

The Establishment vs. Newt: A Long List of Republicans Who Want Anybody But Gingrich

TNR Staff December 9, 2011 | 12:00 am



As a former Republican House speaker and veteran of the culture wars of the 1990s, Newt Gingrich understandably earned his share of liberal detractors. But who knew how many enemies he'd made among the Republican political elite? As Gingrich's recent surge in the polls moves ever closer to bearing electoral fruit in the Iowa Caucuses, it's fair to say that the GOP political establishment is freaking out. Here's just a sampling of the nice things Newt's Washington colleagues have had to say about him lately.

George Will: "Gingrich ... embodies the vanity and rapacity that make modern Washington repulsive. ... There is almost artistic vulgarity in Gingrich's unrepented role as a hired larynx for interests profiting from such government follies as ethanol and cheap mortgages. ... His temperament—intellectual hubris distilled—makes him blown about by gusts of enthusiasm for intellectual fads, from 1990s futurism to 'Lean Six Sigma' today."

Wall Street Journal Editorial Page: "In Mr. Gingrich's telling, his ideas are bold and even radical, but the irony is that they're often much less revolutionary than his rhetoric suggests. ... Take Mr. Gingrich's 49-page manifesto on entitlement reform, which his campaign rolled out shortly before Thanksgiving. It is a fundamentally Newtonian document, both in its ambition—it promises to 'reduce federal spending by half or more'—and in its lack of discipline."

Gene Healy, Cato Institute vice president: "[Gingrich is] Mitt Romney with more baggage and bolder hand gestures. ... It seems that, if you clamor long enough about "big ideas," people become convinced you actually have them. But most of Gingrich's policy ideas over the last decade have been tepidly conventional and consistent with the Big Government, Beltway Consensus. ... There's no denying that Newt is smart, but there's a zany, Cliff Clavin aspect to his intellect. At times, Gingrich, who's written more than 150 book reviews on Amazon.com, sounds like a guy who read way too much during a long prison stretch."

Karl Rove: "He is the only candidate who didn't qualify for the Missouri primary, and on Wednesday he failed to present enough signatures to get on the ballot in Ohio. ... [It's] embarrassing to be so poorly organized."

Ramesh Ponnuru: "Conservatives who dislike George W. Bush's compassionate conservatism have Gingrich to thank for it. After Gingrich lost the budget battles with President Bill Clinton, it took 15 years for any politician to take up the cause of limited-government conservatism that he had discredited. Although Gingrich isn't solely responsible for the

Republican policy defeats of those years, his erratic behavior, lack of discipline and self-absorption had a lot to do with them.”

Charles Krauthammer: “Gingrich has his own vulnerabilities. The first is often overlooked because it is characterological rather than ideological: his own unreliability. Gingrich has a self-regard so immense that it rivals Obama’s—but, unlike Obama’s, is untamed by self-discipline.

Representative Peter King: “He’s too self-centered. He does not have the discipline, does not have the capacity to control himself.” If Newt were elected president, “The country and congress would be going through one crisis after another, and these would be self-inflicted crises.”

Christopher Barron, head of GOProud: “Newt is the establishment. He’s antithetical to what the Tea Party is talking about.”

Senator Tom Coburn: “There’s all types of leaders. Leaders that instill confidence, leaders that are somewhat abrupt and brisk. Leaders that have one standard for the people that they’re leading and a different standard for themselves. I just found [Gingrich’s] leadership lacking.”

Jennifer Rubin: “[W]hen he does think big, it is often in clichés. ... When not predictable, Gingrich’s ideas can range from irresponsible (go see his website for the list of tax cuts, but no talk of spending cuts) to the crazed.”

Ross Douthat: “[Gingrich’s] candidacy isn’t a test of religious conservatives’ willingness to be good, forgiving Christians. It’s a test of their ability to see their cause through outsiders’ eyes, and to recognize what anointing a thrice-married adulterer as the champion of “family values” would say to the skeptical, the unconverted and above all to the young.”

Joe Scarborough: “When [Gingrich] puts on his political helmet he is a terrible person. ... Let me tell you something: the Republican establishment will never make peace with Newt Gingrich. They just won’t! They won’t. This is an important point. Because the Republicans I talk to say he cannot win the nomination at any cost. He will destroy the party. He will re-elect Barack Obama and we’ll be ruined. That’s going to happen. I mean Newt Gingrich would possibly win 100 electoral votes.”

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