

Mike Berman's

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STATE OF THE NATION

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PRESIDENT OBAMA Health Care

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THE CONGRESS

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MORE ON SOCIAL NETWORKS or Tweeters Arise

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THIS AND THAT About David Souter About turning 70

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RESTAURANTS

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It is pretty much a toss-up among Americans as to whether the country is going in the right direction or is on the wrong track.

	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>
February	41/44%	23/68%
April	43/43%	39/53%
June	46/42%	44/50%

87% are at least somewhat dissatisfied with the state of the U.S. economy. 84% rate the condition of the economy at least fairly bad. [NBC/WSJ 6/09] [NYT/CBS 6/09]

By 27% to 25% folks think the economy is getting better. This is a substantial improvement over January, considering 54% to 7% thought the economy was getting worse at that time. [NYT/CBS 6/09]

46% think the economy will get better over the next 12 months, while 22% think it will get worse. This is more optimistic than in December, when only 36% thought it would get better, 28% thinking it would get worse. By the same token, 70% think it will be more than a year before the current economic recession is over and 38% think it will be at least two years. [NBC/WSJ 6/09]

49% say they have just enough income to pay bills and obligations, while 22% say they do not have enough. 36% are very concerned (an additional 28% somewhat concerned) about whether they or someone in their household might be out of work and looking for a job in the next 12 months. [NYT/CBS 6/09]

55% are currently somewhat satisfied with their own financial situation. There has been no change since January. 53% to 46% are less than confident that Obama has the right goals and policies to improve the economy. [NBC/WSJ 6/09]

Below is a list of the most important financial problems facing American families today as described by respondents:

- 15% Lack of money/low wages
- 15% Noted no financial problems
- 12% Cost of owning/renting home
- 11% Healthcare costs
- 10% Unemployment/loss of job
- 10% Too much debt
- 6% College expenses - high cost of living
- 4% Retirement savings - investments
- 3% Taxes - lack of savings - energy/oil and gas prices
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- 3% Energy costs/oil gas prices

[Gallup 4/09]

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57% are not confident that their children's generation's lives will be better than their own.

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Unemployment continues to grow. The unemployment rate reached 9.4% in May.

- 14,500,000 are unemployed
- 787,000 were added to the rolls in May
- 3,900,000 have been unemployed for 27 weeks or more

52% of Americans between the ages 50-64 are now contemplating delaying their retirement as a consequence of the current recession. This includes 61% of the women and 45% of men.

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In an open ended question as to what is the single most important problem facing the country, the following, from the NYT/CBS survey, is a demonstration of what a difference a year or two can make.

	<u>July 2007</u>	<u>July 2008</u>	<u>June 2009</u>
Heath care	9%	3%	7%
Economy	5%	38%	38%
Jobs	1%	3%	19%
War/Iraq	31%	14%	4%

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Between February 1976 and late October 2001, there was only one time (June 1983) when a majority (51%) of Americans trusted the government in Washington to do what is right, at least most of the time. In late October 2001, 55% trusted the government most of the time. It has been down hill since then. In October 2008, 83% said the government could be trusted to do what is right only some of the time. In June 2009, 79% hold that view.

56% currently believe the Federal Government is doing too many things that are better left to businesses and individuals. [NYT/CBS 6/09]

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54% to 41% ,Americans prefer a smaller government with fewer services as opposed to larger government with more services. [WP/ABC 6/09]

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Now that regulation of the tobacco industry has been placed in the hands of the Food & Drug Administration, the American public is ambivalent. By 52% to 46% the public disapproves of the new legislation. Not surprisingly, 69% of smokers disapprove the new law, but so do 50% of nonsmokers. [Gallup 6/09]

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74% of those asked think it is at least somewhat important (43% very important) for the membership of the Supreme Court to reflect the gender, ethnic and racial makeup of the country as a whole. 62% of respondents believe that, when voting on a Supreme Court nominee, the Senate should consider the nominee's personal views, as well as their legal qualifications. 76% believe it is at least somewhat important for the Senate to know the nominee's position on such issues as abortion and affirmative action. [NYT/CBS 6/09]

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A word seems to make a difference. When told that the United States has been holding a number of "detainees" at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, 45% to 42% Americans think the government should continue to operate the prison. However, if asked the very same question with the word "terrorists" substituted for "detainees," by 48% to 40% Americans believe it should be closed. And, of those who said the prison should be closed, 38% to 7% support having these folks transferred to maximum security prisons in the United States. [NYT/CBS 6/09]

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58% view the Republican Party unfavorably, while 57% view the Democrats favorably. [NYT/CBS 6/09]

Women are more likely to identify as Democrats (41%) than men (32%). Men are slightly more likely (28%) than women (25%) to identify as Republicans. More men (34%) than women (26%) describe themselves as Independents.

Single women are more Democratic than married women or women who are separated. [Gallup Jan-May, 2009]

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38% of Republicans and Republican-leaning Independents have an unfavorable opinion of the Republican Party, while only 7% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning Independents have that view about their Party. [Gallup 6/09]

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For the first time since 2003-04, 40% of Americans now consider themselves to be conservative, as opposed to 21% who see themselves as liberals, and 35% who describe themselves as moderates.

The conservative group includes 73% of Republicans, 22% of Democrats, and 34% of Independents. 38% of Democrats, 3% of Republicans, and 20% of Independents say they are liberals. [Gallup 6/09]

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Charitable giving fell 5.7% from 2007 to 2008, the largest year-to-year decline in 5 decades. [NYT 6/10/09]

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There are now more households in the United States which have only cellphones (20%) than there are homes that only have land lines (17%). This compares with only 3% of households that had only cellphones in the first half of 2003. [NYT 5/7/09]

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For the first time since 1995 (when the question was first asked), a considerably larger number of people (51%) consider themselves "pro-life" then consider themselves to be "pro-choice."

When the Gallup organization first began asking the question in mid-1995, only 33% described themselves as "pro-life," as opposed to 56% who described themselves as "pro-choice."

In mid-2001 equal numbers (46%) described themselves as "pro-life" and "pro-choice."

Questions have been raised as to whether this recent result, which reflected a substantial change from 2008, when 44% were "pro-life" and 50% pro-choice, resulted from a bad sample. WW checked with the Gallup organization, in part to determine whether the Party split in this sample might be skewed. Gallup is quite comfortable with the sample.

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Slowly, but inexorably, Americans are beginning to believe that gay couples should be allowed to marry. 5 years ago, 22% favored marriage for gays and lesbians. Today 33% are in favor. A total of 63% favor marriage or at least civil unions. This is an increase of 9 points since 2004. [NYT/CBS 6/09]

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PRESIDENT OBAMA

Over the last several months, Obama's overall approval rating has dropped some in the NBC/WSJ survey, but has stayed relatively stable.

NBC/WSJNYT/CBS

Obama overall job approval

February	60/26%	62/15%
April	61/30%	66/24%
June	56/34%	63/26%

Obama job approval on the economy

February	56/31%	55/24%
April	55/37%	56/34%
June	51/38%	57/35%

Obama job approval on foreign policy

February	--	50/15%
April	56/31%	59/19%
June	54/36%	59/23%

Obama job approval on health care

June	--	44/34%
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Below is how Obama's overall approval rating matches up with other modern Presidents' ratings at the same point (mid-June) in their first terms (Gallup surveys):

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
Eisenhower	73	18
Kennedy	72	14
G Bush (I)	70	14
Nixon	63	16
Carter	63	18
Reagan	59	29
<u>Obama</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>33</u>
GW Bush (II)	55	33
Clinton	39	50

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Positive feelings toward Obama have dropped only slightly since January -- 66% to 60%. However, negative feels have grown from 14% to 29%. [NBC/WSJ 6/09]

In December 2008, the NBC/WSJ survey began asking respondents how strongly they relate to Obama as their President.

The number who related to him has fallen somewhat, from 74% in January to 65% in June.

	<u>Strongly</u>	<u>Relate Somewhat</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>Not really</u>
December '08	47	27	12	9
January '09	50	26	12	9
February	43	26	13	16
June	48	27	13	22

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Interestingly, 58% believe that Obama is a new-style Democrat, who will be careful with the public's money. 36% say he is an old-style tax-and-spend Democrat. [WP/ABC 6/09]

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In February 84% thought Obama inherited the current economic conditions, while 8% saw him as responsible. 72% still believe he inherited these conditions, but now 14% hold him accountable. [NBC/WSJ 6/09]

The question for the Obama Administration is whether its various efforts to deal with the myriad financial problems will be effective before the lines cross and more people hold Obama accountable than believe he inherited the problems.

At the present time, a plurality (48%) believe that Obama's policies have not yet had an effect on the economy. 32% believe that his policies have made things better, while 15% say he has made them worse. [NYT/CBS 6/09]

74% of Americans say they have heard at least something about the Federal budget deficit. By 52% to 41% they believe the Government should spend money to reduce the deficit, rather than stimulating the economy. And 60% to 30% they do not think the Obama Administration has developed a clear plan for dealing with the deficit. [NYT/CBS 6/09]

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The public jury is out on whether the economic stimulus plan has helped or hurt the national economy. 28% say it has helped, 19% say it has hurt, and 52% say it has made no difference. [WP/ABC 6/09]

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Some commentators have argued that Obama has taken on too many issues at the same time, and has effectively taken time and attention away from those issues that are most important. 60% of the public supports the proposition that he

has taken on so many issues because the country has so many problems. 30% disagree. [NBC/WSH 6/09]

It does appear that Obama's programs are beginning to face the legislative equivalent of Bernulli's principle.* If you try to force too much legislation through the legislative pipeline at the same time, the process becomes clogged, either as a function of a lack of time or, more often, as a function of the interplay/collision of time and competing interests.

Obama's apparent willingness to be flexible on what represents the accomplishment of his goals (there does not appear to be a my way or the highway attitude), will go a long way to making achievement of his goals possible.

[*Bernulli's principle - if you force air through a straw faster and faster, eventually the straw becomes blocked and the air stops passing through. Apparently, the speeding air going through the straw lowers the pressure and the outside air pressure closes off the far end of the straw.]

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Healthcare

The healthcare system changes being pressed by Obama and being worked on by Congress, are a much bigger deal than anything else the President has proposed or is likely to propose during his Presidency.

Let there be no question as to whether the public thinks something needs to be done about the current healthcare system. 34% think it is so broken that the whole thing needs to be rebuilt. While another 51% think there is a need for fundamental change.

And by a margin of 57% to 18% they think the Democratic Party is more likely than the Republican Party to improve the healthcare system. [NYT/CBS 6/09]

The public is evenly divided on whether it thinks that the President's health care plan is a good one (33%/32%). It is also evenly divided on whether the focus of healthcare reform should be on the "cost of healthcare" or "people who are not covered by insurance" (41%/43%). They believe (64%/18%) that the focus of the President's plan is the uninsured. [NBC/WSJ 6/09]

Majorities believe everyone should be required to have health insurance coverage, some with government assistance (62%); 62% would raise taxes on people with incomes over \$250,000/year; 55% would require all but small businesses to offer healthcare coverage or to pay the government to provide it.

When asked a series of questions about the current healthcare system, Americans are dissatisfied with the system overall, but are generally comfortable with how the system works for them personally.

- 57% are dissatisfied with the overall healthcare system
43% are satisfied
- 83% are satisfied with the healthcare they receive
- 81% are satisfied with their health insurance coverage
- 55% are satisfied with their healthcare costs, including cost of insurance and expenses not covered by insurance.
- 44% are dissatisfied.

[WP/ABC 6/09]

People are split on whether payments by Medicare and Medicaid to doctors and hospitals should be reduced (47%/46%); 59% oppose requiring folks with expensive health plans to be required to pay taxes on a portion of the premium costs; and they are even more vigorously opposed (70%) to the idea of all people paying taxes on the cost of their private health insurance plans. [NBC/WSJ 6/09]

One of the most contentious issues under discussion is whether there should be a so-called public option insurance plan administered by the federal government. This plan would compete with private insurance plans.

- 72% of all respondents favor a public plan (including 87% of Democrats)
- 57% are willing to pay higher taxes so that everyone can have healthcare; 37% oppose paying higher taxes
- 54% are at least somewhat concerned that, if the government starts providing healthcare more broadly, the quality of their own care will deteriorate
- 34% are very concerned that their own access to medical tests and treatment would be more limited than now
- a third believe they would be required to change doctors.

[NYT/CBS 6/09]

In the June 2009 NBC/WSJ survey, 76% think it is quite important that there be a public plan administered by the government, even though 47% think it is at least somewhat likely that their employer will end their current health coverage.

Those who support a public plan in the WP/ABC survey (62%) prefer to have an "independent organization" (41%) run the plan, rather than have a government agency do it (21%).

If they think the public plan will force private health insurance companies to go out of business, a 37% plurality supports a private plan. 33% oppose it.
WP/ABC 6/09]

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But, when all is said and done, Americans favor the President's plan by 55% to 35%. There has been no change since April. [NBC/WSJ 6/09]

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\$2,300,000,000 was spent on health care in 2007.

- 53% - \$1,240,000,000 comes from private sources
- 47% - \$1,061,000,000 come from public sources

- How it is spent
 - \$721,000,000 - hospital care including drugs administered in hospitals.
 - \$489,000,000 - physician and clinical services
 - \$232,000,000 - prescription drugs
 - \$163,000,000 - program administration
 - \$140,000,000 - nursing home care
 - \$582,000,000 - other spending including dental, home health care, over-the-counter medicine, medical devices, research

[WP 6/9/09]

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Even good results from healthcare reform can potentially have negative consequences.

The Congressional Budget Office, in its recent estimate of the costs of certain healthcare proposals, noted the potential downsides of certain popular changes.

According to an article in the Washington Post (6/18/09):

"In some instances, the cost of delivering preventive care to a large population would actually exceed the savings on the relatively few people who avoided illness as a result."

"....improving public health can reduce Medicare spending on particular problems. However, helping people live longer and healthier lives will increase the burden they put on the federal government, partly because they will spend more time collecting Medicare and Social Security benefits, the CBO reported."

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If they figure out how to play their hand, the recommendations of doctors for reforming the healthcare system are likely to be most persuasive with the

public. 73% have that view, as opposed to 58% who are confident in President Obama. [Gallup 6/09]

The availability of doctors, nurses, physicians assistants, nurse practioners, and related healthcare personnel is a subject that is not being given as much public attention as it should. It is a problem that cannot be fixed in the short run.

The biggest shortage is at the frontline of the healthcare system -- primary care doctors. President Obama acknowledged the problem in his AMA speech.

The Washington Post (6/20/09) said it quite succinctly. "Fifty years ago, half of the nation's doctors practiced what has come to be known as primary care. Today, almost 70percent of doctors work in higher-paid specialties,,,"

"By 2000, 14% of U.S. medical school graduates were entering family practice. Five years later, the figure was 8 percent, and a recent survey of students interested in internal medicine showed that 98 percent wanted to become specialists."

The availability of other critical healthcare and other personnel mentioned above is yet another story.

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2010 CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGNS

The public's attitude toward the job being done by the Congress is almost exactly opposite their view about the job being done by the President. 57% disapprove of the job being done by Congress (58% approve of the Preident - Gallup), while 29% approve. This is about where the rating has been for most of the year. [NBC/WSJ]

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President Obama came to office with a Congress, which at least on the numbers, has more members of his Party seated than the most recent President Bush did at any time during his tenure.

	<u>Senate</u>	<u>House</u>
	<u>Dem/GOP/Ind/Vac</u>	<u>Dem/GOP/Ind</u>
111th Congress (2009-11)	57/40/2/1	257/178/-
110th Congress (2007-09)	49/49/2	233/303/-
109th Congress (2005-07)	44/55/1	202/232/1
108th Congress (2003-05)	48/51/1	205/229/1
107th Congress (2001-03)	50/50	212/221/2

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In the first mid-term election of the last 9 Presidents tenure, 5 experienced their Party losing U.S. Senate seats. [See April, 2009 Washington Watch].

At the moment, it appears that Democrats are likely to pick up Senate seats in 2010. But it is not a sure thing.

There is general agreement that the most vulnerable incumbent Democrat is Chris Dodd (D-CT). For a variety of reasons ,his support has plumeted, and he trails former Republican Congressman Rob Simmons in early polling. However, in the most recent poll, Dodd trails Simmons by substantially less in earlier polling.

One other complication for Dodd is that he is the Chair of the Banking Committee, faced with a need for reregulation of the financial community. He is also the stand-in for Senator Kennedy as Chair of the Health, Education and Labor Committee, which has a key role in the healthcare debate.

There are two potential problems from this dual role. First, it is difficult to handle either of these Committees right now, and handling both of them raises the potential of not doing either very well. Second, those dual responsibilities have to limit the amount of time he has to spend in Connecticut.

Going for Dodd is the fact that Obama won the state by 23 points.

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There is little to say about the Illinois Senate race at this moment, except that the appointed Democratic incumbent will not be the nominee of the Democratic party. Roland Burris (D-II) did not have a distinguished entry into the office, and is not likely to distinguish himself while in the office. It is not yet clear who the Democratic or Republican candidates will be, but it is hard to imagine losing the President's home seat unless his popularity has collapsed by November 2010.

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In Kentucky, the will he-or-won't-he run for re-election question about incumbent Jim Bunning (R-Ky) is so perplexing that even the riskiest of Wall Street Traders would not create a derivative based on the outcome.

There are some interesting potential Democratic candidates but the fact remains that Obama lost the state by 17 points.

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Missouri may provide one of the most interesting races of the 2010 season. Democratic Secretary of State, Robin Carnahan, is the putative Democratic candidate.

On the Republican side, incumbent Kit Bond (R-MO) decided not to seek re-election. The likely Republican candidate is Congressman Roy Blunt (R-MO). Blunt was #2 in the Republican House leadership through 2008, but decided not to seek re-election to that post in order to have the time to run for the Senate. There is some suggestion that part of the impetus for his move was that Congressman Eric Cantor was planning to challenge him for the leadership role and the outcome was not clear.

Obama had no special advantage in this state in the 2008 election.

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With Senator Jud Gregg (R-NH) retiring, the New Hampshire seat is up for grabs. The likely Democratic candidate is Congressman Paul Hodes. On the Republican side, there are a number of possible candidates. Obama won by 9 points here, but this is still likely to be competitive.

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George Voinovich, (R-OH) is not seeking re-election, so Ohio becomes another open Senate seat in which the Democrats may have a slight advantage; however, it is far too early to be sure.

Lee Fisher, the Democratic Lt. Governor, and Jennifer Brunner, the Democratic Secretary of State, are both in the queue at this point to be the Democratic nominee. Both lead the putative Republican nominee, Rob Portman, who was many formers: former Congressman, former head of OMB, former USTR.

Obama won the state by 4 points.

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There are two other potentially interesting races.

In Delaware, Attorney General Beau Biden, currently serving in the military in Iraq, is expected to seek his father's vacated seat. The toughest candidate against him appears to be Mike Castle (R-Del). It is not clear that Castle will run. Polls taken early this spring suggest that Castle is favored over Biden. Obama won the state by 25 points.

And finally, the twists and turns of Pennsylvania. Arlen Specter (used to be R-PA/now D-PA) ostensibly will face a primary against Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) on his way to a match with former Congressman Joe Toomey (R-PA).

In early polls, Specter has a considerable lead over Sestak and a smaller lead over Toomey.

Had he remained a Republican, Specter would be facing Toomey in the Republican primary.

Obama won the state by 9 points.

THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats	57
Republicans	40
Independents	2 (caucus Dem)
Open	1

Here is how the 37 Senate elections (18 Democratic incumbents, 19 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 <u>Democratic(9)</u>	Leaning <u>Democratic(7)</u>	<u>Toss-Up(6)</u>	Leaning <u>Republican(3)</u>	Safe <u>Republican(12)</u>
Arkansas	California	Connecticut	<u>Florida</u>	Alabama
<u>Delaware</u>	Colorado	Illinois	Louisiana	Arkansas
Hawaii	Nevada	Kentucky	No. Carolina	Arizona
Indiana	No. Dakota	<u>Missouri</u>		Georgia
Maryland	<u>Pennsylvania</u>	<u>New Hampsh.</u>		Idaho
New York(A)	Washington	<u>Ohio</u>		Iowa
New York(B)	Wisconsin			<u>Kansas</u>
Oregon				Oklahoma
Vermont				So. Carolina
				So. Dakota
				Texas
				Utah

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Ind</u>
Seats not up in 2010	40	21	2
Safe in 2010	9	12	0
Leaning in 2010	7	3	0
Total	56	36	2
Toss-ups	6 (4R/2D)		

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If history is any indicator, Democrats can be expected to lose House seats in the 2010 election. Starting with, and other than, Roosevelt in 1934 and Bush II in 2002, the sitting President's Party has lost House seats in the mid-term election. [See April 2009 Washington Watch for details].

In the June Diego/Hotline poll, Democrats win the generic Congressional race 39-30. In the previous month, The Democracy Corps survey recorded a 52-39 margin for the Democrats.

Generic results are just that, generic, and are not good indicators of what might happen in truly competitive seats. Charlie Cook points out that 49 Democrats now hold seats that were won by McCain in 2008. 39 Republicans hold seats won by Obama.

THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

	Democrats	257
	Republicans	176
	Vacancy	2
	<u>4/1/09</u>	<u>6/4/09</u>
Total Dem	255	257
Solid Dem	204	198
Likely Dem	29	34
Lean Dem	20	21
TossUp	2	4
D	2	4
R	0	0
Lean GOP	6	6
Likely GOP	26	36
Solid GOP	147	134
Total GOP	179	176

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

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ABOUT TWITTER

Presumably, after the "commercial" for Facebook in the last issue of the Washington Watch you joined the masses and signed up. If you have already taken the plunge, you are now ready for the next step, TWEETING.

If you have yet to hear about "Twitter.com," you have certainly been exposed to this communication service if you have been paying attention to the news coming from Iran. As the Iranian government began blocking ordinary communication channels out of the country, "tweeting" became the device that many American and other world news outlets are using to feed their reporting on the demonstrations, etc.

As with Facebook, participation is free. You signup at Twitter.com and then you are able to list folks you would like to "follow." Once you are following, you receive whatever information that person decides to send out. The person you want to follow has to agree to allow you to follow him, her or it.

Finding someone you are interested in following as a "tweeter" requires a little trial and error. There is a place to search for a name, and once you get a hit, you can see who that person is following or who is following them. You can then decide whether you want to follow one of those folks.

I am following 18 people, and being followed by 20 people. For example, I follow several news sources, like George Stephanopoulos, Jake Tapper and several other news services, like CNN.

My name on Twitter is "mikesww."

And you may find that people you have never heard of will decide to follow you.

The limitation of each individual "tweet" is 140 characters, including spaces. Your immediate reaction will be that you can't say anything meaningful in that short a message. Give it a try and you will be surprised. .

I have chosen to "tweet" things like: "Most pizzas are round; why are pizza boxes always square?" Or my recent tweet: "Why is it that we put men on the moon before we thought to put wheels on suitcases?" [WW readers will recognize those items from the April WW.]

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One caution -- information that you receive on Twitter is no better than the carefulness and reliability of the "tweeter." It has been and will be used to mislead people.

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Not everyone is an "early" adopter of the various forms of instant communication. "Politico" reported the following from Congressman Barney Frank. "The left and right live in parallel universes. The right listens to talk radio, the left's on the internet, and they just reinforce one another. They have no sense of reality....I have now one ambition, to retire before it becomes essential to tweet."

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THIS AND THAT

ALL I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT DAVID SOUTER

In 1990, I had the privilege of being part of the team that prepared Supreme Court Justice David Souter for his confirmation hearing.

In my view, he has been a superb Justice, and has been surprising many with the tenor of his decisions.

At the end of the Senate hearing the entire team had dinner with Souter. Other than briefly visiting the Court one day, I did not really see the Justice again for nearly 20 years, until November, 2007.

As I sat in my living room surrounded by dear friends, either the night that Carol died or the night after, one of my friends came in to say that there was a well-dressed man in the front hall and it looked like Justice Souter.

I went out to the hall and greeted Justice Souter. He joined me for a while in the living room. I don't remember what he said, but I remember that it made me feel good.

That is all I need to know about David Souter.

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This "Word Quiz" item from Al Oehrle, lawyer, pianist, bandleader, friend.

The word "startling" can be reduced, letter by letter by letter to form 8 increasingly shorter words ending with "i."

Try it. You can find the answer at the end of This and That.

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Happiness

I have become a daily reader of Gretchen Rubin's blog, "The Happiness Project." I recommend it to you. You can find it and sign-up for daily emails at www.happiness-project.com.

I am told (not confirmed) that Freud said,

"There are two main goals in life - To Love and To Work.

"Some who also work with the mind have added a third goal - To Play.

"Said another way -- A good life, a happy life, will happen if a person can "Experience love, Enjoy work, and Engage in play."

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ON TURNING 70

As your editor turned 70, the following arrived from a "friend."

Perks of reaching 70 years of age or more

1. Kidnappers are not very interested in you
2. In a hostage situation, you are likely to be released first
3. No one expects you to run -- anywhere
4. People call at 9PM and ask, did I wake you?
5. People no longer view you as a hypochondriac
6. There is nothing left to learn the hard way
7. Things you buy now won't wear out
8. You can eat supper at 4 PM

9. You can live without sex, but not your glasses.
10. You get into heated arguments about pension plans
11. You no longer think of speed limits as a challenge
12. You quit trying to hold your stomach in no matter who walks into the room.
13. You sing along with elevator music
14. Your eyes won't get much worse
15. Your investment in health insurance is finally beginning to pay off
16. Your joints are more accurate meteorologists than the National Weather Service
17. Your secrets are safe with your friends because they can't remember them either
18. Your supply of brain cells is finally down to a manageable size
19. You can't remember who sent you this list

* * * * *

In 1999, Peter Hart Research conducted a ground breaking survey of some 2000 adults, followed a decade later (2009), by a survey on the same subject of some 3000 adults.

The subject of the survey -- Michael S. Berman, your editor.

1999 --16% of American adults, 32,147,117 people, knew me and had an opinion about me.

- 7,890,656 had positive feelings about me
- 18% of respondents had negative feelings about me

2009 -- 28% of American adults, 61,082,000 people, know me and have an opinion about me.

- 12,020,065 have positive feelings about me
- only 5% have negative feelings about me

In both surveys, 52% of women and 48% of men had positive feelings about me.

[Note: My Google Alert has revealed that there are a number of Michael Bermans, and at least one more Michael S. Berman. So it is possible that some of those who claim to know me actually know one of the other Michael Bermans.]

* * * * *

Questions to be considered in quiet moments.

Why does a round pizza come in a square box?

How is it that we put man on the moon before we figured out it would be a good idea to put wheels on luggage?

Why is it that people say they "slept like a baby," when babies wake up every two hours?

Why do people pay to go up tall buildings and then put money in binoculars to look at things on the ground?

* * * * *

Answer to word quiz:

startling
starting
staring
string
sting
sing
sin
in
i

* * * * *

RESTAURANTS

The Washington Watch, began restaurant reviews in August 1998, highlighting "Solo Camacina" in Lake Como, Italy, and "Moose's Restaurant" in San Francisco.

Since that beginning and through this issue, the Washington Watch has included information about 235 restaurants in 6 countries, 48 cities, and 1 railroad.

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adour
St. Regis Hotel
923 16th and K Streets N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
202-509-8000
Fax 202-509-8006
www.adour-washingtondc.com

There have been a number of high-end restaurants in this space. This is yet another one. Hopefully, it will have better luck than its predecessors.

Dinner at "adour" was Jo's suggestion and it was a good one.

The restaurant is reached by walking past a separate bar and lounge area, which seems to draw a mix of hotel guests and locals.

The upholstery is white, and there are many windows that let in a great deal of light. The room is cheery and bright. At the near end of the room, there is a banquet with tables and regular chairs on the other side. The chairs are comfortable.

One of the nice things about this restaurant is that there are a number of relatively low calorie offerings.

The meal began with an Amuse Bouche of puree potatoes and tiny pieces of red sausage, served in a tiny earthen pot. Different and tasty.

Jo began with a Multicolor Spring Vegetable Composition, followed by a nice filet of Halibut with appropriate accompaniment.

I started with a Chilled Marinated Shellfish. As an entree I chose Baked Riviera Style John Dory with Baby Fennel, Basil and Taggiasche olive.

We passed on ordering a specific dessert, but did enjoy a plate of tiny chocolates and cookies.

There are 8 appetizers, 10 entrees, and specials of the day. Also available is a cheese course and 7 desserts.

On the evening we were at the restaurant, there was a tasting menu of 5 courses.

The service left nothing to be desired.

As with any number of hotel-located restaurants, the restrooms are not conveniently located relative to the restaurant. In this case you need to go out to the lobby and half way across it to find the sign that points to the Restrooms.

You then face a fairly long, back and forth stairway to the level on which the restrooms are located. (There is also an elevator available.)

The restroom is quite nice as hotel and restaurant restrooms go. Immediately to the right, as you enter, there are several white ceramic urinals, which are separated by partial dark wooden panels that start about 2 feet off the floor and run to about 5 feet.

Next come 4 commode stalls, enclosed by almost floor-to-ceiling dark wood walls and doors. Across from the urinals and commodes are a string of 5 white ceramic washbasins in a tan marble counter with gold colored fixtures. They are backed by a mirror that runs the length of the counter and fills the wall from the top of the counter to the ceiling.

The floor, wall and ceiling are covered in various shades of tan.

Reservations are recommended, but in this economic climate you will not likely have any problems.

* * * * *

Persimmon
7003 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda, Maryland 20815
301-654-9860
goodfood@persimmon.com

This Sunday night dinner included Rita and Bob, Rhoda and Dan, Ron and me.

The restaurant seats about 60 people, with a few additional tables on the sidewalk outside the restaurant. Toward the back of the restaurant there is a small bar with 8 high chair/stools. No one was at the bar on the night we were there.

As I looked at my notes after the dinner, I had written "freshness." There is a freshness and lightness about the place and the food.

Rita started with a Salad of Lemon Marinated French Beans, Prosciutto and Shaved Parmesan with Walnut Balsamic Vinaigrette. The rest of us were quite boring -- we all ordered gazpacho, which was the special that night and not on the printed menu.

There was a little more adventure in the entree orders. Rita and Rhoda ordered Pan Seared Barramundi with Lemon Gnocchi, Spinach, Exotic Mushrooms, Roasted Tomatoes and Eggplant Couli.

Ron opted for Sauteed Jumbo Lump Crab Cakes with Roasted Corn Hash and Sweet Corn Sauce. The dish was designed to include Bacon Mashed Potatoes, but Ron chose an additional vegetable in its place.

Dan ordered a Halibut special, and true to form Bob ordered the Oven Roasted Organic Chicken with Creamy Mashed Potatoes and Garden Vegetable Ragout. Sticking with a fowl theme, I ordered Roasted Magret of Duck served Medium Rare with Sweet Potato and duck Confit Hash, Celery Root Galette and Foie Gras Reducation.

We passed on offered desserts, but did enjoy a plate of cookies.

The service was swift and excellent. While the restaurant was not full when we were there, reservations are suggested.

The men's room is of a size that no more than two people could use it at once. It is likely to be the case that more often than not a single occupant will lock the outer door.

It is well appointed and clean.

All of the walls are a dark pinkish orange and the floor is covered by very large dark brown- hued with lighter accent tiles.

As you enter, there is a white ceramic wash basin topped by a mirror. There is a partial wall between the wash basin and the urinal. On this particular date there was a white paper sign over the urinal bowl not that it was not to be used.

The commode is in a separate room, with floor-to-ceiling walls, and a white full louvered door. In addition to the white ceramic commode, there is small dark wood cabinet to the right as you enter the room.

There is a municipal parking lot behind the restaurant.

* * * * *

Mike

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