

# POLITICO

## **Think tank president quits after domestic violence complaint**

The wife of Jerry Taylor, the co-founder and president of the Niskanen Center, made the allegations after an incident in June.

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Jerry Taylor, the co-founder and president of the Niskanen Center, recently resigned from the Washington, D.C.-based think tank after being charged with violently attacking his wife, according to court records obtained by POLITICO.

Taylor, who previously had been a longtime top official of the Cato Institute, was arrested in early June on a misdemeanor charge of assault and battery of a family member in Arlington, Va.

He denies the accusations, but says he pleaded guilty in exchange for the charges being dismissed as long as he successfully completes a domestic violence and substance abuse prevention program.

On the night in question, Taylor had been up late after celebrating his son's high school graduation. When his wife saw him drinking and using his iPad, she urged him to go to bed and threw his iPad in the trash, according to what she told a police officer who responded to the scene and wrote handwritten notes for a criminal complaint.

Taylor, 58, then allegedly pushed her onto the kitchen floor and put his hands around her neck and slapped her, the officer recorded in her notes. After she told him he shouldn't do that, Taylor allegedly pushed her out of the house and pushed her down the front steps, injuring her, according to the complaint.

The officer, who responded at around 1 a.m., said in her police report that she observed "fresh scrape marks on her left leg and left ankle" of Taylor's wife and that the woman also complained about pain from her right shoulder and her back. He had no visible injuries.

According to the complaint, Taylor told the officer that his wife had thrown his iPad down the front steps, smashing the device, and then turned around and pushed him. He said he pushed her back, causing her to fall down the steps. He denied slapping her or putting his hands around her neck and said she was emotionally and psychologically abusive to him, the complaint said.

Taylor was arrested that night and held in custody for around a day and half.

The Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court in Arlington found on July 20 that the facts were sufficient in the case to sustain a conviction but deferred a finding on the case until next July as long as Taylor exhibits good behavior, completes an "abuser's intervention program," undergoes a substance abuse evaluation, follows all treatment recommendations and abides by a protective order requiring him to forgo any contact with the complainant and her daughter.

Taylor is appealing the protective order.

Two weeks after the incident, Taylor's wife filed for divorce, claiming she had been abused.

In his divorce response, he said she had started the fight and tried to force him to leave the house. He acknowledged that he "very lightly smacked her" and claimed that "such a theatrical gesture would get her attention and wake her up to what she was doing."

In a statement in the criminal case file seen by POLITICO, Taylor's wife said he was an alcoholic who "cannot stop once he starts."

“He has totaled a car under [the] influence, broke his foot under [the] influence, yelled, made crazy comments and has used abusive language. His drinking got worse over time, with extremely drunken episodes occurring more than once in a week,” she wrote, adding that he drinks almost five days a week and has called her expletive-laden names.

“The alcohol makes him a person who is aggressive, self-centered and abusive,” she said in the statement filed to the court.

She also said that she had told him to attend Alcoholics Anonymous, but he told her the group had informed him he didn’t have a problem with alcohol.

“My wife’s allegations about the events that evening are not grounded in reality. Those events for the most part did not occur and I’m confident that the charges will ultimately be dismissed,” Taylor said in a statement. “I sincerely wish my wife the best as she wrestles with the issues she’s dealing with.”

A lawyer for Taylor, Nicholas Balland, said in a statement: “There’s no corroboration to her representations. There were no witnesses present, and she never requested medical attention or medical treatment until two weeks after this occurred.”

Taylor’s wife, who POLITICO is not naming because she’s not a public figure, did not respond to a request for comment. Kathryn Leckey, an attorney for Taylor’s wife, declined to comment citing ongoing litigation.

Louisa Tavlas, a spokesperson for Niskanen, also declined to comment, but a person close to Niskanen said the board was made aware of the incident in early September and immediately put Taylor on administrative leave. He resigned a few days later, on Sept. 6.

POLITICO reported last week that Taylor had resigned from Niskanen and that Tavlas did not disclose a reason for the departure.

Tavlas said in a statement at the time that the board of directors thanked Taylor, who co-founded the think tank in 2014, “for his leadership in building one of the most effective, principled, and strategic thought leadership institutions in the political world.”

The think tank has attracted attention for supporting a carbon tax to fight climate change and has advocated for libertarian and conservative policies on issues like immigration and regulation.