

*Mike Berman's*

# WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

No. 97

February 19, 2011

STATE OF THE NATION  
Budget/Debt Ceiling

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PRESIDENT OBAMA

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THE CONGRESS

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RESTAURANTS

GATEAUX Bakery and Café

Ris

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ACE HARDWARE

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There was a sharp change between January 2009 and January 2010 in the number of folks thinking that the country is going in the right direction, from 20% in 2009 to 36% today. There was little change from January 2010 to January 2011.

	<u>Right Direction</u>	<u>Wrong Track</u>
January 2011	35%	60%
January 2010	36%	57%
January 2009	20%	72%

[Average of ABC/WP, NBC/WSJ, CBS/NYT)

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Americans' satisfaction with certain aspects of life today has dropped precipitously over the last decade.

	<u>2002</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2011</u>
Our system of government and how it works	76%	53%	42%
Size and power of the Federal government	60%	41%	31%
Opportunity to get ahead by working hard	77%	68%	55%

[Gallup 1/11]

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80% of us believe that the U.S. "has a unique character that makes it the greatest country in the world" (91% of Republicans, 77% of Independents and 73% of Democrats). 66% believe the country "has a special responsibility to be the leading nation in world affairs" (73% of Republicans, 64% of Independents and 61% of Democrats). [Gallup 12/10]

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The closer folks are physically to the center of government, the more favorably they view it.

Over the last 9 years the change in attitudes toward the Federal government is quite dramatic. In 2002, 64% rated the Federal government favorably and a year

later it was even higher. Now it is at 38%. Equally dramatic is the number who describe the government unfavorably. It has grown from 27% to 57%.

Attitudes toward State government have also dropped, but not nearly so dramatically, from 62% favorable to 53% favorable. And toward local government the change is even more modest, dropping from 67% favorability to 63%.

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>
Federal	38%	57%
State	53%	42%
Local	63%	32%

[PEW 2/11]

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When asked about the economic condition of the country today, there is some slight improvement in attitudes among Americans.

	<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Only fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
February 2009	*	4%	24%	71%
February 2011	1%	11%	45%	42%

[PEW 2/11]

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41% of respondents say the economy is getting better. While that is 2.5 times the number that held that view in January 2008 (16%), it is only a 3 point increase since January 2010. [Gallup 2/11]

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When asked, “What do the American people want?,” one astute observer answered, “To be safe, pay less taxes and give up no benefits.”

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There has been a shift of attitudes as to whether there should be more or less Federal regulation of business. In February 2009 the public thought there was too

little regulation as opposed to too much regulation, by 40% to 28%. Two years later, by 45% to 27%, they think there is too much regulation. [CBS 2/11]

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When given a choice of a variety of economic issues (unemployment, budget deficit, health care, gas prices, Federal taxes, pension security, housing prices, changes in the stock market) and asked to select the one that is most significant, no issue comes close to “unemployment,” which is listed by 49% of the respondents.

The last time more than 40% of Americans selected unemployment as the most important economic issue was 2003. Before that, the 40% threshold was last crossed in 1993. Here is the current list.

Unemployment	49%
Federal budget deficit	17%
Cost of health care	11%
Gas & energy prices	9%

No other issue on the list was named by more than 3% of the respondents.

[NBC/WSJ 1/11]

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Further emphasizing the importance of unemployment as the key domestic issue, Gallup reports that 35% of Americans list unemployment as the most important problem facing the country. This is the highest number seen by Gallup since 1983 (41%) . [Gallup 2/11]

When it comes to the unemployment rate, you can choose your measurement of choice, depending on whether you are an optimist or a pessimist.

If you are an optimist your measurement of choice would be that of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), which reported that unemployment had fallen from 9.4% in December 2010 to 9.0% in January 2011. If, on the other hand, you are a pessimist, your measurement of choice would be the Gallup survey, which reported that unemployment had increased from 9.6% in December 2010 to 9.8% in January 2011.

Over the last 12 months the highest rate of unemployment reported by BLS

was 10.6% in January 2010. The highest rate of unemployment reported by Gallup over the same period was 10.9% in February 2010.

Looking a little more realistically at the unemployment situation, if you are an optimist, the BLS reports that 16.1% of Americans were either unemployed or underemployed in January 2011. That is down from 18% in January 2010. Gallup reports that 18.9% were unemployed or underemployed in January 2011. The high point from Gallup over the previous 12 months was 20.4% in April 2010.

The total number of new manufacturing jobs created in January 2011 was 49,000, but the total number of new jobs created was only 36,000. [BLS]

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54% believe that America is in a state of decline, while 42% do not share that view. However, 53% believe that things will get better over the next 5 years, while 21% think they will get worse. [NBC/WSJ 1/11]

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When asked whether each of the following has responsibility for the climate in the country that resulted in the shootings of a Member of Congress and a Federal judge in Arizona, electronic communication and its voices are seen as primary culprits.

Great deal/good amount of responsibility

Radio and TV commentators	44%
Blogs on the internet	38%
TV shows and movies	35%
Political groups like Tea Party And MoveOn.org	33%
Elected officials	29%
Democratic and Republican Party officials	28%

[NBC/WSJ 1/11]

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The public is evenly split 47% to 45% on whether the deficit can be eliminated solely by cutting waste or whether it will be necessary to cut important programs and raise taxes. [NBC/WSJ 1/11]

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When faced with the question of what Federal expenditures they would favor cutting, only foreign aid draws a majority of Americans (59%) from the list below. When the question is put to Republicans and Democrats separately, there is considerable disagreement, ranging from 4% to 23%. The only one on which the same number of each group agree is Social Security.

	<u>All</u>	<u>GOP</u>	<u>Dem</u>
Foreign aid	59%	63%	55%
Funding arts and sciences	46%	56%	35%
Aid to Farmers	44%	42%	49%
Homeland security	42%	38%	47%
Military and national defense	42%	31%	54%
Anti-poverty programs	39%	46%	35%
Medicare	38%	40%	36%
Social Security	34%	34%	34%
Education	32%	35%	31%

[Gallup 1/11]

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The military and the high-tech industry are in a separate class when folks are asked to evaluate their confidence in various institutions of American society. One of the surprising/interesting scores was that given to social networking websites, in which only 17% of Americans had a “great deal/quite a bit” of confidence, while 40% had “very little/no” confidence. (The mid-point choice between “great deal/quite a bit” and “very little/none” was “some.”)

	<u>Great deal/Quite a big</u>	<u>Very little/None</u>
The military	71%	6%
High-tech industry	52%	10%
Automobile industry	25%	23%

Religious leaders and organizations	22%	31%
Pharmaceutical industry	18%	38%
Federal government	18%	35%
National news media	18%	42%
Online social networking websites	17%	40%
Facebook or LinkedIn		
Large corporations	13%	44%

[NBC/WSJ 1/11]

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In NBC/WSJ surveys from July 2009 until January 2011, more Americans than not have expressed the view that Obama's healthcare plan is a bad idea as opposed to a good idea. In January 39% of Americans held each position.

	<u>Good idea</u>	<u>Bad idea</u>
January 2011	39%	39%
January 2010	36%	48%
July 2009	36%	42%
April 2009	33%	25%

On the other hand, 55% of Americans say that the healthcare bill should be either expanded or left as is, while 37% would repeal it. [PEW 1/11]

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An increasing number of American adults, 16.4% ,did not have health insurance during 2010. This is up from 14.8% in 2008. [Gallup 1/11]

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The number of Americans receiving food stamps has grown by 30% in the last 2 years. As of January 2011, 43 million Americans are using food stamps. This is up from 40 million in 2010, 33 million in 2009, and 30 million in 2008. [UPI.com]

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10,800,000 homeowners, nearly 1 in every 4, owe more on their homes than they are now worth. [HuffPost]

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For the first time since mid-2005, Americans have a more positive (47%) than negative (43%) opinion of the Republican Party. The Democratic Party has a 47% negative rating and a 46% positive rating. [Gallup 1/11]

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18% now view the Tea Party favorably, down from 24% in October 2010. 25% do not view it favorably, and that has not changed since 2010. Only 27% believe the views of the Tea Party reflect the views of most Americans, while 45% say they do not. 2/3rds of Tea Party members say their party's views reflect the views of most Americans. And, half of those who identify as Republicans think the Tea Party reflects the views of most Republicans.

Among Independents 18% are favorable/19% unfavorable to the Tea Party generally. 28% think the Tea Party's views reflect those of most Americans; 40% do not share that view. [CBS 2/11]

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### Budget/Debt Ceiling

According to most of the members of the incoming 1<sup>st</sup> year class in the House of Representatives, their mandate is to cut Federal spending. Not just a little, but a lot. This is also the mantra of the Tea Party.

But a funny thing happened on the way to governing in 2011 after the 2010 election. When the public is asked what Federal spending should be cut, not only is there little that it would like to cut, there is a whole lot it would like to increase.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Increase Spending</u>	<u>Stay Same</u>	<u>Decrease Spending</u>
Education	62	25	11
Public Schools	56	29	13
Vet. Benefits	51	40	6
College Fin. Aid	44	37	16
Medicare	40	43	12
Healthcare	41	30	24
Aid US needy	42	34	20
Soc. Security	41	43	12



Combat Crime	39	40	18
Infrastructure	38	37	21
Enviro. Protect	36	36	26
Sci. Research	36	37	23
Energy	36	37	23
Agriculture	32	39	23
Terror Defense	33	43	21
Military Defense	31	36	30
Unempl. Aid	27	41	28
Aid World Needy	21	29	45

[Pew Res. Ctr. 2/2-7/11]

Go figure.

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Sometime this Spring, there will be a need to raise the debt limit. There is much conversation going on about who will or will not vote for it. Then there is an ongoing debate as to when the critical moment will come, i.e., when in fact will the government default? There are a variety of devices that the government has used in the past to postpone that inevitable moment. There does seem to be agreement that the length of the delay made possible by these devices is substantially less than it was in the past.

If you listen to the horror stories about what might occur if the debt limit is not raised, it makes “locusts, pestilence, frogs, and the slaying of the first born” look like child’s play.

There does not seem to be any particular roadmap on how this plays out, but it is not about closing the National Parks for a few days. The things that might happen include tax refunds not going out, government salaries not being paid in a timely fashion, interest payments on government debt may be postponed, contract payments owed to large and small companies could be suspended. Ultimately, if the stalemate continues for a sufficiently long time, it could affect the government’s ability to send out Social Security checks.

Of somewhat less direct consequence, the country’s cost of borrowing would likely increase meaningfully for a long period of time. This could well lead to

higher borrowing costs for everything from home mortgages to student and auto loans, to loans to small businesses, and credit card debt.

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Note: For some period of time I have had concerns about the practice of comparing data over long periods of time. For example, is it reasonable to compare the job approval rating of President Carter with that of President Obama, given the changes in the amount and kind of public communication and information that is broadly available? As with most such questions, I asked Peter Hart for his views. He has no problem with this type of comparison. He said in part, “it is like baseball and tennis sport records, the equipment changes, but the records remain.” And, “Overall, the world may change, but the records and the marks are still good benchmarks.”

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## PRESIDENT OBAMA

What a difference 3 months have made in how the country views the job being done by President Obama. Here is the result of an averaging of 4 media surveys for October 2010 and January 2011.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	
January 2011	51%	42%	+9
Mid-November 2010	46%	46%	(only CBS & NBC/WSJ)
October 2010	45%	48%	-3

[Fox, CBS/NYT, NBC/WSJ, ABC/WP]

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However, views about how Obama is dealing with the economy are basically unchanged during the same 3 month period. This is an average of 3 media surveys for January and October.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
January 2011	44%	51%
November 2010	41%	54% (only NBC/WSJ & NYT/CBS)
October 2010	41%	52%

[NBC/WSJ, NYT/CBS, WP/ABC]

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#### OBAMA APPROVAL RATINGS

	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>
January 2011	53/41%	49/39%	54/43%

When matched against the approval ratings of the last 8 Presidents in February of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of their initial terms in office, President Obama is number 6. [Based on Gallup surveys]

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
G Bush (I)	80%	14%
Eisenhower	75	15
Kennedy	70	18
GW Bush (II)	58	37
Nixon	49	37
Obama	49	43
Clinton	42	48
Reagan	40	50
Carter	37	46

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Personal feelings about the President have also improved slightly over the last several months, but are almost exactly where they were a year ago.

	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
January 2011	52%	32%

January 2010	52%	34%
February 2009	68%	19%

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56% believe that Obama could be doing more on the economy. 39% say he is doing as much as he can. In March 2009, 30% thought he could be doing more. In February 2010, 50% said he could be doing more. [PEW 2/11]

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68% disapprove of Obama's record on dealing with the Federal budget deficit. This is roughly the same number as those who held that view in February 2010 (64%). [Gallup 2/11]

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Since August of 2009, roughly 2/3rds of Americans have believed that Obama and GOP leaders were not working together. This month 65% hold that view. By 31% to 19% the public blames the GOP more than the President for this failure to get along. [PEW 2/11]

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45% believe that Obama shares their priorities for the country. 32% have that view about the Republicans in Congress, and 29% say that about the Democrats in Congress.

However, 58% of Independents do not think Obama has the same priorities for the country as they do. 56% have that view of the Republicans in Congress, and 66% say that about the Democrats in Congress. [CBS 2/11]

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When it comes to the budget deficit, 42% say they trust the President to make the right decisions about reducing the deficit. The same percentage have that view about the Republicans in Congress.

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The 2012 Presidential campaign is not just around the corner, but it is impossible to avoid the early machinations about who will be the Republican nominee. The list is too long, and evidence of who might be leading this pack of a dozen or more potential candidates is too sparse, to say much more.

President Obama will not be challenged for his party's nomination.

Early polls mean little, but CNN/OR, in January, surveyed registered voters on their current intention to vote for the President's re-election.

	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Clinton January 1995</u>
Definitely vote for	25%	11%
Probably vote for	<u>23%</u>	<u>28%</u>
	48%	39%
Probably not for	16%	19%
Definitely not for	<u>35%</u>	<u>35%</u>
	51%	54%

In a Gallup survey of registered voters in early February, 45% supported Obama and 45% supported a generic Republican candidate. Obama leads among women, nonwhites, those 18 to 34 years, and among Democrats. Independents split 41% to 41%. [Gallup 2/11]

Stay tuned.

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Republicans will gather for their convention in Tampa Bay, Florida, beginning on August 27, 2012. The Democrats will meet in Charlotte, North Carolina, starting on September 3, 2012.

If you have ever wondered whether selecting a particular city for a Party's convention has any real impact on the outcome of the election, here is a partial answer.

Going back to 1936, Democrats have won the State in which their convention was sited 21 times. The Republicans have won the State in which their convention was sited 17 times. The next question is whether any of the victories or losses

affected the ultimate result of the election. That question will likely be answered in a future edition of the Watch.

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## CONGRESS

At this time in 2009 there were 58 Democrats in the Senate (including 2 Independents) and 1 vacancy. By July 2009, the Democrat caucus had 60 Senators, including the Independents. Theoretically, the caucus had the capacity to end any filibuster.

At the outset of 2009, there were 256 Democrats in the House and 1 vacancy; by the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of the year their majority stood at 258.

And then came the 2010 election. Obama said the Democrats had taken a shellacking, and that is not a bad description.

The Republicans took over the House with a 242 seat majority, having picked up 63 Democratic seats. Democrats lost 6 seats, but retained control of the Senate, with a 53-person majority. However, the Democrats' ability to deal with filibusters was gone, except if a sufficient number of Republicans bolted from their leadership. That will be a rare, if ever, happening.

Congressional job approval is little changed since January 2009.

	<u>Approval</u>	<u>Disapproval</u>
January 2011	25%	68%
January 2010	24%	67%
January 2009	22%	68%

[Combinations of ABC/WP, Fox, CNN, NBC/WSJ, CBS]

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71% of respondents believe that it is at least somewhat important for GOP leaders to consider the policy positions of the Tea Party movement. This includes 88% of Republicans, 72% of Independents and 53% of Democrats. [Gallup 1/11]

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The Democratic Party is seen in a more favorable light than the Republican Party. It remains to be seen what the future will hold for either Party, given the unavoidable clash between the incoming class of House and Senate members and the White House.

46% rate the Democratic Party favorably, as opposed to 45% who have the opposite view. 40% see the Republican Party favorably, while 49% see it unfavorably. [NTY/CBS 1/11]

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## THE U.S. SENATE

Going into the 2012 election cycle the Democrats have already lost one seat. The retirement of Democratic Senator Kent Conrad almost certainly means that a Republican, probably the sitting Governor, will win that State. Effectively, the Democrats go into the election with a 52-person caucus.

Of the 7 Senate races that WW has in the Toss Up category, 6 are Democrats. While a number of these races have not yet developed, and a lot can happen in 20 months, the safe bet today would be that the Republicans will take control of that body.

Senator Jeff Bingaman will not be a candidate for re-election. Having served 5 terms in the Senate, he has apparently decided it is enough. It is too early to suggest how the race to succeed him will progress, but for the moment, New Mexico moves from Safe Democrat to Toss Up.

[Note: To be completely transparent about the fallibility of WW predictions, the following is a quote from the Washington Watch of June 2009: “At the moment, it appears that Democrats are likely to pick up Senate seats in 2010. But it is not a sure thing.” Someone might describe that as an understatement. ]

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## THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats	51
Republicans	47
Independents	2 (caucus Dem)

Here is how the 33 Senate elections (23 Democratic incumbents (includes 2 Independents), 10 Republican incumbents) look to me at this time (underlining reflects retirement). (D=Dem incumbent in office, R=GOP incumbent in office, I=Ind. Incumbent in office)

Safe	Leaning		Leaning	Safe
<u>Democrat (10)</u>	<u>Democrat (6)</u>	<u>Toss-Up (8)</u>	<u>Republican (3)</u>	<u>Republican (6)</u>
California	<u>Connecticut</u>	Massachusetts	Maine	Arizona
Delaware	Florida	Missouri	<u>North Dakota</u>	Indiana
Hawaii	Michigan	Montana	Texas	Mississippi
Maryland	Ohio	Nebraska		Tennessee
Minnesota	Pennsylvania	Nevada		Utah
New Jersey	Washington	<u>New Mexico</u>		Wyoming
New York		Virginia		
Rhode Island		W. Virginia		
Vermont				
Wisconsin				

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2012	30	37
Safe in 2012	10	6
Leaning in 2012	6	3

Total	46	46
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Toss-ups 8 (2R/6D)

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The Democrats are setting out to win the necessary 25 seats to regain control of the House. It will be a long haul.



## THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Republicans	242
Democrats	193

	<u>1/20/11</u>
TOTAL Dem	193
Solid Dem	150
Likely Dem	27
Lean Dem	12
 Toss-up	 10
D	4
R	6
 Lean GOP	 15
Likely GOP	38
Solid GOP	183
TOTAL GOP	242

[As always, thanks to “The Cook Political Report.” It is the best when it comes to analysis of Congressional races (as well as other electoral matters)].

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Of the 63 Democrats who lost their seats in the 2010 election, 35% were in their first terms, 60% were in their 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> terms. 3 of those who lost seats were in the 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> terms respectively. Here is the whole list:

1<sup>st</sup> term – 22 members; 2<sup>nd</sup> term – 16 members; 3<sup>rd</sup> term – 3 members; 4<sup>th</sup> term – 3 members; 6<sup>th</sup> term – 3 members; 7<sup>th</sup> term – 4 members; 9<sup>th</sup> term – 2 members; 10<sup>th</sup> term – 1 member; 11<sup>th</sup> term – 2 members; 13<sup>th</sup> term – 2 members; 14<sup>th</sup> term – 2 members; 17<sup>th</sup> term – 1 member; 18<sup>th</sup> term – 1 member; 19<sup>th</sup> term – 1 member.

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12 electoral votes will move as a result of the 2010 census.

10 States will lose 1 or more seats. Each of the States is politically Democratic based on Gallop’s political identification measures. (Ohio and New York each lose 2 seats; Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania each lose 1 seat.)

8 States will gain seats. The 5 that are politically Republican will pick up 8 seats (Texas (4), Arizona, Georgia, South Carolina, and Utah). The 3 politically Democratic States pick up the other 4 seats (Florida (2), Nevada, and Washington).

On the numbers, these changes represent a net gain of 8 electoral votes for the Republicans.

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## RESTAURANTS

### GATEAUX

bakery

570 Piermont Road

Closter, NJ 07624

201-767-8585

Fax 201-784-3768

Cell 201-906-7897

[michiyo501@hotmail.com](mailto:michiyo501@hotmail.com)

I was in Closter and had a little time to kill before an event that was to begin at 9 a.m. We drove around, looking for a place to stop for coffee and tea, and happened upon Gateaux, a Korean bakery and café.

The inside of the café is a huge vaulted room that has within it what would otherwise be described as an “outdoor” café.

On the left as you enter is a long counter with multiple open shelves that had more different kinds of rolls and buns than I have ever seen. At least two-thirds of the offerings were items, plain and sweet, that I have not seen in any other bakery. There are also a variety of fresh loaves of bread on these shelves.

On the right is a second counter devoted to various kinds of cakes and pastries.

The working bakery is in another room, behind the counter on the left.

I had an excellent glass of freshly-made ice tea and a soft roll lightly decorated with lines of chocolate. The person with whom I was traveling had a flat roll that had a raised, open center of a tuna fish mixture.

The men's room had a single commode and wash basin, and a plain brown décor. It was very clean.

If you are ever in the area, it is worth going a little out of your way to try the Gateaux's offerings.

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Ris  
2275 L Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
202-730-2500  
Fax 202-730-2519  
risDC.com

This was my 3<sup>rd</sup> visit to Ris. On earlier visits I had found it a little more crowded and hectic than I ordinarily enjoy. However, on this evening the crowd was reasonably sized and generally calmer than I had previously experienced. Our party included Rita, Bob, and Debbie.

As you enter the restaurant, directly ahead is the greeting stand where you check in for your reservation. Directly to the right there is a series of 4-person tables, and also to the right is an L-shaped bar with 14 high backed seats. Also in the bar area are 3 high, two-person tables with accompanying high stools. Food is also served at the bar, and there were a number of people taking advantage of that option.

Just past the bar there is an area of 3 booths, two 4s and one deuce.

The main dining room also begins at the front desk. First there is a banquet with several 2s and 4s. The balance of the large dining room is populated with 2 and 4-person tables that can be combined for larger parties.

Part of what made the evening so pleasant was our server, Florence, who hailed from the South of France. She had a great disposition and did everything right for our group. We have a habit of wanting to modify the menu offerings.

Rita started with Greens and herbs with Champagne Dijon vinaigrette and shaved parmesan. For a main course she selected Monk fish Ossobuco, on Champagne lobster risotto, buttered cabbage, mushrooms, tomato fondue and truffle oil.

Debbie opted for Scallops margarita, lime marinated scallops with chiles, orange, avocado and tequila ice served in a margarita glass with a salted edge. Her second course was Pan Roasted Chesapeake Rockfish with potato confit, pickled onions, olives, cured lemon, parmesan cream and minted pine nuts.

Bob's first course was French Onion Soup Grantinee, followed by Chicken Pot Pie, with roasted chicken sherry sauce and a side salad.

I had the same soup to start. Then I opted for the Pan Roasted Chicken with spinach, glazed carrots and tarragon sauce. I eschewed the mashed potatoes and asked for a side order of Braised Red Cabbage.

The men's room is relatively small. As you enter there is a full length mirror to the right with a wide black wood frame. Straight ahead is a reddish/ brownish black stone counter with inserted wash basin. The mirror over the wash basin is also framed in wide black wood. Towels are paper.

Behind the wash basin wall sits the commode. This is a one person restroom. On the wall on which the commode resides is a full wall of 3 inch square tiles of multiple colors. All other walls are brown painted. The floor is covered with large black tiles.

One welcome change since my previous visit to the restaurant is that valet parking at the front door has been added.

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Ace Hardware  
Tenleytown  
4500 Wisconsin Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20016  
202-364-1902  
[20 locations in the great DC area]

This piece about the Tenleytown Ace Hardware does not signal that WW is now going to regularly review hardware stores. However, this hardware store has become a regular stop when I am in the market for a variety of items. Although, whenever I am unable to find the particular item for which I went to the store, it is inevitable that I will buy something that I really don't need, but can find useful.

The store does not have the wide aisles of modern retail establishments. Every inch of shelf space is stuffed with something.

The thing that makes this store the most attractive is the people who work there. They are everywhere and they all seem to know everything. Ask any one of them a question about where something might be found, and they have an answer. The range is extraordinary.

On a recent visit I saw something that I have never seen before in any store. At the entrance stood one of the store employees, asking folks what they were looking for and directing them. Then as they moved away from him he would use an internal store a communication device to quietly call ahead to one of his colleagues, describing the person by size or clothing, etc., and suggesting where the person was heading. That is special.

*Mike*

Suite 500  
2100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
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