

# CBS NEWS

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## Reports raise questions about Gingrich's first divorce

[Corbett B. Daly](#)



Newt Gingrich

(Credit: CBS)

The story behind Newt Gingrich's first divorce more than three decades ago is coming back to haunt the front-runner in the race for the Republican nomination for president.

The thrice-married Gingrich has long claimed that it was his first wife, Jackie, who initiated the 1980 proceedings, and their daughter penned an article in May to rebut claims that Gingrich served her with divorce papers on a hospital bed.

But this week, CNN and Bloomberg have each published accounts casting serious doubt on the former House speaker's version of events

In essence, CNN and Bloomberg say it was Gingrich himself who wanted the divorce, not Jackie.

"It's totally untrue that she wanted the divorce, and Newt knows that," Dot Crews, who worked in the former Georgia lawmaker's office for five years through 1984, [told Bloomberg in a telephone interview this week and published Wednesday](#).

Now 80, Crews told the financial news agency that Gingrich confided to him during a car ride in Georgia that he'd decided to file for divorce.

On Monday, [CNN said it had obtained documents from the Georgia courthouse](#) where the divorce papers were filed which contradict Gingrich's assertion that Jackie Battley Gingrich initiated the proceedings.

In the documents, Gingrich filed a complaint on July 14, 1980, arguing for divorce because the marriage was broken.

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In Jackie's response, she argued "she has adequate and ample grounds for divorce, but that she does not desire one at this time."

"Although defendant (Jackie Battley Gingrich) does not admit that this marriage is irretrievably broken, defendant has been hopeful that an arrangement for temporary support of defendant and the two minor daughters of the parties could be mutually agreed upon without the intervention of this court," her petition said. "All efforts to date have been unsuccessful."

One of those daughters, now known as Jackie Gingrich Cushman, was 13 at time. Earlier this year she published an article in support of her famous father on the conservative website Townhall.com. She offered her first-hand account of the divorce and the famous hospital visit in 1980 at Emory University in Atlanta, where her mother was having a tumor removed.

["My mother and father were already in the process of getting a divorce, which she requested," Cushman wrote.](#) "As with many divorces, it was hard and painful for all involved, but life continued."

She said her mother did not wish to discuss the matter in public and "deserves respect and should be allowed to live in peace."

"We will not answer additional questions or make additional comments regarding this meaningless incident, which occurred more than three decades ago," she wrote.

Her father, however, was asked about the divorce as recently as Tuesday at a campaign stop in Dubuque, Iowa.

"It's 30 years old," Gingrich told reporters who asked about the contradictory accounts, according to [Bloomberg](#). "You can read my younger daughter's column and talk to her. She's covered it, I think, more than adequately, and that's all I'm going to say on that."

Gingrich may not want to talk about it, but the controversy is not going away.