CEO of Freddie Mac at the time, is quoted as saying that Gingrich never indicated to them that there was a housing “bubble” or that the model was at risk. It's safe to assume Syron also doesn't recall him advising their model was “[insane](#)” as Gingrich claimed.

Supporting the former officials' version of events, the few [contracts](#) finally produced by Gingrich show he was paid \$25,000 per month and reported to Freddie Mac's chief lobbyist, not their history department. This is because Freddie Mac doesn't have a history department. Nor does [Fannie Mae](#), for whom Gingrich also acted as cheerleader. In fact, Gingrich was decidedly in favor of Government Sponsored Enterprises, [GSE's](#), in general, and said there [should be more](#) of them.

The second contract released does include the claimed clause about not lobbying, but it also spells out his duties which seem to be the definition lobbying. Good thing that clause was in there, or folks may not have understood that influence peddling and lobbying are not the same thing.

The [AP reported](#) that Gingrich was paid \$300,000.00 by Freddie Mac in 2006. Far from claiming their business model was “insane,” Gingrich “talked and wrote about what he saw as the benefits of the Freddie Mac business model.” This was around the same time the Bush Administration and then Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan tried to sound the alarm about Fannie and Freddie. Gingrich and many others were hired to thwart their efforts.

Gingrich was also instrumental in squelching efforts to rein in [Freddie and Fannie](#) while he was Speaker. Though there is no evidence of direct payment for those efforts, it is believed they financed Gingrich's trip to Ireland in 1998. Of course, since Gingrich ignored the rule to annually disclose such “gifts” there is no official record of just how much they valued his help.

At one point, Gingrich defended himself against accusations of lobbying by explaining he had [consulted an expert](#) in lobbying law to train his staff to avoid lobbying. This doesn't seem to be much of a defense. It just shows that he was, once again, parsing words and skirting legal boundaries while peddling his K-Street “power broker” influence. He even hired an expert to make sure he could rake in millions while continuing to do everything a lobbyist does without registering as one, so as to not harm his political aspirations.

Keep in mind that [Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac bailouts](#) have already cost taxpayers about \$170 *billion* dollars and will likely cost *billions* more. When seen in that light, one may tend to agree with Gingrich that those who profited should be jailed – including Gingrich.

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Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac weren't the only recipients of Gingrich's knowledge of history *and his influence*. According to [FactCheck](#):

“Gingrich wrote [op-eds](#), organized meetings with members of Congress, testified at congressional hearings and appeared at health care conferences, advocating positions dear to groups who were paying him large sums of money.”

Gingrich claims to have been acting as a “private citizen” when advocating for various health care related policies, but his think tank received [\\$37 million dollars](#) from the health care industry. Much of this money came from insurance companies, including Wellpoint, the nation's largest health insurer, and [Blue Cross/Blue Shield](#), but Gingrich expects us to believe this had nothing to do with his support of centralized medical records and an unconstitutional mandate requiring all citizens to purchase health insurance.

Gingrich supported the individual mandate from [at least 1993](#) and as [recently](#) as [May 2011](#). Sometime thereafter, when he realized public opposition had manifested staying power, he decided to oppose it. This is cold comfort when one considers he would have signed such legislation at any time during the 18 or so years he supported an individual mandate to buy health insurance.

Gingrich also expects us to believe his big pharma clients, including [Astra-Zeneca and Pfizer](#), had nothing to do with his vociferous support of unfunded [Medicare Part D](#) benefits. It's difficult to conclude Gingrich wasn't a '[plain and simple lobbyist](#)' when he directly contacted members of Congress about the pending legislation and strong-armed fiscally conservative dissenters in closed-door meetings.

Like his numerous liberal votes and the numerous liberal bills he [co-sponsored](#), Gingrich was also able to work with democrats when it benefited his clients. Gingrich even [teamed](#) up with [Hillary Clinton](#) to push an individual health care mandate. Gingrich's plan involved clear wealth redistribution through tax credits and subsidies, not unlike the Democrat plan. Around the same time, Gingrich announced his support for mandating physical education five days per week for school children, to combat obesity. One can assume he'd also be able to work well with First Lady Michelle Obama, if she would pay his current rate.

What his record shows is that to Gingrich, what he says is more important than what he does. Whatever he says today is real; ignore the other Gingrich behind the curtain, '[draining the lifeblood from the Republican Revolution](#).' He says he is a conservative but has taken many decidedly anti-conservative positions. For example: Gingrich supports amnesty for illegal aliens, and didn't alter his position even when the U.S. unemployment rate was hovering around 10%. He got into a heated debate on the topic with [Laura Ingraham](#).

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Gingrich voted for an amendment that would create a [National Police Corps](#). His [record](#) of support for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment is mixed, at best. During his tenure as Speaker, he received a “D” rating from [Gun Owners Of America](#). I'll leave it to the reader to add those two facts together.

More examples: Gingrich voted to expand the powers of the [FDIC](#); think bail outs, bad assets; like TARP. Needless to say, he also said he would have “[reluctantly](#)” voted for TARP in 2008. In 1982, Gingrich voted for a \$1 billion increase in unconstitutional [mortgage subsidies](#), and to strengthen [federal home loan agencies](#), further involving the federal government in the home loan business that helped collapse the economy. He also voted to bail out the [Savings & Loan](#) companies and supported funding of the [International Monetary Fund](#). He strongly supported President Clinton's bailout of [Mexico](#) against the wishes of Republican House members. Gingrich also called Representative Paul Ryan's budget proposal “[right wing social engineering](#).” He was one of only 20 House members who [voted against a balanced budget amendment](#) but Gingrich was a reliable vote to increase the debt ceiling, voting to raise it at least four times.

In addition, in 1984, Gingrich co-sponsored a bill to implement the unconstitutional “[Fairness Doctrine](#).” Gingrich voted to fund [PBS](#) and [potato research](#); and he supported increasing funding for “[the arts](#),” including funding the Atlanta (Georgia) Ballet.

It is impossible to imagine all of the very costly different directions Gingrich's pronounced [big-government progressivism](#) would take this country should he ever be put in charge of it. What's not hard to imagine is the Obama re-election team producing millions of dollars worth of truthful ads highlighting Gingrich's past and his personal failings. No doubt, Gingrich's history would also be fodder for mainstream media, day in and day out. Gingrich's primary opponents were kind to him compared to what the Obama machine would do with just the facts in Gingrich's record. They wouldn't need to spin it to ensure a landslide victory for Obama, if Gingrich somehow becomes the Republican nominee. (But they would, to make it seem even worse.)

Most conservatives have seen through Gingrich and chosen to support another candidate. Some perhaps recognize that Gingrich shares many characteristics of a [narcissist](#) or even a [sociopath](#) – grandiose, glib, promiscuous, manipulative, needs stimulation, impulsive, and on and on. All of these characteristics and more have been demonstrated in this series. Also, don't forget Gingrich described himself as a “[definer of civilization](#).” He also admitted he forced a government shutdown at least in part because then President Clinton snubbed him on Air Force One.

For anyone still not convinced, please read a [1995 New Yorker](#) profile of Gingrich which thoroughly substantiates the author's conclusion that Gingrich is the consummate con-artist. (Click on the text to enlarge) When taking into consideration

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how much power he had at the time as Speaker of the House, and how much more he attempted to obtain with his presidential bid, this profile is more frightening than anything written by Stephen King. It describes in detail how manipulative and downright *devious* Gingrich was in obtaining power and how he used his power to manipulate others. The research is so detailed, the article even describes how Toranaga, a major character in the novel *Shogun*, was a “critical model” for Gingrich.

The *New Yorker* profile makes “[The Many Faces Of Newt Gingrich](#),” a 1997 [Reason.com](#) article which refers to Gingrich's frequent praise of big government and quoted him as saying his philosophy could “involve a very activist government,” seem almost a puff piece in comparison.

This series is not meant to be an all-encompassing record of all of Gingrich's negative or liberal history. There is a lot [more](#). There are many, many reasons that Gingrich's [favorable rating](#) is consistently in the 20s or less, with his unfavorables in the 60s; even worse than Nancy Pelosi's ratings.

The purpose of this series, and the purpose of completing it even now with Gingrich likely to drop out of the race at any moment, is to encourage you to thoroughly research any candidate, national or local, before pledging your support. Even if you think you already know him or her; maybe especially if you think so. Gingrich spent years re-branding himself, working toward what he believed was his inevitable and world-changing presidency.

The man who declared the [era of Reagan](#) to be over is pretty much done for this election cycle, so even Gingrich's most loyal supporters should start considering the other candidates. [Andrew Breitbart](#) said, “There are two paths. One is America and the other one is Occupy.” “Anyone who is willing to stand next to me to fight the progressive left, I will be in that bunker. And if you're not in that bunker because you're not satisfied with this candidate, more than shame on you, you're on the other side. “

Character *matters*. And Barack Obama's character makes getting him out of the White House a national imperative.

Lin Franklin

[Send email feedback to Lin Franklin](#)

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### **Biography - Lin Franklin**

Lin Franklin is mostly retired these days but continues to advocate for children. She occasionally advocates for local single parents on a referral basis; primarily helping them to navigate the legal system and local resources for the benefit of their children. Lin has been devoutly religious since her earliest memories and consistently conservative since the days of Ronald Reagan. She believes in strict constitutional interpretation, very limited federal government, state's rights, and personal liberty. Lin's love of the law and the country led to her interest in U.S. and state politics. She believes apathy is the greatest danger to our society on every level; from schools, to entertainment, to politics. Lin believes if we as a society do not become involved and vocal in demanding better, we're unlikely to ever receive it.

Read [other commentaries by Lin Franklin](#).

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