

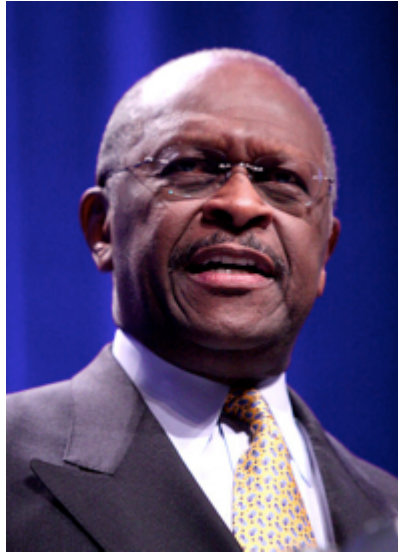


Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on November 6, 2011

The Cain-Gingrich Love-in

Go ahead, ask this commentator: What was the main difference between the [1858 Illinois Senate debates](#) between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas and the Gingrich-Cain "debate"?

The main difference was that Lincoln and Douglas actually disagreed about a few principles, such as the expansion of slavery into the U.S. territories of Kansas and Nebraska. The tone of the entire Gingrich-Cain "debate" was ably summed up by Herman Cain in his first statement after Newt Gingrich's opening remarks: "At this particular juncture, I'm supposed to have a minute to disagree with something that he said, but I don't." And it didn't get any more testy than that.



As a debate, this event — so fervently sought by Gingrich since the race began — was a real snoozer. The point of debates is to draw out the differences between candidates. Cain and Gingrich hardly disagreed on anything. They might as well have called it a joint press conference. Cain actually hinted that Gingrich would be his vice presidential choice, asking Gingrich (in what was probably the toughest question of the night): "Mr. Speaker, if you were the Vice President of the United States, what would you want the President to assign you to do first?"

Gingrich praised Cain throughout the 90-minute exchange, but did not return the Vice President hinting. The praise and lack of disagreement is understandable: This was a debate "of the neocons, by the neocons, and for the neocons," or, to use a [favorite expression of Herman Cain](#), it was a choice of dieting by eating a gallon of ice cream by choosing black walnut or high-fat, old fashioned vanilla. Both Cain and Gingrich are establishment figures on the political landscape. In essence, the debate was between former Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City Chairman Herman Cain and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who is also a member of the establishment (and interventionist) Council on Foreign Relations.

But the [Texas Tea Party Patriots PAC-sponsored](#) forum did serve a more useful purpose than simply providing the debaters with an opportunity to dust off old [Heritage Foundation talking points](#) on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. The event highlighted Cain and Gingrich as ideologically indistinguishable. Neither candidate has offered substantial spending cuts, other than the standard talking points about eliminating waste and fraud that Gingrich repeatedly harped on during the forum. Both candidates are known to support U.S. military interventionism in the Middle East; both support continuing the Federal Reserve System that is continuing the economic boom-bust cycle of the past decade; and both [Cain](#) and [Gingrich](#) admit they'd have supported the TARP bank bailout bill if they had a chance to vote on it in Congress back in 2008.



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The Cain-Gingrich love-in was held in Houston — not far from the congressional district represented by Ron Paul, and in the state whose Governor is Rick Perry. Both Paul and Perry, like Cain and Gingrich, are running for President as Republicans. But neither Paul nor Perry appeared at the Houston event.

If Representative Paul had appeared and had also been given equal time with Cain and Gingrich, a real debate would have undoubtedly ensued. Rep. Ron Paul is the only one who has [proposed cutting \\$1 trillion from the federal budget](#) in his first year and to balance the budget in the third year. He has also proposed to phase out the Fed, and to withdraw U.S. troops from Germany, Japan, Korea, and the Middle East.

On the other hand, if Governor Rick Perry had appeared at the forum, he could easily have become part of the Cain-Gingrich love-in. Consider: When Perry was asked during a September 23 debate who he'd pick for Vice President, he [replied](#): "I don't know how you would do this, but if you could take Herman Cain and mate him up with Newt Gingrich, I think you would have a couple of really interesting guys to work with."

Perry, who was considered a front-runner, is now hoping to recover from poor debate performances and, possibly, recover lost ground as front-runner Herman Cain's favorability appears to be dropping. A Reuters-Ipsos [poll](#) showed Cain losing five points since decades-old allegations of sexual harassment were publicized by the [Politico.com](#) website.

Yet it remains to be seen if Perry can recover front-runner status beside Mitt Romney; Perry certainly has the money in the bank to slog on in the race. But Gingrich has been rising in the polls. Moreover, Paul has stayed steady with 10-13 percent in most polls in early primary states, and could also be the next candidate to pop into the front-runner level.

The November 5 love-in between Cain and Gingrich did an important job in terms of revealing just how indistinguishable two of the GOP candidates for President actually are. Given a chance to ask Cain a question at the end of the forum, Gingrich took a moment out to tell the audience that "I hope you notice, we have not played gotcha one time tonight." Yeah, Newt. We noticed. Yawn.



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