

Mike Berman's

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

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30 days until the election

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State of the Nation

In early September the NBC/WSJ poll found that 67% of us think the country is on the wrong track. At mid-month, the CBS/NYT survey found 66% saying the country is on the wrong track.

76% are dissatisfied with the way things are going in the United States. 23% are satisfied. [Gallup 9/14]

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Americans are split evenly, 39% to 40%, as to whether they trust the Democrats or the Republicans more in coping with the main problems the nation faces over the next few years. [WP/ABC 9/14]

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As of 2010, “One in four women (24.3%) and one in seven men (13.8%) age 18 and older in the United States have been the victims of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.” (Black et al, 2011)

13,079 U.S. women experience domestic violence every day, and nearly 1 in 3 women have been physically abused. [Time 9/22/14]

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The official BLS unemployment rate for August 2014 is 6.1%, down a point from the previous month, and down 1% point from a year ago. If one takes into account the total unemployed + those marginally attached to the labor force + those working part-time who want full-time work, the rate is 12 %. This is down from 13.6% a year ago. 2.9% of the work force has been unemployed for 15 weeks or more.

In the fourth week of September, Gallup found an unemployment rate of 6.8%. It also found an underemployment rate (unemployed +those working part-time, but wanting full time) of 15.4%, up a touch from mid-August.

Indications are that, over the past year, unemployment rates dropped for various groups within the community between August 2013 to August 2014, although for several groups there was a slight uptick from July to August 2014.

Unemployment among those

25 years and older	<u>8/13</u>	<u>7/14</u>	<u>8/14</u>
Less than high school diploma	11.3%	9.6%	9.1%
High school graduates, no college	7.5	6.1	6.2
Some college or associate degree	6.1	5.3	5.4
Bachelor's degree and higher	3.5	3.1	3.2

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The annual GDP (gross domestic product) for the 2nd quarter of 2014 was 4.6%, making it the economy's best quarter since 2006. [WP 9/27/14]

By 56% to 42% Americans believe that the economy has begun to recover. However, among those who think it is recovering 63% say the recovery is weak. [WP/ABC 9/14]

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Throughout 2014 attitudes about the healthcare law passed in 2010 have been static. In each of four surveys taken this year, 41% have approved of the law and 50-53% have disapproved of the law. [NYT/CBS 9/14]

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Inversions are the topic du jour in Washington. The Winston Group asked respondents what they would do if they had the option to legally file their income taxes in a State with a lower rate or to continue to pay a higher rate in their home State. By 53% to 43% respondents opted to file in the State with lower rates. Among Republicans, 59% would opt to pay in the lower rate State and 51% of Independents would do the same. Only among Democrats would a slight majority, 49% to 48%, opt to continue to pay the higher rate in their home State.

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Currently, trust in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government is at 43%. The lowest recorded, 40%, occurred a few months before Richard Nixon resigned. It was also in the low 40s during the last two years of George W. Bush's Administration.

Trust in the Legislative Branch of the Federal Government is at 28%. Trust in the Judicial Branch of government continues to stand above it all at 61%.

Trust in the American people “to make judgments about political issues facing the country”, at 61%, is also at a new low. Trust in politicians to make these judgments is at 45%, 1% point above the all time low recorded in 2012. [Gallup 9/14]

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As of 2007 there were 89,476 local governmental units in the United States; 3,033 counties, 19,462 municipal governments, 16,519 townships, and 13,051 school districts. [US Census Bureau]

About 2% of American adults say they have run for Federal, State or local elected office. Of this group, 75% are men and 25% are women. [Pew]

The 2014-2015 school year is the first time racial and ethnic minorities make up the majority of public-school students nationally. [NJ 9/14]

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Perhaps it should be no surprise that local government, which on a day-to-day basis is closer to the people, is more trusted than State government. And Americans believe that the Federal Government wastes 51 cents of every dollar. [Gallup 9/14]

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While the median income of single parent households (83% of which are headed by women), in 2013 dollars, has grown by +12.4% in 24 years (1989-2013), that group of households has not yet recovered from the recession which officially ended in 2009. The change in their income from 2010-2013 is still down 11.7%.

Set out below are the relative changes in median incomes of a variety of families in the 1989-2013 period.

Median value of before-tax family income (thousands of 2013 dollars)
BY FAMILY STRUCTURE

	Single with children*	Single, no child age <55	Single, no children age >55	Couple with children	Couple, no children
1989	24.9	32.1	18.8	68.3	58.5
2001	29.7	37.8	22.3	82.0	67.6
2010	31.6	32.7	26.0	72.5	66.2
2013	27.9	31.7	25.4	74.6	66.8
Change 2010- 2013**	-11.7%	-3.1%	-2.3%	+2.9%	+.9%
Change 1989-2013	+12.4%	-1.2%	+35%	+9.2%	+14.1%

*Single mother homes make up 83.3% of all single parent homes.

**2009 marked the end of the Recession.

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Americans continue to express an interest in a third party. 54% say a 3rd party is needed. This is up from 40% who had this view ten years ago. [Gallup 9/24/14]

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President Obama

The public's grade on the job President Obama is doing (as found by Gallup 9/28) is 43% approval/52% disapproval.

In August 2014, the NBC/WSJ survey found women with a disapproval rating of 47% and an approval rating of 46%. In September, that same survey has found with a 52% disapproval rating and a 42% positive rating among women.

Of the five most recent two-term Presidents at this point in their second term, Obama's current approval rating is essentially tied with George W. Bush. He trails Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and Dwight Eisenhower. (By this date Richard Nixon had left office.) The list of 5 follows:

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
Clinton	66	31 (9/24/98)
Reagan	63	26 (9/17/86)
Eisenhower	54	28 (9/29/58)
G. W. Bush	44	51 (9/17/06)
<u>Obama</u>	43	52 (9/28/14)

<u>Date</u>	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN/ORC</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>
Sept 2014	40/54%	42/51%	44/52	40/50%
August 2014	40/54%	xxx	xxx	41/50% (CBS)
June 2014	42/53%	xxx	43/55%	40/54%
Mar 2014	41/54%	46/50%	43%/53%	43/50%
Jan 2014	43/51%	45/52%	45/51%	46/47% (CBS)
July 2013	45/50%	49/44%	xxx	48/45% (CBS)
Jan 2013	52/44%	55/41%	55/43%	51/41%

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53% disapprove of the job Obama is doing in handling the economy, and 62% disapprove of the way he is handling foreign policy. The number disapproving his handling of foreign policy is the highest recorded in the NBC/WSJ survey. This level of disapproval is 13% points higher than it was a year ago (8/14) . The NYT/CBS survey in mid-September showed Obama with a 34% approval rating on foreign policy, which is the lowest finding on this subject in that poll since Obama took office.

Again, when it comes to handling foreign policy, women's support of Obama has started to fade. In August 2014, 43% approved his handling of foreign policy and 52% disapproved. Now there has been a 10-point drop in women's support of his handling of foreign policy, with an approval rating of 33% and a disapproval rating of 60%. [NBC/WSJ 9/14]

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41% of Americans are at least somewhat satisfied on how the Obama Presidency has gone so far, while 57% are somewhat/very disappointed. [NYT/CBS 9/14]

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When President Obama came into office, 99 of the U.S. appellate court judges had been appointed by Republican Presidents and 65 had been appointed by Democratic Presidents. As of today, 95 of the current appellate court judges have been appointed by Democrats and 77 of the jurists by Republican Presidents. [NYT 9/14/14]

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When it comes to how Americans “feel” about Obama, 46% say they have negative feelings and 42% have positive feelings. A year ago, 45% had positive feelings and 42% had negative feelings. [NBC/WSJ 6/14]

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By 55% to 38%, Americans think that Obama has done more to divide the country than to unite it. They also believe that Republicans in Congress have done more to divide than unite the country, by 63% to 27%. [WP/ABC 9/14]

Obama faces a variety of difficult choices as he come to grips with the dangers posed by ISIS (or ISIL if that is your preference). The American public seems to be warming to the task of substantial engagement. 45% of Americans believe that ISIS poses a very serious threat to the United States. Another 23% describe the threat as fairly serious. [CNN/ORC 9/14]

In the early September 2014 NBC/WSJ survey, 34% of Americans were willing to have American airstrikes and combat troops used in this struggle; 40% wanted any action limited to airstrikes. Three weeks later, in the NBC/WSJ Annenberg survey, 45% support air strikes and ground troops, and 72% believe the United States will use ground troops.

75% believe it is at least somewhat likely that the U.S. will eventually send ground troops into combat against ISIS, even though 60% oppose the involvement of U.S. ground troops. [CNN/ORC 9/14]

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Conventional wisdom at the moment is that Obama’s Presidency is all but over, and that nothing will happen in the final two years of his tenure. The same

case was made at about the same time in the terms of Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

In a NYT article, James Mann makes the case that all three of these latter Presidents had significant achievements in the 7th and 8th years of their term. Interestingly, all of the actions mentioned were international in nature. At least at this moment it appears that a significant part of Obama's focus in the next two years will be the international stage. [NYT 9/22/14]

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“Where have all the voters gone”

As voting has been made easier by wider use of no-excuse absentee voting, mail voting, and early voting generally, turnout has gone down.

Prior to 1972, only Tennessee and Idaho offered so-called “no excuse” absentee voting. In all other states if you wanted to vote absentee you needed a reason. In 1972, less than 5 percent of American voters used absentee ballots.

In 1975 Congress enacted the Overseas Citizens Voting Rights Act which allowed overseas voting age eligible U.S. citizens without legal domiciles in the United States to vote absentee. Additional legislation in 1986 eased the ability to register.

In 1978, California began absentee voting for anyone by request. By 2010, 40.3% of Californians voted absentee.

In 2008, almost a third (32%) of all voters cast their ballots BEFORE Election Day.

By 2010, including in-person early voting, 30% of voters who cast ballots did not go to the polls on election day. Almost 16% of votes cast were absentee ballots, and nearly 5% more were mail ballots.

For the 2014 General Election:

- 27 States plus the District of Columbia offer no-excuse absentee voting
- North Carolina, Minnesota, Maine, New Jersey, South Dakota, and Vermont all start the week of September 15th-20th

2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 33 states and D.C. allow any qualified voter to cast a ballot in person during a designated period prior to Election Day • Minnesota will become the 27th state to offer no-excuse absentee voting • Colorado will become the 3rd state to offer all-mail voting for all elections
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Sources: Census Data, U.S. Election Assistance Commission's Election Administration and Voting Survey

Summary of Adoption of Voting Reforms

	Number of States w/ No-Fault Absentee Voting	Number of States w/ Early Voting
1972	2	5
1976	3	6
1980	6	7
1984	6	7
1988	6	9
1992	12	11
1996	16	14
2000	22	22
2004	24	27
2008	27	31

The net result of these early voting opportunities is that overall voter turnout has gone down.

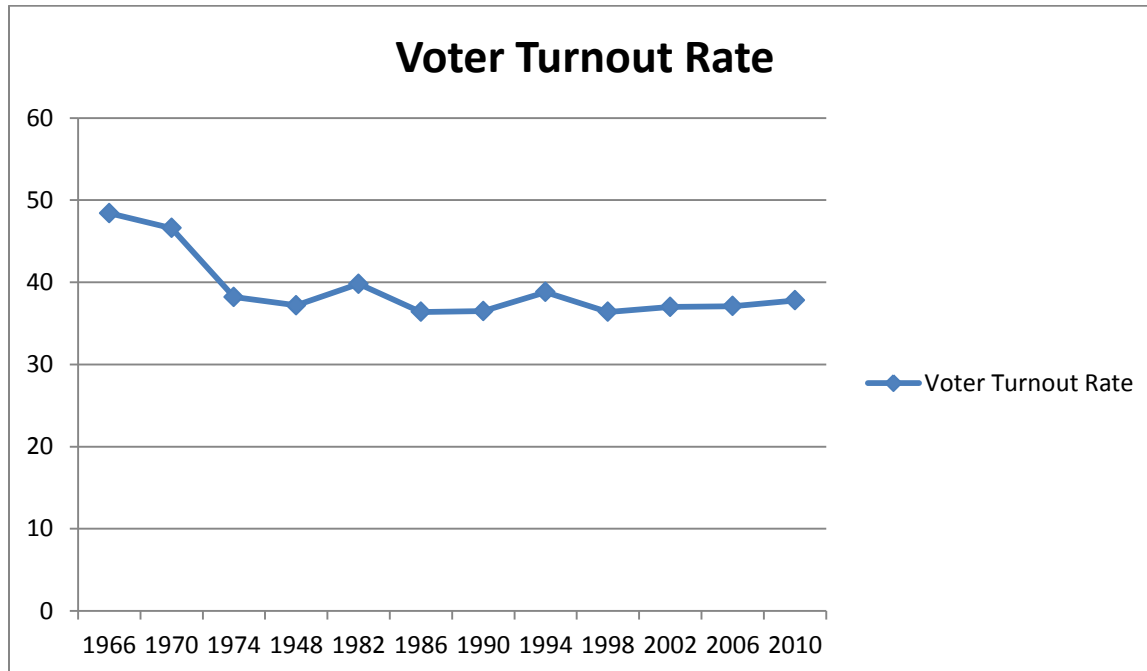
Only mid-term general elections are included in the following analysis.

As you might expect, turnout has gone up in some States and down in others. Results are likely affected by which States have significant contests in a given election. However, those differences do not account for a drop since 1966 of as much as 12% points in certain elections in 1986 and 1998.

In 2010, the turnout was 37.8%, a drop of 10.6% points.

The following is the Voter Turnout Rate for the 1966-2010 mid-term General Elections:

	Voter Turnout
1966	48.4%
1970	46.6%
1974	38.2%
1978	37.2%
1982	39.8%
1986	36.4%
1990	36.5%
1994	38.8%
1998	36.4%
2002	37%
2006	37.1%
2010	37.8%



[Source: Jan E. Leighley, Jonathan Nagler; *The Effects of Non-Precinct Voting Reforms on Turnout 1972-2008*, produced by Pew Charitable Trust, January 15, 2009]

In the 2010 mid-term election the participating voter group of eligible voters included 48.6% of whites, 44% of blacks, 31% of Hispanics, and 31% of Asians. [Pew]

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The Congress

14% approve of the way Congress is doing its job. This has been the average approval rating for all of 2014. This is somewhat higher than the 9% approval recorded earlier this year. Among those who follow national politics closely, only 8% approve of the job being done by Congress.

40% of adult Americans “care a great deal” about who controls Congress. This includes 43% of Republicans and Republican leaners, and an equal number of Democrats and Democratic leaners.

Only 36% of adults can correctly identify which Party controls each of the two houses of the Federal Government. [Gallup 9/14]

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Currently, by a margin of 45% to 43%, registered voters prefer a Congress controlled by Republicans as opposed to a Congress controlled by Democrats. A year ago they preferred a Congress controlled by Democrats, 46% to 43%. [NBC/WSJ 9/14]

In a survey conducted three weeks later than the 9/14 NBC/WSJ survey, the NBC/WSJ/Annenberg survey found a shift in public preference for control of the Congress, with 47% preferring Democratic control and 42% preferring Republican control. (Take your pick.)

Women prefer a Congress controlled by Democrats by 47% to 40%, but just over a month ago that preference was 51% to 37%. This is one of several areas in which women’s support of the Democrats is showing signs of slippage. [NBC/WSJ 9/14]

In June of 2014 women felt positively about the Democratic Party by 44%-36%. That positive feeling has been reduced to 39%-37%. [NBC/WSJ 9/14]

30% of registered voters approve of the way that the Democrats in Congress are handling their job. Only 19% of these voters approve of the way Republicans in Congress are handling their job. [NYT/CBS 9/14]

Overall, the public, by 36% to 26%, thinks the Republican Party would do a better job than the Democratic Party in handling the economy. Women hold the same view by a lesser number, 32% Republicans to 28% Democrats. However, a year ago, when the public at large thought Republicans would do a better job by 33% to 29%, women thought the Democrats would do a better job by 33% to 39%. [NBC/WSJ 9/14]

When it comes to the re-election of the current members of Congress, 87% believe that it is time for new people, and 63% have that view about their own representative in Congress. Both of these results represent the highest number of people who have held that view since this question came into use in the early 1990s. [NYT/CBS 9/14]

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In any mid-term election, there is always the question of whether the standing of the President will affect the outcome in individual States. Recent polls in at least four contestable States find the President's approval rating below his national score. In Iowa it is 37%; in Arkansas it is 33%; in Kentucky it is 29%; and in New Hampshire it is 35%. [CNN/ORC]

Andrew Kohut, founder of the nonpartisan Pew Research Center, does not believe that the mid-term elections are a referendum on President Obama's competence. In his view the "public is unhappy with the performance of both Parties in Washington," the elections are a referendum on the times, and he believes that the country has a "chronic case of pessimism." [NYT 8/14]

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The Senate

Since passage of the 17th amendment in 1913, the President's Party has lost an average of nearly 6 U.S. Senate seats in the mid-term election of the 6th year of the President's term (this includes circumstances when a President was replaced by the Vice President).

The most dramatic exception was Bill Clinton in 1998, when the Democrats did not lose a single seat. (Clinton had overseen the loss of 10 Democratic Senate seats in the 1994 and 1996 elections.)

1918	Wilson	-6
1926	Harding/Coolidge	-6
1938	F. Roosevelt	-7
1950	Truman	-5
1958	Eisenhower	-12
1966	Kennedy/Johnson	-4
1974	Nixon/Ford	-4
1986	Reagan	-9
1998	Clinton	-0
2006	G.W. Bush	-6

There have been a number of changes in the status of the U.S. Senate races since the last Watch in August.

In Kansas, the incumbent Pat Roberts (R) is now faced with an unexpected contest. It has been hard to miss the stories about the political and legal machinations that have gone on in this race, so I will not repeat them here. The bottom line is that Roberts is running against an Independent (who used to be a Democrat), Greg Orman. Recent polls, including Fox News, have Orman ahead by 4-6 points. Orman has not said with which side he will caucus, but he could find himself in a situation in which he would decide which Party controls the Senate.

Franken (D-MN) was previously in the Safe Dem column, but the race has become a little closer than expected, and he has been moved to Leaning Dem. Shaheen (D-NH) is still Leaning Dem, but looking a little stronger. Udall (D-CO) and Peters (D-MICH) were previously rated as Toss Ups and are now in the Leaning Dem column.

McConnell (R-KY) and Georgia (R incumbent not running), which were previously in the Toss-Up column, have now moved to Leaning Republican.

Finally, Montana, West Virginia and South Dakota, all with Democratic incumbents who are not running for re-election, should now be considered as Safe Republican.

Louisiana will add a little excitement to election night. The State has no primaries, so if one of the candidates does not get 50% of the vote on November 4th, there will be a runoff of the top two finishers in early December. In Georgia, which did have a primary, if neither candidate draws more than 50% on election night there will be a runoff in January 2015.

There are a variety of opinions as to the impact of a sitting President's job approval rating on Senate contests in a particular State. Recently, CNN/ORC began a series of State-based polls. In those surveys made public to date, while the President's job approval rating is 40%, in Iowa it is 37%, in Arkansas it is 33%, in Kentucky it is 29% and in New Hampshire it is 35%.

THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats	53
Republicans	45
Independents	2

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2014	34	30
Safe in 2014	9	15
Leaning in 2014	4	3
Shaheen (NH)		McConnell (KY)
Michigan		Georgia
Udall (CO)		Roberts (KS)
Franken (MN)		
Total	47	48

Toss-ups

5 Democrats
Iowa
Landrieu (LA)
Hagan (NC)
Pryor (AR)
Begich (AK)

If one pushes the Toss Ups, Landrieu, Pryor and Begich tilt Republican, and Iowa and North Carolina are smack in the middle.

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The general consensus is that the Republicans will pick up seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. Cook currently suggests that the Republicans will gain

between 2 and 12 seats. Larry Sabato's Crystal Ball suggests the GOP pickup will range from 5 to 8 seats. (Cook Political Report is my bible for the data below.)

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Democrats 199

Republicans 234

Vacant 2 (2D)

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Safe in 2014	161	206
Leaning	27 (1 GOP seat)	26 (includes 3 Democrat seats)
	<u>Toss Ups</u>	
	11	4

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The Governors

Democrats – 21

Republicans - 29

The Watch has not generally covered gubernatorial races and will not do so in any detail, but here is the current state of play based on the Cook Political Report.

There are 36 seats on the ballot this fall. 14 of those seats are held by Democrats and 22 seats are held by Republicans.

U.S.GOVERNORS

Democrats	21
Republicans	29

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2014	7	7
Safe in 2014	3	9
Likely/Leaning	6	6
Maryland		Arizona
Dayton MN		Parnell AK
Hassan NH		Branstad IA
Kitzhaber OR		Martinez NM
Rhode Island		Haley SC
Corbett PA		Texas
Total	16	22

Toss-ups

6 Democrats	6 Republicans
Arkansas	Scott FL
Hickenlooper CO	Deal GA
Malloy CT	Brownback KS
Hawaii	LePage ME
Quinn IL	Snyder MI
Massachusetts	Walker WI

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2016

The list of potential candidates for President in 2016 has stabilized, at least for the moment. Hillary Clinton continues to clear the Democratic field. On the Republican side there are six candidates drawing between 11.5% and 8.8%.

In “contests” with seven potential Republican nominees, Clinton averages 49.6%, while the Republicans average 39.7%. Clinton’s spread over the putative Republican nominees ranges from 13.8% over Cruz to 6.7% over Ryan.

The numbers below represent the Real Clear Politics average of public surveys in the respective Party “nomination contests.” In the case of the Democrats from May 29th –July 22nd, and in the case of the Republicans from June 24th –August 4th.

<u>Democrats</u>		<u>Republicans</u>	
Clinton	64.5%	Christie	11.5%
		Bush	10.8
Biden	10.3	Paul	10.3
Warren	9.3		
Cuomo	3.8		
O’Malley	1.5	Ryan	10
Schweitzer	1.0	Cruz	8.8
		Perry	8.3
		Rubio	7.5
		Walker	5.3
		Santorum	2.8
		Jindal	2.3

This is the current list of potential contenders.

<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Democrats</u>
Jeb Bush	Joe Biden
Chris Christie	Hillary Clinton
Bobby Jindal	Andrew Cuomo
Rand Paul	Kristin Gillibrand
Marco Rubio	Amy Klobuchar
Paul Ryan	Martin O’Malley
Mike Pence	Elizabeth Warren
John Kasich	Howard Dean
Scott Walker	Duval Patrick
Ted Cruz	Brian Schweitzer
Rick Santorum	Mark Warner
Rick Perry	Jay Nixon
Michelle Bachman	Jim Webb
Ben Carson	Bernie Sanders
Mike Huckabee	Joe Manchin
John Huntsman	
Joe Scarborough	

Donald Trump	
Mitt Romney	

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This and That

For many, many years I have admired Bob Shrum's ability to write the words used to deliver political messages in all formats, but particularly in speeches. (This is not to undervalue his overall strategic political acumen, which is very high.)

Recently, Bob was installed as the Carmen H. and Louis Warschaw Chair in Practical Politics at USC. During his installation he spoke, and I was particularly taken by a passage from that speech, parts of which I have included below.

“The practice of politics passes through constant revolution. The train brought us the whistle stop. Radio brought immediacy to conventions and campaigns. Then for nearly half a century of TV advertising, the most important political rallies have been two or three people around a television set. That may still be true, but it is one way communication – and now social media are changing that. They are changing the way we organize, talk with, and target the electorate....In the end, social media may prove to be direct mail on steroids.

So while the techniques move on, I believe the decisive role of message endures. ...”

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[See Restaurants on next page]

Restaurants

Washington DC

Bagels Etc. and Carry Out
2122 P Street NW
Washington DC 20037
202-466-7171
Fax 202-466-7961
www.bagels.net

This primarily take-out "restaurant" has been at this location for 29 years. I have partaken of its offerings for 25 years.

The restaurant is 8-10 feet wide and quite long. To your left as you enter is a long counter and exhibit cases that enclose the food preparation area. Take a moment to observe and you will see some of the fastest short-order cooking you have ever seen.

Then there is a floor to ceiling wall that blocks the baking area from view.

They advertise 23 kinds of fresh bagels. And they have something they call a "bialy," which is what I order. For those who are used to New York deli bialys, this bialy bears little resemblance. It is round, 6 inches across, not as thick as a bagel, and weighs 6 to 7 ounces.

There are 14 breakfast specials, ranging from scrambled eggs, to bagel and a choice of meats, to pancakes, two eggs with meat. 11 cold sandwiches; 11 different spreads for bagels; 20 hot sandwiches; 5 bagel melts; 5 pizza bagels; 8 items titled your favorites, ranging from a combo special including roast beef, ham, turkey, bacon, cheese, lettuce, tomato and mayo; 7 cream cheese spreads and a lox spread in 8 oz. containers; 6 salads; 5 homemade soups. And, of course, there are a variety of coffees and soft drinks. The bagels are \$1 each or \$9.99/dozen.

If you want to sit down and enjoy your selections, there 12 seats outside, 6 seats just inside the front door, and a dozen or more high stools and tables in the back. I have never seen anyone back there, but I have never been there at lunch time.

The restaurant opens at 6 a.m. seven days a week, and closes at 5 p.m. Monday thru Friday, 4 p.m. on Saturday, and 3 p.m. on Sunday.

Parking is problematic. I usually stop before 7 a.m. so there is parking on the street.

Mike

Suite 500
2100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20037
202- 728-1100

mberman@duberteingroup.com