

Mike Berman's

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

No. 125

May 4, 2013

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Sports, Education, Government Service – which is most important

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“Stiletto Network”

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State of the Nation

The NBC/WSJ found that 61% of Americans believe that things are off on the wrong track in this country. This is highest “wrong track” number found in this survey since September 2012. [4/13]

67% are dissatisfied with the way things are going in the country at this time. This is the lowest level of dissatisfaction recorded by Gallup since mid-November 2012. [Gallup 4/13]

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On the first Friday of every month the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics publishes the unemployment rate for the previous month.

For the month of April 2013, the unemployment number is 7.5%. Down slightly from March. For March 2013 the unemployment number was 7.6%, down from a high of 10% in October 2009.

There is one small problem with this indicator of “unemployment.” It does not include people who are working part-time, but want full-time employment, nor those who have not looked for work in the last four weeks. When those folks are added, we get an unemployed/underemployed number that is 13.8% for March 2013.

Following is the March data for 2009 – 2013.

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Unemployed	9.0	9.7	9.1	8.2	7.6
Unemployed +	16.2	16.9	15.7	14.5	13.8

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In the first two years of the economic recovery, 2009 to 2011, the misdistribution of wealth between those at the top of the economic ladder and those on the lower rungs grew even larger. From 2009 to 2011, the net worth of those in the top 7% of wealth in this country increased by 28%. For those in the lower 93%, their net worth dropped by 4%. [PEW 4/13]

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When asked about the job situation in America, 26% currently say that it is a good time to find a quality job. This compares to 46% who expressed that view in 2007, and 10% in mid 2009. [Gallup 4/13]

32% say that the availability of jobs in their community is getting better, while 15% say it is getting worse. Two years earlier 26% thought availability was improving and 37% said it was getting worse. [WP/ABC 4/13]

45% of us rate our current financial situation as excellent or good. The previous high point was 55% in early 2007. 47% think that their financial situation is getting better, up from a low of 29% in late 2011. [Gallup 4/13]

55% say the amount of income tax they are paying this year is fair. This is somewhat less than the 64% who had that view in 2003.

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America's middle class has changed since 2000, and mostly not for the better.

	<u>2000</u>	<u>2010, 2011, 2012</u>
Household income, median	\$ 54,841	\$50,054 (2011)
Family net worth, median	\$106,000	\$77,300 (2010)
Household debt, median	\$ 50,971	\$70,000 (2011)
High school graduation rate	71.7%	78.2% (2010)
Births to single women under 30	44.0%	53.5% (2010)
Labor-force participation/ages 25-34	85.0%	81.9% (2012)
Unemployment rate/ages 25-34	3.1%	6.7% (2012)
Percentage without		
health insurance (under 65)	14.7%	17.9% (2011)
Disability applications, ages 50+	544,558	992,234 (2011)

[National Journal 4/27/13]

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By 46% to 45% Americans believe that the development of energy supplies should be given priority, even if the environment suffers. In mid-2010, 55% favored environmental protection over energy production, while 39% expressed the contrary view.

47% believe that the U.S. government is doing too little in terms of protecting the environment, while 35% think government is doing about the right amount. [Gallup 4/13]

In 2008, 49.2% of Americans reported having employer-based health insurance. That number dropped to 44.5% in 2012. Another 25.6% participate in a government plan, up from 23.4% in 2008. 16.9% get their coverage from some form of private coverage. 11.1% are uninsured, down slightly from 11.5% who reported being uninsured in 2008.

Texas has the most uninsured adult residents of any State in the union – 28.8%. Massachusetts has the lowest percentage of uninsured, with 4.5% of its adult residents holding that status. [Gallup 11/12,12/12,1/13,2/13,3/13]

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78% of Americans think that installing surveillance cameras in public places is a good idea. This is a slight increase from the 71% who expressed that view in 2005. [NYT/CBS 4/13]

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The U. S. Supreme Court had a favorable rating of 80% in 1994. It moved down to 72% in 2007, to 65% in April 2008, and to a low of 51% in July 2012. The Court's current favorable rating is 52%.

The unfavorable rating of the Court during that period grew from 16% in 1994 to a high of 37% in July 2012, and a current 31%. [Pew 3/13]

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Technology

The first cell phone call was made on April 3, 1973. That device weighed two pounds. Now

- 87% of American adults have a cell phone
- 78% of those 12-17 years of age have a cell phone

54% of those over the age of 65 have used the internet

At least 15% of those over 65 years of age had a tablet in 2012

- 12% of those over 77 years of age

Facebook's user base reached 1.11 billion accounts as of March 30, 2012

- 665 million accessed Facebook each day as of March 30, 2012
- 61% of current Facebook users have taken a break from using the service for several weeks or more
- 20% of online adults currently not using Facebook did so at one time

E-books and the past year

- 23% of those over 16 years of age read an E-book
- the number of those 16 years of age and older who read printed books in the past year fell from 72% to 67%
- 19% of those over 16 years of age had an e-book reader
- 25% of those over 16 years of age had a tablet on which they can read e-books
- 33% of those over 16 years of age had a tablet or e-book reader

Youtube has 800 million users

Twitter has 500 million total users and 200 million active users

Google+ has 400 million registered users and 135 million active users

Gmail has 287 million users

Tumblr has 150 million users

Pinterest has 25 million users

Flipboard has 20 million users

Path has 3 million users

[PEW Internet, NY Times, Washington Post, Google]

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Gun Control and Immigration

Gun control and immigration reform are dominating the news, with 37% showing an interest in the gun debate, and 23% showing interest in the immigration debate. However, when Americans are asked what they think is the most important problem facing the country today, only 4% name gun control and 4% name immigration. Heading the list, at 25%, is the economy, followed by unemployment at 19%. [PEW 4/13, Gallup 4/13]

Gun Control

45% of men own guns, while only 15% of women own firearms. Those who are married (37%) are more likely to own guns than those who are not married (22%). [Gallup 2/13]

In 2010

- 31,076 Americans died from gunshot wounds
 - 11,078 gun deaths were labeled as homicides
 - 19,392 gun deaths were labeled as suicides

- 606 gun deaths were unintentional
- 73,505 Americans were treated in hospital emergency departments for non-fatal gunshot wounds

[Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence]

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Republicans and Democrats view the two issues differently. 59% of Republicans/Republican leaners are satisfied with U.S. gun laws, a position held by only 28% of Democrats/Democratic leaners.

Conversely, 46% of Democrats/Democratic leaners are satisfied with the level of immigration into the country but only 23% of Republicans/Republican/leaners hold this view. [Gallup 1/13]

In 1999, 49% of gun owners said they owned guns for hunting. Now that number is 32%. Again in 1999, 26% said they owned guns for protection. Now that number is 48%. [PEW 3/13]

By 55% to 9%, adults believe that the laws covering the sale of firearms should be made more strict. [NBC/WSJ 4/13]

55% of Americans believe that new gun control laws are possible without interfering with gun rights. 52% think enacting new laws should be a higher priority right now. 86% would require background checks on people buying guns at gun shows or online. [WP/ABC 4/13]

However, when it comes to the recent demise of proposed background check legislation in the U.S. Senate, 47% of Americans are angry or disappointed (67% of Democrats and 34% of Republicans), while 39% express relief and happiness (51% of Republicans and 22% of Democrats). [PEW 4/13]

65% of Americans believe that the Senate should have passed the measure. [Gallup 4/13]

Immigration

54% of us believe that immigration strengthens the United States, while 36% have the contrary view. Among Hispanics/Latinos the positive number is 65%. [NBC/WSJ 4/13]

In 2011 there were an estimated 11.1 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States. This is down from the 2007 estimate of 12.0 million unauthorized immigrants. Roughly 715,000 unauthorized immigrants left the country voluntarily or involuntarily during 2011. However, a large number also arrived in the country. [PEW Hispanic Center, Dept of Homeland Security]

71% of Americans believe there should be a way for undocumented aliens to stay in the United States. This number includes 43% who believe they should be eligible for citizenship, and 24% who believe they should only be eligible for permanent residency (4% don't have a point of view). [PEW 3/13]

64% favor creating a pathway to citizenship for foreigners who have jobs, but are here illegally. Those favoring a pathway goes up to 76% if these folks are required to pay a fine, pay back taxes, and pass a security background check.

51% believe that people to whom this law would apply should be eligible for citizenship five years after they apply. Another 18% would make them eligible as soon as they apply, and 12% say they should be required to wait 10 years. [NBC/WSJ 4/13]

83% would require businesses to check the immigration status of prospective employees. [WP/ABF 4/13]

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65% of Americans think the country would be better off with more women in political office. This is roughly the same number as expressed that view in 1997. The number of women holding this view is at 69%, down from 77% in 1997 while the number of men who hold that view has grown to 62% from 57% in 1997.

68% of women and 59% of men believe the country would be better off with more women in senior business roles.

Opinions of Women in Politics and Business

In April 2013 and previously in September 1997, *NBC/WSJ* conducted a poll of opinions about women and society. Two of the questions read:

1. The country would be better off if we had more women in political office
(WOMEN IN OFFICE)

2. The country would be better off if we had more women in Senior management positions in business (BUSINESS)

	2013				1997			
	Agree	Strongly Agree	Some-what Agree	Dis-Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Some-what Agree	Dis-Agree
Women in office (Total Population)	65%	32%	33%	26%	67%	36%	31%	26%
Women in office (Only Men)	62%	25%	37%	28%	57%	23%	34%	36%
Women in office (Only Women)	69%	39%	30%	23%	77%	48%	29%	17%
Business (Total Population)	64%	29%	35%	31%				
Business (Only Men)	59%	24%	35%	34%				
Business (Only Women)	68%	33%	35%	27%				

[NBC/WSJ 4/13]

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43% of women say they have personally experienced discrimination because of their gender. This is about the same number (44%) who stated that view in 2000.

Of those who experienced discrimination, 35% said the discrimination occurred in the workplace. When the question was asked in 2000, only 26% said the discrimination occurred in the workplace.

In the current survey, 15% said the discrimination occurred in a social setting, and 14% experienced the discrimination while shopping as a consumer.

[NBC/WSJ 4/13]

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16% of Americans think that obesity is the most urgent health problem in America. Using the Body Mass Index as the standard, 26.2% of Americans are considered to be obese. People living in Colorado are the least obese (18.7%) and those in West Virginia the most obese (33.5%).

In 1991, Americans described their ideal weight as 149 pounds and their average weight as 161 pounds, a spread of 12 pounds. In 2012, ideal weight is

described as 162 pounds and their average weight as 176 pounds, a spread of 14 pounds.

Hawaii is rated No. 1 in the wellness of its population, while the residents of West Virginia have the lowest rating.

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Sports, Education, Government Service

Which is most important in America today – collegiate sports, education or government service?

If the test is the comparative salaries paid to coaches of major collegiate sports teams, the presidents of their respective colleges or universities, or the governors of the States in which these institutions are located, the answer is clear – collegiate sports.

[The source and age of the data below is noted in the chart that follows.]

One of the two most highly compensated football coaches is at the University of Alabama. He makes \$5,300,000 per year. The president of Alabama makes \$592,000 per year, and the governor makes \$121,000. The amount of the coach's salary is equivalent to a full ride for 221 students (\$23,939/year).

The highest paid basketball coach, who receives \$7,200,000 per year, is at Duke University. The president of Duke makes \$969,000, and the governor of North Carolina makes \$140,000. The amount of the coach's salary is equivalent to a full ride for 125 students (\$57,325/year).

The coaches of women's collegiate basketball teams, 43% of whom are male, generally do not make as much as the coaches of the men's basketball team. The exception are Tennessee and Rutgers, where the women's team coaches make more than the men's team coaches. In general, women's basketball team coaches also make more than the host university president's salary, with the exception of Ohio State.

Top 5 Salaries, College Football and College Basketball

All coaches' salaries are for the 2012-2013 Season; Public University President Data is from 2011 fiscal year; Private University President Data is from 2010 fiscal year. Salaries for coaches include base salaries and benefits, but not bonuses; salaries for University Presidents include benefits and bonuses.

Via, Chronicle of Higher Education and USA Today Football Coaches Salary Database, Fortune, and Ballotpedia.org

Football

College	Coach and Salary	President and Salary	Governor and Salary
Alabama	Nick Saban--\$5.3 million	Robert Witt--\$592,161	Robert Bentley--\$120,936
Texas	Mack Brown--\$5.3 million	William C. Powers--\$667,212	Rick Perry--\$150,000
Oklahoma	Bob Stoops--\$ 4.6 million	David L. Boren--\$527,265	Mary Fallin--\$147,000
Ohio State	Urban Meyer--\$4.3 million	E. Gordon Gee--\$1.99 million	John Kasich--\$148,886
Louisiana State	Les Miles--\$3.8 million	Michael V. Martin--\$525,000	Bobby Jindal--\$130,000

Basketball

College	Coach and Salary	President and Salary	Governor and Salary
Duke	Mike Krzyzewski--\$7.2 million	Richard H. Brodhead--\$969,394	Pat McCrory--\$139,590
Louisville	Rick Pitino--\$5.0 million	James R. Ramsay--\$435,132	Steve Beshear--\$151,643
Kansas	Bill Self--\$5.0 million	Bernadette Gray Little--\$450,000	Sam Brownback--\$99,636
Michigan State	Tom Izzo--\$3.7 million	Lou Anna K. Simon--\$520,000	Rick Snyder--\$159,300
Florida	Billy Donovan--\$3.7 million	Bernard J. Machen--\$507,808	Rick Scott--\$130,273

Top 10 Women's Basketball Salaries, compared to other institutional salaries

All coaches' salaries from *USA Today* databases unless otherwise listed; university president salaries are from *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

College	Women's B-Ball	Men's B-Ball	University President
Tennessee	\$2.0 million	\$1.5 million	\$345,000
Connecticut	\$1.6 million*	\$2.7 million	\$370,833
Baylor	\$1.1 million	\$1.8 million	\$413,865
Rutgers	\$1.1 million	\$650,000^	\$550,000
Texas	\$1.1 million	\$2.4 million	\$667,212
Oklahoma	\$948,400	\$2.1 million	\$527,265
Texas A&M	\$827,737*	\$1.6 million	\$525,000
Maryland	\$806,239	\$1.6 million^	\$300,000
Ohio State	\$798,200*	\$3.2 million	\$1.99 million
Louisiana State	\$666,000*	\$1.1 million^	\$525,000

*Coaches are male (43% of women's coaches are male); all the men's basketball coaches and university presidents in this chart are male.

^data via local media

[Note: I have been informed that success in collegiate sports is a very important stimulus of financial support for a college or university's "primary" purpose.]

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"STILETTO NETWORK"

[Note: In the usual course, Washington Watch does not include discussion of books. However, I had an opportunity to read an early draft of "Stiletto Network" and I found it intriguing. I asked the author, Pamela Ryckman, to send me a paragraph or two describing her book. I was given the opportunity to write a blurb for the book jacket, which follows Ryckman's description.]

"**STILETTO NETWORK** is a story of female friendship – disguised as a business story, a tale of women banding together to improve lives and companies and communities, to realize their dreams and change the world. During the past few years, women's groups have been coalescing in every major American city. Formidable ladies across industries are convening at unprecedented rates; they're creating salons and dinner groups; and collaborating not only to achieve clout and success, but also to create a more just and equal society. Each group has no more than 10 women, but in aggregate they number in the tens, if not hundreds of thousands of women nationwide.

A new girls' network is alive and set to hyper-drive, and *STILETTO NETWORK* is the first book to shed light on this groundbreaking movement."

Here is the blurb that I wrote:

"Pamela Ryckman uses good old-fashioned storytelling to illuminate a moment in history where women are poised to make waves in business, politics, and philanthropy. An important read for men who want to know where the world is heading and want to understand the change (without feeling under attack)."

The book will be published on May 16, but can be ordered on [Amazon](#), [Barnes & Noble](#), or [IndieBound](#).

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Same Gender Marriage

Rhode Island has become the 10th State, plus the District of Columbia, to provide full marriage rights to same gender couples.

At least three additional States are at one stage or another in consideration of same gender marriage rights in 2013: Delaware, Illinois and Minnesota.

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The April NBC/WSJ survey included a number of questions on same gender marriage. The following are excerpted from a memorandum prepared by Jay Campbell of Hart Research Associates:

- * 53% of Americans favor same-sex marriage and 42% oppose it
- * 64% of those under age 35 support same-sex marriage
- * 58% of seniors oppose same-sex marriage
- * 73% of Democrats support same-sex marriage
- * 54% of Independents support same-sex marriage
- * 66% of Republicans oppose same-sex marriage
- * 69% of those who have a close gay friend favor marriage equality
- * 53% of those who have a gay co-worker favor marriage equality
- * 49% of those who have a gay acquaintance favor same sex marriage
- * 41% of those who do not know anyone who is gay favor same sex marriage
- * 79% of those who know a gay/lesbian couple who are in a civil union or who are married favor marriage equality
- * 63% say the Federal government should recognize same sex marriages even though only 53% support them
- * 41% of Republican partisans say the Federal government should recognize same-sex marriages in States that have legalized them.
- * 56% would like to see a Federal standard with a uniform definition of marriage for the whole country, while 38% want it left to the States

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President Obama

The public's grade for the job President Obama is doing (as found by Gallup) is 47%/45%. This is better than only one of the 5 previous two-term Presidents at this point in their second term. The list of 6 follows:

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
Eisenhower	64	23 (4/30/57)
Clinton	59	35 (3/26/97)
Nixon	45	42 (5/7/73)
Reagan	55	37 (5/20/85)
<u>Obama</u>	47	45 (3/24/13)
G Bush (II)	50	45 (5/5/05)

<u>Date</u>	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN/ORC</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>
Apr 2013	47/48%	50/45%	51/47%	47/45%
Mar 2013	xxx	50/46%	47/50%	45/46%*
Feb 2013	50/45%	xxx	xxx	xxx
Jan 2013	52/44%	55/41%	55/43%	51/41%
<u>Apr 2012</u>	49/46%	50/45%	49/48%	48/42%

(* CBS alone)

By 55% to 43%, Americans have a favorable opinion of Obama.
[Gallup 4/13]

In April the NBC/WSJ survey found 50% disapproving of Obama's performance on the economy. It has been in this range since January 2010.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>	
Apr 2013	47%	50%	
Feb 2013	44%	51%	
Jan 2013	49%	48%	
Jan 2012	45%	50%	
Jan 2011	45%	50%	
Jan 2010	43%	49%	
Jan 2009	56%	31%	[NBC/WSJ4/13]

However, 57% of Americans say they have a great deal/fair amount of confidence that Obama will "recommend the right things" for the economy. [Gallup 4/13]

The NBC/WSJ survey also found Obama's performance on foreign policy rated positively by 46% to 43%. This is the lowest foreign policy approval rating that Obama has received in this survey going back to April 2009.

On three other current issues Obama's performance is rated from about even

to significant disapproval. On Obama's handling of immigration the public is split even with 45% disapproval and 44% approval. On the question of his handling of gun policy 52% disapprove of his performance. And, handling the budget, 57% disapprove. [NYT/CBS 4/13]

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The Congress

74% disapprove of the job being done by Congress. [FOX rv 4/13] Gallup registered a disapproval score of 83% in early March. 67% disapprove of the job being done by Republicans in Congress, while 57% of Americans disapprove of the job being done by Democrats in Congress. [AP-GFK 4/13]

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THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats	53
Republicans	45
Independents	2

At least at first glance, Democratic control of the Senate is in play in the 2014 election. Ten current Democratic seats are contestable. Only two Republican seats are in a contestable category.

Seven Democrats have announced their retirements. Four of those seats are now rated as Toss-Ups: Iowa, South Dakota, Montana, and West Virginia. One additional seat, Michigan, is in the leaning Democrat category. The sixth seat is New Jersey, which is considered safe for the Democrats. The seventh seat is Massachusetts, for which a special election is scheduled. It is likely to remain in Democratic hands.

There are two additional Democratic seats in the Toss Up category, Arkansas and Louisiana. Included in the Leaning Democrat line are Alaska, New Hampshire, North Carolina, and Michigan

There are no current Republican seats in the Toss Up category, and only two seats, Georgia and Kentucky, in the Lean Republican category.

Of the six Democratic Toss Up States, Romney won five of them with an

average margin of 20 points. Only Iowa was captured by Obama. In the Lean Democratic category, Romney won two of them, Alaska (by 14) and North Carolina (by 2). Obama won New Hampshire (by 6) and Michigan (by 12).

In terms of the allocation of resources, Republicans (and organizations that support Republicans) will be able to spend the largest part of their resources on the attack for the ten Democratic seats. Democrats (and organizations that support Democrats) will have to spend most of their resources defending potentially vulnerable seats.

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* Italics denotes the retirement of a current member.

Safe Democrat(11)	Leaning Democrat(4)	TossUp(6)	Leaning Republican(2)	Safe Republican(12)
Colorado	Alaska	Arkansas	<i>Georgia</i>	Alabama
Delaware	<i>Michigan</i>	Louisiana	Kentucky	Idaho
Hawaii	New Hamp.	<i>Iowa</i>		Kansas
Illinois	No. Carolina	<i>Montana</i>		Maine
<i>Massachusetts</i>		<i>So. Dakota</i>		Mississippi
Minnesota		<i>West Virginia</i>		<i>Nebraska</i>
<i>New Jersey</i>				Oklahoma
New Mexico				So. Carolina
Oregon				So. Carolina
Rhode Island				Tennessee
Virginia				Texas
				Wyoming

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2014	34	31
Safe in 2014	11	12
Leaning in 2012	4	2
Total	49	45

Toss-ups 6 Democrats

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THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

In a recent column, Charlie Cook wrote about the decline in the number of swing Congressional Districts. Among other well-documented points, Cook wrote the following,

“As local print-news readership has declined precipitously in the Internet age, fewer voters are gaining exposure to individual candidates’ backgrounds and qualifications, and party labels have become an even-more-salient cue at the ballot box.”

The charts below are based on data included in that column.

	<u>Solid Dem</u>	<u>Solid Rep</u>	<u>Swing</u>
1998	123	148	164
2013	159	186	90

Based on 2012 Presidential election results:

- 17 Republicans represent districts carried by Obama
- 9 Democrats represent districts carried by Romney

As it has for a very long time, WW regularly reprints and relies on the analysis of House Races published by the “Cook Political Report.”

	<u>1/24/13</u>	<u>2/21/13</u>	<u>4/17/13</u>
Total Dem	201	201	201
Solid Dem	167	166	166
Likely Dem	17	18	18
Lean Dem	11	11	11
Toss-up	7	7	8
D	6	6	6
R	1	1	2
Lean GOP	7	10	10
Likely GOP	18	17	18
Solid GOP	208	206	204
Total GOP	234	234	234

“The Rothenberg Political Report” has also posted a report that deals with the entire House. [Thanks to the Rothenberg Report.]

	<u>3/12</u>	<u>4/19</u>
Total Democrat	201	200
Safe Democrat	176	176
D Favored	10	10
Lean D	6	6
Toss Up/Tilt D	6	6
Toss Up-D	3	2
Toss Up-R	2	3
Toss Up/Tilt R	5	5
Lean R	5	5
R Favored	13	13
Safe Republican	207	208
Total Republican	234	234

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Restaurants

Washington DC **The Grill Room, Capella Hotel** **Range**

THE GRILL ROOM
CAPELLA HOTEL
1050 31st Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007
855-922-7355
www.CapellaWashingtonDC.com

[Note: Subsequent to writing the piece below about The Grill Room, two separate couples who eat out regularly (one of whom went to The Grill Room at my suggestion) experienced significant service problems. It is as if the restaurant is unable to find experienced serving people and the communication with the kitchen is not quite ready for primetime.]

I was introduced to lunch at the Grill Room for lunch by Carol M., and subsequently Debbie and I had dinner there.

The Grill Room and the Capella Hotel have been open for only a few months. (The Hotel is in a converted office building, and has 49 rooms and suites that begin at about \$650 per night.)

The hotel is located on the C & O Canal. The Grill Room is located on the canal side of the hotel and has floor to ceiling windows overlooking the water. There is an outdoor patio located right at the edge of the canal, which will be especially enjoyable on a warm night.

There are about 75 seats in the indoor portion of the restaurant. Included is a glass-enclosed private dining room that seats ten. The balance of the room is a combination of 2s, 4s (which can be shifted to accommodate larger parties), and one round table for six. Seating on the back wall is on a banquette. If arranging for a larger party and not using the private room, request space other than at the banquette. At a table of more than four, those sitting on the banquette have to inconvenience one or more parties if there is a need to leave the table before the meal is completed.

The patio has a half dozen 2s that can be shifted to make tables of four.

At lunch, Carol ordered two items from the Starters and Salads section of the menu; Baby Romaine Salad - Mizuna Leaf, Rotisserie Chicken, Caesar Dressing, Shave Wisconsin Parmesan and Chesapeake Jumbo Lump Crab Cake – Old Bay & Bacon mayonnaise. Carol also ordered Crème Brulee in an egg shell, a rather unique form of presentation. The egg shell was silver suggesting to me that it was not a real egg shell. We learned that real egg shells are painted offsite and then used for this dessert.

I ordered the Chopped Lobster Salad – Seasonal Greens & Vegetables, Pink Grapefruit Dressing and Onion rings.

At dinner Debbie also ordered two items from the Starter section of the menu. First she had the Chopped Lobster Salad – Seasonal Greens & Vegetables, Pink Grapefruit Dressing, followed by Jumbo Lump Crab Cake – Old Bay & Bacon Mayonnaise.

I started with Spring Pea Soup – Local Radishes & Smoked Eel, followed by Roasted Halibut – Roasted on the Bone with Sorrel & Oxtail Rice. We also ordered Onion Rings and Yukon Gold Creamed Truffle Potatoes.

One small issue was the fact that the onion rings I ordered at lunch were different than the onion rings I ordered at dinner, although there was nothing in the menu to suggest they might be different. The luncheon rings were single rings cooked in light oil. The dinner rings were of the more traditional deep fried variety.

The restaurant has a special style. I have had flowers delivered to many restaurants around Washington for my luncheon guests. Invariably they are placed on the table in the box in which they are delivered. At the Grill Room the top of the box was removed and the flowers were presented open to my guest. They were then recovered and made available when we left.

Service is still evolving. It ranges from very attentive to a bit forgetful.

The chef is from Sweden and has worked in a variety of Capella Hotel dining rooms around the world.

The walls and floor of the men's room are covered with very large dark tiles, streaked with tan and white streaks and slashes. The marble countertop is of a similar style. There are two ceramic wash basins in the countertop. There are round mirrors over each wash basin, each circled by a light all the way around the mirror. There are two circular wall-hanging urinals, with floor to ceiling walls between them and the countertop. There is a totally enclosed commode room with a single white commode.

There is valet parking.

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RANGE
5335 Wisconsin Avenue NW
2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20015
202-803-8020
www.voltrange.com

Range is another new D.C. restaurant which opened just over four months ago. I went to Range with Debbie, Gail and Rob.

It is a massive (seats 300) modern restaurant that wraps around a large part

of the atrium of the office building in which it is located. (Originally a series of separate retail stores were located around the atrium.) The restaurant is open to the atrium through floor to ceiling windows. Periodically during dinner, one is entertained by a series of light designs emanating from the atrium.

As you enter the restaurant, off to the right is a glass-walled area in which a variety of cooking utensils and devices are offered for sale. To the left is the first of a variety of food stations; this one is set up to prepare candies and desserts. Wrapped around a goodly portion of the restaurant's outer wall are a series of other stations, including cheeses, baked goods, a raw bar, rotisseries, a wood-fired hearth, and a coffee bar. There is also a counter than runs past each of the stations which seats over 50 people.

A separate bar area has high stools and a glass-walled private room that appears to seat up to twenty people.

There are a variety of tables and booths seating two or four people. There are also rounds that seem to seat up to six. One of the interesting features is that the 4 person booths are open on both sides. The tables can easily be shifted to the left or right, until everyone is seated comfortably, and then pulled back to a center position between all four diners.

The main outside entrance to Range is on Military Road. If you find the stairs leading up to the main entrance daunting, walk to your right, enter the Embassy Suites Hotel, and take the elevator on the left to the second floor.

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When reviews of restaurants are written they are almost always about the chefs. The chefs create the food and that is what restaurants are all about. However, there is more to running a restaurant than cooking and presenting the food. If a chef is involved in more than one restaurant, all of them are treated as his or hers.

There are times when the ideas for a restaurant come from a non-chef. As it turns out, the original driving force behind Fredricks Volt, Lunchbox and Family Meal, Graffiato, and Range in D.C. is a non-chef, Hilda Staples. Staples was previously involved in public relations and is a mother of 7 year-old twins. Of course, once she decided to venture into the restaurant world, she teamed up with high quality, experienced chefs.

An article in the Local Living Section of the Washington Post on April 18th tells the story of Staples and the restaurants are described at length. The author of the article, Mari-Jane Williams, writes, “Staples does the behind the scenes work of running the businesses.” It is worth going online to read the whole story.

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San Francisco
Buckeye Roadhouse
Prospect
Sauce
Serpentine

THE BUCKEYE ROADHOUSE
15 Shoreline Highway
Mill Valley, CA 94941
415-331-2600

We met Suzy and Bill at the Buckeye, which is about a 45 minute drive from downtown San Francisco.

To the right, as you enter, there is a bar area, which includes a long bar and a number of booths and tables. The dinner menu is also available in this area. To the left is a good-sized dining room, including tables of 2, 4, 6 and at least one 8. There is an additional dining room located on a balcony overlooking the main floor level dining room.

This is clearly a neighborhood restaurant. Dress is primarily casual to very casual, and the diners include young children and babies.

To begin we shared a large serving of the thinnest onion rings I had ever seen, but they were good.

Suzy selected as an appetizer, Dino Kale - Ricotta Salata, Shaved Fennel, Black Radish, Bread Crumbs. Debbie picked Organic Butter Lettuce - Spiced Walnuts, Fuji Apple, Point Reyes Blue Cheese. I again chose The Wedge - Iceberg Lettuce, Zoe Bacon, Point Reyes Blue Cheese. Bill passed on the first course.

For her Entree, Suzy decided on Seared Sesame Sprinkle Ahi Tuna - Red and Napa Cabbage, Crispy Wonton, Hoisin-Ginger Vinaigrette. She did also savor one of Bill's Ribs.

Debbie went back and forth, but finally chose Sautéed Calf's Liver - Zoe's Bacon, Caramelized Onions, Garlic Potatoes.

Bill, who eats beef only once or twice a year, opted for Barbecued Baby Back Ribs - Maple Mashed Yams, Cole Slaw. I chose Braised Lamb Shank "Gremolata" - Saffron Couscous, Pine Nuts.

We were all too full to try the desserts.

The men's room has a single large urinal and a single washbasin in a marble counter directly across from the urinal. There is a commode area that is walled off, but open for a foot or so at the bottom. The walls and the floor are covered with green tiles of various sizes.

Melanie and Eliot love this restaurant.

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PROSPECT
300 Spear Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
415-247-7770
Fax 415-247-7760
info@prospectsf.com

Peggy and Mike took Debbie and me to this restaurant. As a gesture to environmental consciousness, the menu for the evening we were there was printed on the back side of the menu from the night before.

As you enter the modern-appointed restaurant there is a large three-sided bar with some tables around the edges. It turns out there is a Happy Hour from 4-6 p.m. on Friday. We arrived a short time after that period was over, but the whole front of the restaurant was teeming and noisy, which carried over to the back of the restaurant, until the bar crowd disappeared and the noise level softened.

There is an additional private room suitable for a reception or dinner, down a corridor and roughly across from the restrooms.

For starters - Peggy chose Hawaiian Kampachi Crudo - Golden Enoki, Shitake, Ginger, Sesame, Yuzu, Shiso and Radish.

Debbie selected Nantucket Bay Scallops - Vialone Nano Rissotto, Broccoli Romanesco, Ginger, Extra Virgin Olive Oil (these were the tiny scallops which are often so hard to find).

Mike and Mike enjoyed Hand Picked Dungeness Crab Salad - Brokaw Farm Avocado, Hearts of Palm, Citrus Supremes, Petite Greens.

For her entree Peggy opted for Snake River Farms Kobe Bavette- Panzanella of Asparagus, Various Peas & Bresaola, Spring Alliums, Bloomsdale Spinach, Caramelized Onions, Beef Jus.

Debbie went with Prather Ranch Berkshire Pork - Rose Fingerling Potatoes, Rutabaga & Apple Puree, Rye Whiskey Roasted Pear Hazelnut, Crispy Rye, Lardo & Sage, Port Jus.

The other Mike selected Brandt Farm Prime Ribeye - Pommes Frites, Bloomsdale Spinach, Marrow Bone, Gremolata, Beef Jus.

I had Liberty Valley Duck Breast - Breast & Crispy Rye, Black Quinoa, Rhubarb, Rainbow Chard, Quinoa & Walnut Brittle, Duck Jus.

For dessert. Peggy had a Lemon Meringue Sundae; Debbie savored Strawberry Rhubarb Crepes; the other Mike had Chocolate Cake; and I enjoyed Grapefruit Champagne Basil Sorbet.

Darcey was our server and she was on top of her game.

The men's room is on the dark side as a result of the dark walls and large brown-tiled floor. As you enter, there are two large white ceramic, wall-attached urinals with a floor to head top divider between them. Straight ahead is an enclosed commode area with dark paneling and door that starts about a foot from the floor. (The inside was not observable.) On the right is a long stone wash basin that has a V-shaped inner area. There are three separate sets of faucets.

There is valet parking.

* * * * *

sauce
131-135 Gough Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
415-252-1423

Debbie and I went with Julia to “sauce” for dinner. This is a somewhat unusual restaurant in that it has an eight-room guest house in which you can rent a single room or any combination, up to eight.

As you enter the restaurant you are in the bar area, which has six high stools and several high round tables with stools. To the left is a dining room that seats up to 40 people in combinations of 2, 4 and 6 seats. If you go back into and through the bar area, you come to a second dining room with its own bar. It has a neon sign over the hallway that announces the "sauce night club." It seats 34 people, including a number of 6s. On this particular evening the back dining room was empty.

The atmosphere is of an old neighborhood pub.

We started by sharing an order of Dungeness Crab Wontons - cream cheese, cilantro, green & red onion, gingered apple sweet and sour sauce.

Julia started with Braised Beef Sweet Gem Salad Cups - house burrata, basil roasted tomato garlic and shallot. Debbie and Mike selected the Baby Iceberg Wedge Salad - lettuce bowl filled with Point Reyes Blue Cheese, Roma Tomato, Red & Green Onion & Ranch topped with Crispy Bacon. (Iceberg Wedge salads are my favorite and this was the single best I have ever eaten.)

Julia's entree was Roasted Artichoke & Spinach Ravioli - Cremini Mushrooms, Fresh Mozzarella, Beet Tops, Kale, San Marzano Tomatoes, Fresh Herb and Reggiano.

Debbie went with an appetizer as her main course: Horseradish Crusted Shrimp - San Marzano Tomato Cocktail Sauce, Fresh Horseradish.

I opted for sauce's Fried Chicken - Breast & Wing w/Truffled Mushrooms & Green Beans, Whipped Potato & Pan Gravy.

For dessert we shared a Sauce Ice Cream Smash, a sundae of vanilla ice cream and chocolate sauce laced with whiskey, and a fresh-from-the-oven pear cobbler with vanilla ice cream.

There are two unisex restrooms. They would be classified as small, but neat. There is a single white ceramic commode, a small triangular white ceramic washbasin attached to the wall in a corner, red wall coloring, and a large framed mirror on each wall from waist to ceiling.

The service was excellent; fully attentive, but not clinging.

Parking is on the street.

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SERPENTINE
2495 Third Street
San Francisco, CA 94197
415-252-2000
www.serpentine.com

Debbie and I went with Dee and Elroy to this restaurant in the Dogpatch section of San Francisco.

The restaurant is located in an old industrial section of town which is going through a kind of rebirth. The inside of the restaurant can also best be described as industrial. As you enter, there is a bar with about 10 high stools at which the regular menu is served, as well as those things you usually find at a bar. Overall, the restaurant is relatively small, and seats about 70 people at high tables, regular height tables and booths.

We were there for brunch, which is offered on Saturdays and Sundays.

Dee ordered the red flannel hash - beef brisket, crispy potatoes, roasted beets, arugula, horseradish crème Fraiche, poached eggs & grilled levain (bread).

Debbie selected local Dungeness crab Benedict - two poached eggs, hollandaise sauce, sautéed spinach, fried capers and lemon, fines herbes, buttermilk biscuit and crispy potatoes.

Dee and Debbie shared the two dishes.

Elroy went for baked eggs -- two eggs, spiced garbanzo beans, Swiss chard, hen of the woods mushrooms, tomatillo green salsa, toasted levain, and pork sausage.

I selected the fried egg sandwich - Ledbetter's English muffin, fried eggs (yolks removed), arugula, dill aioli crispy potatoes, and a fruit salad.

Our server was Sarah, who was friendly and accommodating.

Because the restaurant is so small, the women's and men's restrooms are literally in the dining room. In order to mask them, two small structures have been built into the dining room, with a heavy drape covering the opening. It is that drape that is seen when you are in the dining room. It results in a 3-foot anteroom before you actually get to the restroom doors.

The restroom itself is small, but not overbearingly so. It houses a commode and a washbasin, both of which are white ceramic, and a wood chair in one corner. The walls are painted dark red, and the floor is covered in a bluish linoleum. It is clean and serviceable.

Reservations are recommended, and the only parking is on the street. We ended up parking a good block from the restaurant.

Mike

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