Newt Gingrich's back door to the White House

by Bill_Berkowitz

American Enterprise Institute 'Scholar' and former House Speaker blames media for poll showing 64 percent of the American people wouldn't vote for him under any circumstances

One day he's being gently quizzed on the radio program of Focus on the Family's Dr. James Dobson and he's confessing to marital infidelity during the Clinton impeachment brouhaha -- a reality that most political observers already knew -- and another day he's bashing Hillary Clinton. One day he's espousing populist rhetoric about the need to cut the costs of college tuition and on another day he's talking World War III. One day he's claiming that the "war on terror" may force the abridgement of fundamental first amendment rights and then he's advancing a twenty-first century version of his dastardly Contract with America.

Newt Gingrich At the same time he's publicly proclaiming how "stupid" it is that the race for the presidency has already started you know that he's trying to figure out how to out-finesse Rudy, McCain and Romney for the nomination. And last week, when Fox News' Chris Wallace cited a poll showing that 64 percent of the public would never vote for him, he was quick to blame those results on how unfairly he was treated by the mainstream media back in the day.

Whatever it is that former House Speaker Newt Gingrich has come to represent in American politics, the guy is nothing less than fascinating.

These days, Gingrich, who is simultaneously a Senior Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution, is making like your favorite uncle, fronting a YouTube video contest offering "prizes" to whoever creates the best two-minute video on why taxes suck. Although the prizes may not be particularly attractive to the typical YouTuber, nevertheless Gingrich recently launched the "Winning the Future, Goose that laid the Golden Egg, You Tube Contest." According to Newt.org, participants are to "Create a 120 second video explaining why tax increases will hurt the American economy, leading to less revenue for the government, not more. Or in other words, explain why we shouldn't cook the goose that laid the golden eggs (the American economy) by raising taxes."

Announcing the contest via a short video of his own, Gingrich advised entrants they needed to explain the dangers of a tax increase in terms that "a sixth grade class or a member of Congress" could understand.

The prizes? The winner will receive a signed copy of the Contract with America and a signed leatherbound copy of Gingrich's book, "Winning the Future: A 21st Century Contract with America," published by Regnery two years ago.

Although the public hasn't yet flocked to take on Gingrich's challenge, one conservative commentator expressed his delight: "I've got to give Newt credit for using technology -- not just to get his message out -- but to solicit input from all of us," Matt Lewis wrote at TownHall.com. "One of the reasons we encourage comments on this blog is that you never know where the next great idea will come from. By giving up a little control, you often get a better product. That's one of the most amazing things about the internet. Newt gets that."

And while he hasn't formally announced his candidacy -- and he probably won't anytime soon -- Gingrich definitely has his eyes on the White House. He's just still figuring out how he will get there. His public confession appears to be one finely calculated step along the way.

Over the past several months Gingrich has been ubiquitous on the media and political scenes:

Â· Late last year at an annual dinner in New Hampshire honoring individuals who stand up for free speech, "Gingrich explained why he believes that the First Amendment must be reconsidered in these trying times," he New York Observer's Joe Conason reported. "This is a serious, long-term war, and it will inevitably lead us to want to know what is said in every suspect place in the country, that will lead us to learn how to close down every website that is dangerous, and it will lead us to a very severe approach to people who advocate the killing of Americans and advocate the use of nuclear or biological weapons."

According to Conason, Gingrich "advocate[d] measures that 'use every technology we can find to break up [the terrorists'] capacity to use the Internet, to break up their capacity to use free speech, and to go after people who want to kill us, to stop them from recruiting people before they get to reach out and convince young people to destroy their lives while destroying us.'"

During a follow-up appearance on NBC's "Meet the Press," host Tim Russert asked Gingrich how his plan to shut down suspect websites would work. Who would decide what is "advocacy of terrorism" or "violent conduct"?

"You close down any Web site that is jihadist," he said.

"But who makes that judgment?" asked Russert.

"Look, I -- you can appoint three federal judges if you want to and say, 'Review this stuff and tell us which ones to close down.' I would just like to have them be federal judges who've served in combat," replied Gingrich.

Â· Earlier this year, speaking via satellite to the annual Herzliya Conference held by the Institute for Policy and Strategy, Gingrich warned that nuclear weapons constitute the threat of a second Holocaust: "Israel is facing the greatest danger for its survival since the 1967 victory... If two or three cities are destroyed because of terrorism both the United States' and Israel's democracy will be eroded and both will become greater dictatorial societies... Three nuclear weapons constitute a second Holocaust. Enemies are explicit in their desire to destroy us. We are sleepwalking through this as if diplomatic engagement will create a fiesta where we will all love one another."

Other conference speakers included Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, former Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, GOP presidential hopeful Republican Mitt Romney, and neoconservative Richard Perle.

Â· During a February 18, appearance on the Fox News Channel's "Fox News Sunday" Gingrich told host Chris Wallace that the Democrats in Congress were "systematically undermining American foreign policy" by speaking out against Bush's escalation of the war in Iraq.

Wallace quoted from one of Gingrich's own statements: "If Iraq matters as much as the president says it does, then the United States must not design and rely on a strategy which relies on the Iraqis to win. On the other hand, if the war is so unimportant that the fate of Iraq can be allowed to rest with the efforts of a new, weak, untested and inexperienced government, then why are we risking American lives?"

"So question is," asked Wallace, "if the president isn't pursuing a plan for victory, and you seem to say he isn't at this point, aren't Democrats perfectly entitled to say we shouldn't be sending more troops after the ones that are already there?"

Gingrich: "There's a different -- look, I can offer advice. The Senate can offer advice. Any American can offer advice. There's a difference between offering advice, which I think we should do, and legislating."

Â· Gingrich has also recently advocated legislation making English the official U.S. language; continued putting forth ideas to transform America's healthcare system using information technology; and prepared a "Contract With America for the 21st Century."

Gingrich's new 527 built on gambling money

Gingrich recently formed a new IRS 527 political group called "American Solutions for Winning the Future."

According to longtime Gingrich friend and colleague Matt Towery, the group "received its first significant early contribution of $1 million" from Las Vegas Sands Corporation Chairman Sheldon G. Adelson shortly after the November elections. Adelson's company owns The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino and the Sands Expo and Convention Center in Las Vegas, Nevada and the Sands Macao in The People's Republic of China's Special Administrative Region of Macao, as well as Venetian Macao Limited, a developer of additional multiple casino hotel resort properties in Macao.

According to the Washington Post, "Adelson was listed by Forbes magazine in 2006 as America 's third-richest man, with assets of more than $20 billion. His long list of political donations, primarily to Republicans, includes $100,000 to the Republican National Committee in 1997 and 1998, when Gingrich was speaker."

Adelson is a member of the Board of Directors of the Washington, D.C.-based Republican Jewish Coalition, an organization founded in 1985. He shares that honor with several dozen prominent Jewish businessmen and political figures including Ari Fleischer, former White House press secretary; Lewis M. Eisenberg, a long-time Republican activist who has raised millions of dollars for the Republican Party and Republican candidates and was recently elected Finance Chairman of the Republican National Committee; David Frum, a former Bush White House speechwriter and currently a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and the author of five books, including two New York Times bestsellers: "The Right Man: The Surprise Presidency of George W. Bush," and co-author with Richard Perle of "An End to Evil: What's Next in the War on Terror"; Ken Mehlman, former chairman of the Republican National Committee from 2005-2007.

The RJC is headed by Matthew Brooks, who serves as Executive Director of both the RJC and the Jewish Policy Center, "a think-tank that examines public policy from a Jewish perspective."

According to its website, the RJC "is the sole voice of Jewish Republicans to Republican decision makers and the Jewish community, expressing our viewpoint on a wide variety of issues."

In early February, Israel News Agency reported that the Boston, Massachusetts born Adelson -- the world's wealthiest Jew -- and his wife Miriam -- a physician and Israeli native -- donated $25 million to the Taglit-Birthright Israel program (BRI), which "will double to at least 20,000 the number of free summer trips to Israel offered by Birthright Israel this summer." The Birthright program not only generates much needed tourist dollars, it also encourages young Jews from around the world to seriously consider settling in Israel. The Adelsons also recently donated $25 million to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority.

In December of last year the Israeli daily Haaretz reported that a new foundation to be established by Adelson "promises to change the face of Jewish philanthropy. The new entity will be a major boon to American and Israeli causes, with a pledge to dole out more than $200 million to Jewish causes annually -- the largest-ever pledge by a Jewish foundation."

Opening for Gingrich?

On the home front, many Republicans appear disappointed with the current crop of declared candidates for the party's presidential nomination. Gingrich thinks the rush to the campaign trail is "stupid." In a mid-February appearance promoting his latest book, Gingrich said "the current process of spending an entire year running in order to spend an entire year running in order to get sworn in in January 2009 is stupid."

All the thus-far declared candidates "suck" Erick Erickson, CEO of the Republican blog RedState recently declared at his website. "Let's just admit it. Every one of the thus far announced Republican candidates for President sucks. From the lecherous adulterer [Rudy Giuliani] to the egomaniacal nut job [Senator John McCain] to the flip-flopping opportunist with the perfect hair [former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney] to the guy who hates brown people [Colorado Congressman Tom Tancredo] to the guy we've never heard of [California Congressman Duncan Hunter] to the guy who has a better chance of getting hit by a meteor while being consumed by a blue whale being struck by lightening [Kansas Congressman Sam Brownback]."

Erickson does show some love for Brownback, who "doesn't suck at all, but" he doesn't think his candidacy has "viability." And that's where Gingrich comes in:

Part of me, frankly, wants Newt Gingrich to run. Don't get me wrong (or divorced; my wife can't stand the guy). I don't want the former speaker to actually win. I don't know that I'd trust him with that much power. He is the most articulate, honest defender of conservatism out there. His ideas are bold, they are conservative, and they are good. I don't agree with him on everything, but it would really be nice for him to get out there and pull everyone else to the right, to tell them why they are wrong, and why they are cowards for standing on the shoulder of Reagan while acting like the Manneken Pis [Wikipedia: "little man piss" in English; a Brussels landmark -- a small bronze fountain sculpture depicting a naked little boy urinating into the fountain's basin] on his legacy.

Gingrich has also suggested that the six Muslim scholars who were removed from a plane in Minneapolis last year for praying in the airport "should have been arrested and prosecuted for pretending to be terrorists." And before the November elections, Gingrich counseled GOP candidates that they could shake things up by using terms like "World War III" to get the public's juices flowing in their favor.

On the same February 18 appearance on "Fox News Sunday," Wallace asked Gingrich to respond to a Fox poll showing that 64 percent of voters wouldn't vote for him under any circumstances and 44 percent of Republicans said the same: Wallace: "Why do you think that so many voters say Newt Gingrich, forget it?".

Gingrich: Well, there was a column written by Brent Bozell recently about Nancy Pelosi becoming speaker

and me becoming speaker. And he contrasted the initial media coverage of the two of us.

And if you go back and look -- you know, I had a -- Time magazine savaged me as Scrooge who stole Tiny Tim's broken crutch -- didn't just steal the crutch; I broke it, on the cover of Time. Newsweek had me as the Grinch that stole Christmas. I was a Dr. Seuss figure.

Then the Democrats -- I think correctly, strategically -- decided to run 121,000 ads in '95 and '96 attacking me. We adopted a totally different strategy. We thought that instead of defending me, we would defend the majority. And as a result, in 1996 we became the first reelected majority since 1928 for Republicans.

In that process, I was badly damaged. I made some mistakes as speaker. And I think the combination of all of that left me, you know, with a fairly high negative.

Now, you know, one could argue that says I'm being very wise not to run. Or it could mean that over time, as people get to see what we've done at the Center for Health Transformation, what I've done in national security, what we're doing -- we have a book coming out this fall called Contract With the Earth. It's a conservative entrepreneurial science and technology environmentalism.

You know, people may decide that, in fact, they want to take a second look. I'm pretty comfortable relaxing and letting the American people decide, not me.

If Gingrich thinks that the reason the vast majority of America voters wouldn't cast their ballot for him under any circumstances is because the liberal media has distorted his record, he needs to take a closer look at his personal behavior, ethical mishaps and political maneuvering.

And he really doesn't have to look much further than to the time three days before the polls opened in November 1994: In those heady days before the GOP takeover of Congress, Gingrich jumped on the case of Susan Smith -- the South Carolina woman who drowned her two young sons -- and equated her act with the values of the Democratic Party. As reported by the Associated Press, Gingrich said: "The mother killing her two children in South Carolina vividly reminds every American how sick the society is getting and how much we have to have change. I think people want to change and the only way you get change is to vote Republican That's the message for the last three days."

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