



The Truth-O-Meter Says:



Sixteen million jobs were created under Ronald Reagan's presidency.

[Newt Gingrich](#) on Wednesday, February 29th, 2012 in a speech

Gingrich uses Reagan record to make case for his campaign

Former Georgia congressman Newt Gingrich was feeling nostalgic Wednesday. Or at least hoping voters here feel that way next week.

Gingrich, now a Virginia resident, spoke to the Georgia House of Representatives to gather support in a state the Republican has repeatedly said he must win Tuesday in order to stay in the race for the White House.

Gingrich talked one particular achievement that he and his fellow members of Congress were able to accomplish with Republicans favorite Republican, President Ronald Reagan, during the 1980s. They created 16 million jobs during the Reagan years, he said.

It could be done again under a Gingrich presidency, the candidate said.

Perhaps. But we wondered if Gingrich was correct about that number under the Reagan years.

Gingrich served in Congress from 1979 to 1999, the final four years as U.S. House Speaker. Reagan took office in 1981 and left the White House in January 1989.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics keeps the most widely used data on employment, which can be accessed on its website on a month-by-month basis. In January 1981, the month Reagan took office, there were slightly more than 91 million Americans employed. By January 1989, the total was 107.1 million Americans.

That's an increase of 16.1 million employed Americans.

There is some debate about how much credit Reagan deserves for the

increase. First, what types of jobs were these?

Reagan's supply side economic policies were debated intensely at the time. Critics contend those policies resulted in the rich getting richer and the poor becoming poorer. Conservatives say his tax cuts were the catalyst of the nation's economic revival in the mid 1980s.

The Libertarian-leaning Cato Institute released a report in 1996 that found the median family income of Americans rose by nearly 1 percent a year under Reagan, which they concluded was higher than the years before and after he was in office. A U.S. Census Bureau chart we found shows a similar increase, although median salaries rose higher for whites than African-Americans and Hispanics. Asian-Americans weren't included in the chart.

The first two years of Reagan's presidency saw a economic downturn that included the decline of about 2.3 million employed Americans and an unemployment rate that rose from 7.5 percent to 10.8 percent. The unemployment rate was 5.4 percent by the end of Reagan's presidency.

Some argue Reagan's predecessor, Jimmy Carter, was responsible for some economic policies that helped during the Reagan years. Others contend the increase in employed Americans were largely a result of the Federal Reserve cutting interest rates and expanding the money supply, policies used after the recent Great Recession.

Gingrich's numbers are accurate. Reagan's policies, many of which required the support of Congress, deserve some credit for the increase. We rate Gingrich's statement as True.