



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on January 8, 2012

ABC/WMUR Debate: Ron Paul Hits Gingrich as “Chickenhawk”

Texas Congressman Ron Paul slammed former House Speaker Newt Gingrich as a “chickenhawk” in the ABC News/WMUR debate January 7, one of two final debates before the New Hampshire primary January 10. WMUR’s Josh McElveen remarked to Gingrich, “Recently, Dr. Paul referred to you as a chickenhawk because you didn’t serve.” A chickenhawk is a politician who is gung-ho for war, but avoids military service for himself. In essence, a chickenhawk is someone who is brave only with the lives of someone else’s sons.



The comment led co-moderator Diane Sawyer to ask Rep. Paul: "Congressman Paul, would you say that again? Would you — would you use that phrase again?"

Paul replied:

Yeah. I think people who don’t serve when they could and they get three or four or even five deferments aren’t — they — they have no right to send our kids off to war, and not be even against the wars that we have. I’m trying to stop the wars, but at least, you know, I went when they called me up.

Among active presidential candidates, only Rep. Paul (Air Force flight surgeon) and Texas Governor Rick Perry (Air Force pilot) served in the military.

Gingrich responded with a lawyerly response, [claiming](#) he had indeed avoided the draft, but hadn’t technically applied for a deferment. With extraordinary bravado, Gingrich said: "Well, Dr. Paul has a long history of saying things that are inaccurate and false. The fact is, I never asked for deferment. I was married with a child. It was never a question." Gingrich, noting that his father had served in Vietnam, [added](#) that "I think I have a pretty good idea of what it’s like as a family to worry about your father getting killed. And I personally resent the kind of comments and aspersions he routinely makes without accurate information and then just slurs people with."

CNN’s "Truth Squad" [evaluated](#) the charge after the debate and ruled Gingrich’s response "incomplete" because it hinged on a technicality. "Gingrich is correct, that he was not eligible for the draft" because "the fact that Gingrich had two daughters — born in 1963 and 1966 — gave him a III-A classification, putting him far back in the line of people who might have been called to serve." CNN also [added](#): "But that does not mean he could not have been one of the 3 million Americans who ultimately served in the war."

But Paul [noted](#) that he had been drafted with two children: "I need one quick follow-up. When I was drafted, I was married and had two kids, and I went."

Earlier in the week, Rep. Paul had stressed Gingrich’s hypocrisy. "He’s probably as aggressive with the



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military as anybody," Paul [said](#) on Fox News. "He chose not to go. Now he'll send our kids to war."

Paul [stressed](#) during the debate that under the U.S. Constitution, it is not the job of the President to bring the nation to war; rather, that is the sole authority of Congress under [Article I, Section 8](#):

I talk about the Constitution. Constitution has rules. And I don't like it when we send our kids off to fight these wars, and when those individuals didn't go themselves, and then come up and when they're asked, they say, oh, I don't think I could — one person could have made a difference.

I have a pet peeve that annoys me ... a great deal, because when I see these young men coming back, my heart weeps for them.

Photo: Rep. Ron Paul, R-Texas, former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, and former Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum (L-R) participate in a Republican presidential candidate debate at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, N.H., Jan. 7, 2012: AP Images



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