

Newt Gingrich's daughters come to dad's defense after personal attacks

Special Guests: Jackie Cushman and Kathy Gingrich Lubbers

SEAN HANNITY, HOST: And there was some real bombshell revelations on the campaign trail today, including Texas Governor Rick Perry's decision to drop out of the race for the GOP nomination. This morning in South Carolina, a very emotional Governor Perry delivered that major news as he announced his endorsement for an old rival. Watch this.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

GOV. RICK PERRY R- TEXAS: I have come to the conclusion that there is no viable path forward for me in this 2012 campaign. Therefore, today I am suspending my campaign and endorsing Newt Gingrich for president of the United States.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HANNITY: Now that endorsement is likely to dramatically shift the dynamic of this primary contest less than 48 hours before voters head to the polls in South Carolina. And today, a brand new poll release by Rasmussen now shows that former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich has taken the lead in the Palmetto State. Now the former speaker is receiving 33 percent of the vote. Mitt Romney is getting 31 percent.

Meanwhile, today the Gingrich campaign was also forced to deal with a very personal matter after the former speaker's ex-wife Marianne came forward in an interview with ABC News. Now Speaker Gingrich was asked to respond to those comments earlier today, but said he refuses to say anything negative about his former wife. Instead he asked voters to turn to people who know him best to discuss his character.

And now I am joined by two of those people live, they're in South Carolina, Jackie Cushman and Kathy Gingrich Lubbers, Newt Gingrich's daughters. Guys, welcome to the show, welcome back. Thanks for being with us.

JACKIE GINGRICH CUSHMAN, NEWT GINGRICH'S DAUGHTER: Thanks, Sean. We're thrilled to be with you.

KATHY GINGRICH LUBBERS, NEWT GINGRICH'S DAUGHTER: Thank you, Sean.

HANNITY: All right. Earlier tonight your father was asked about this in a debate setting, and Frank Luntz said after the last Fox debate on Monday that he had never seen an instance where a candidate had gotten a standing ovation. This was an extended standing ovation, excoriating the media for their tawdry, you know, desire to go after this. I think that the divorce was 13 or so years ago, whatever it was. And to do this on the eve of this debate, and obviously the people in that room agreed with him. I want to get your reaction.

LUBBERS: Sean, you are so right. The truth of the matter is, the people of South Carolina and the people in that room in particular, and I'm sure across this country watching that debate, knew in their hearts the reality that the American people deserve to have a president such as our father. He responded and he brought up the fact that you know what? The American people deserve to have real questions in the debates, not things that are not pertinent to the current situation at hand which is what is important to the American people in regard to jobs, and the economy, and national security. And he was loved and just, you know, reinforced by everyone in that room.

HANNITY: Yes. What do you think?

CUSHMAN: I think she's exactly right. I think a couple things. I mean, first of all, it was a very direct question, he answered it directly, which I think is very good. But then the point is, they started off on a presidential debate with a personal story from over a decade ago to get to your point. And we all know that, you know, terrible things happen in terms of divorce. Divorce is very painful always for everybody. He tried very hard in that marriage and it didn't work out. And the reality is he is really running not from his personal record but on his professional record which is, you know, he is the only candidate, including President Barack Obama, who has actually balanced the national budget four years, reformed welfare, cut taxes and cut spending. He has an incredible record of accomplishment.

HANNITY: Yes. Let me ask you both about this. I have known your father for a lot of years and I asked him recently in the course of this primary process, because he wrote a book about God and America. He's done a DVD on the pope. He's talked a lot about his religious faith. I want to play the answer, I asked him how he's changed over the years and this was his answer.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP FROM NOV. 14, 2010)

NEWT GINGRICH, FORMER SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE: Being married to Callista has really helped a great deal and has changed my life and has given me a sense of fulfillment. Having Maggie and Robert as grandchildren has really,

you know -- a grandfatherly view the world is somehow really different. I can't quite explain it, but I bet every person who is watching who is a grandparent knows what I am talking about. It gives you a very different perspective on life. And I think candidly the recognition that I had of acceptance into the Catholic Church, the feeling of belonging to the church has been a very, very comforting, very reconciling part of life.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

HANNITY: And I have asked him also on radio, he said he's 68, he's more mature, he's found his faith, he's a very different person than he was 14 years ago. You guys are his daughters. Did you see the change in him?

CUSHMAN: I absolutely have. I think a couple of things. He's been very open about his past mistakes. He hasn't tried to cover up the fact that he has made terrible mistakes but he's been very forthright. He's asked for God's forgiveness. He's reconciled himself with God. And I think that people understand that none of us are perfect. And Rick Perry today in his endorsement gave such an eloquent speech about how dad wasn't the perfect person but he was the right person to lead this nation at this time, and I think that really resonates with people. It's not about being perfect but it's about who can lead at this particular time in our nation.

HANNITY: All right. Jackie or Kathy, let me ask you. Which one of you were the janitor at 13?

LUBBERS: Well, the truth of the matter is that I actually had the job first because, as you know, Sean, I happen to be the elder sister, and my sister, you know, she picked up the gauntlet, if you will.

CUSHMAN: Constantly following her footsteps, right Sean?

HANNITY: Yes, well, I see that. But you know, actually NBC News had a report on. They actually had an expert on and said that your dad by allowing this to happen, may have violated the child labor laws. They actually -- I'm not making this up. The U.S. Department of Labor, an assistant administrator for policy said that the child labor laws now and in effect in the 1980s, you were not allowed to hold a janitorial job. And I was washing dishes. You had a better job than me.

CUSHMAN: I know. See, now you know we need less government regulations, right? So, we can both work and learn the work ethic.

LUBBERS: We were janitors in a church, by the way. That, you know, we didn't want to go there but yes, it was in a church, so we were being blessed and praying while we were at it.

HANNITY: All right. Let me ask you one last question. A lot of issues come up when your dad uses the term that Barack Obama is the food stamp president. Since Obama's become president, 12 million more Americans are in need of food stamps. The New York Times has a piece preaching division in South Carolina. Is it that you can't tell the truth, that under Barack Obama, food stamp recipient numbers have gone up dramatically?

CUSHMAN: I think you are exactly right. Dad confronted that head-on in the last debate. It is a fact. And the fact is that under dad's presidency, he wants everyone to move up, to have more opportunity, to have more jobs. And that's the way you solve that problem. It's not by issuing more food stamps, it's about creating opportunity.

HANNITY: All right.

LUBBERS: And he went so far as to say, you should get a job, get a better job and then you should own the job, and I think that that's the American dream.

HANNITY: All right. Thank you both for being with us. I know it's probably hard when your dad is under fire and I'm sure he probably appreciates you being here. I think his opening remarks tonight, though, will make a lot of news. Thank you both for being with us.

CUSHMAN: Thanks, Sean.

LUBBERS: Our pleasure.

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