

Mike Berman's

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

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100th Edition

Editor's note:

Recently, someone asked me when “Washington Political Watch” started. This 100th issue seemed the right time to answer that question.

The first issue of WW in its current format was published on January 19, 1987.

But it all started while I was at the law firm of Kirkpatrick & Lockhart (now K&LGates). On June 14, 1985, I began writing a series of memoranda, on firm letterhead, commenting on the progress of what became the Tax Reform Act of 1986. On August 21, 1985, I started writing another memorandum that dealt with electoral politics. These memos circulated within the firm and to a few clients. In mid-1987, one of my partners suggested that I formalize these memos. I took his advice and so was born, on June 19, 1987, “Kirkpatrick & Lockhart’s Washington Political Watch.”

The first 15 editions came out under that title.

When I joined the Duberstein Group, I re-titled the “Watch” to “Mike Berman’s Washington Political Watch,” beginning with the 16th edition.

One other change to be noted is that for the first 72 editions of WW it took roughly ten days from the time the issue was completed until the time it was in your hands. That was the time required to send it to the printer, get a proof back to be checked, and then print and mail it. Beginning with edition 73, on February 6, 2007, the WW has been delivered by email. Thus, it is in your hands within a day or so of the time it is finished.

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STATE OF THE NATION

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PRESIDENT OBAMA

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2012 ELECTION

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THE CONGRESS

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RESTAURANTS

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STATE OF THE NATION

62% of Americans think the country is on the wrong track, while 29% say it is going in the right direction. This is a 12-point increase from last month, when 50% thought the country was on the wrong track.

30% believe the economy will get worse during the next 12 months, up from 21% who had that view in April. This is the most pessimistic the public has been in responding to this question since April 2009. Additionally, 35% say their personal economic situation has gotten worse during the past 12 months. [NBC 6/11, NBC/WSJ 4/11]

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The official Labor Department unemployment rate for the month of May was 9.2%. That number does not include those who are working part-time, but would rather be working full-time. Gallup's unemployment rate for mid-June is 8.9%. If you add in those who are working part-time, but would like to be working

full-time, the total underemployment number in mid-June is 18.6, down from 19.2% at the end of May.

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In early May, 26% of Americans were satisfied with the way things were going in this country. Now, in June, that number has fallen to 20%. [Gallup 6/11]

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46% are hearing mostly bad news about the economy. This is 9% points higher than the number who said they were hearing mostly bad news in May. However, it is well below the 80% who were hearing mostly bad news in December 2008. [Pew 6/11]

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On average, over the period January – May 2011, most folks thought the economy in general (29%) and unemployment/jobs (26%) were the two most important problems facing the country. The budget deficit drew #1 attention from 13%, and health care from only 10%. [Gallup 6/11]

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89% of Americans believe that the economy is not so good (46%) or poor (44%). 57% believe the economy has not yet begun to recover. [WP/ABC 6/11]

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41% believe that the worst of the economic recession is ahead of us. In September 2008, 75% had that view. [NBC/WSJ 6/11]

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86% say that this is a bad time to find a job. [Gallup 6/11]

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34% believe that the costs of Medicare and Social Security are already creating a crisis, while another 33% think that crisis will occur during the next 10 years. Again, those who are most concerned are those 30-49 years of age. 41% believe the crisis is now. [Gallup 5/11]

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By 41% to 36%, respondents oppose a proposal that would change the way Medicare currently operates to a program in which participants would get a credit toward the purchase of private health insurance. It is no surprise that the level of opposition is affected by age. 51% of those over 50 years of age oppose the proposed change. But only 36% of those 30-49 years, and 28% of those 18-29 oppose it. [Pew 6/11]

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66% are at least moderately worried about whether they will have enough money for retirement. 36% are very worried. The age group that is most concerned about this problem are those age 30-49 years, of which 77% are at least moderately worried. Gallup 6/11]

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By 57% to 35%, Americans believe that money and wealth in this country should be more evenly distributed. By a slim margin, 49% to 47%, they do not believe that the redistribution should be accomplished through the tax system. 71% of Democrats, 52% of women, 64% of non-whites, 51% of those making \$30-75,000, and 63% of those making less than \$30,000 support redistribution through the tax system. 69% of Republicans, 53% of Independents, 54% of men, 56% of whites, and 67% of those making over \$75,000 per year oppose tax system redistribution. [Gallup 6/11]

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When given sufficient information so they have some understanding of the real-world impact of failing to raise the debt ceiling, such as not paying social security on time or not paying the regular military salaries when due, 46% of Americans would raise the debt ceiling. while 42% would not. [NBC/WSJ 6/11]

A recent Bloomberg Poll found 45% saying that Republicans should hold out for more spending cuts in exchange for voting for a debt limit increase. 46% express the opposite view. [Bloomberg Poll 6/11]

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There are a variety of Federal expenses which Americans are willing to see cut in order to cut the Federal deficit:

- Reduce foreign aid - 72%
- Raise Social Security contribution cap – 67%
- Raise taxes on incomes over \$250,000 – 66%
- Reduce overseas military commitments – 65%
- Limit tax deductions for large corporations - 62%

There are other expenditures that a majority are not willing to see cut or eliminated:

- Taxation of employer-provided health insurance – 73%
- Reduce funding to States for education/roads – 73%
- Gradual increase in Social Security retirement age – 50%
- Reduction of programs that help low income – 54%
- Reduction of Social Security for high-income seniors – 54%

A plurality (49%) are willing to see the mortgage interest deduction cut. They split 43% to 43% on whether agriculture subsidies should be reduced. [PEW 6/11]

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86% of college graduates say that college was a good investment for them. But 75% say that a college education has become “too expensive” for most people. The average student loan at graduation is \$27,204, and 24% of student borrowers say paying off their loans can affect their career choice. [PEW 3&4/11, Wash Post 5/11, PEW]

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In the last 50 years the number of children under 18 years of age who lived apart from their fathers or mothers has grown. In 1960, 11% of those young people lived apart from their father. Now that number stands at 27%. 50 years ago, 4% of children lived apart from their mothers, now that number is 8%. [Pew 6/11]

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38% think that the overall state of moral values in the United States is poor. That is the lowest number Gallup has found in asking the question since 2002. Only 23% think the state of moral values is excellent/good.

51% of Americans believe that abortion is morally wrong, while 39% find it morally acceptable. 45% describe themselves as pro-life and 49% see themselves as pro-choice. 68% of Republicans see themselves as pro-life (27% pro-choice). Only 32% of Democrats are pro-life (62% are pro-choice).

48% think doctor-assisted suicide is morally wrong, while 91% think married men and women having an affair is morally wrong. 36% think it is morally wrong for unmarried men and women to have sex.

92% believe in God. This is down only slightly from the 96% that Gallup found when it first asked the question in 1944. The percentage of believers reached a high of 98% in the 50s and 60s. [Gallup 5 & 6/11]

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In May, 45% of respondents identified themselves as Democratic/Lean Democratic. 39% identified themselves as Republican/Lean Republican. This is roughly the same split that was found in January and March. [Gallup 5/11]

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38% of Americans have positive feelings about the Democratic Party and 39% have negative feelings. 30% have positive feelings about the Republican Party and 44% have negative feelings. [NBC/WSJ 6/11]

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By 41% to 32%, Americans trust Democrats more than the Republicans to cope with the problems facing the nation over the next few years. [WP/ABC 6/11]

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The Pew Research Center recently issued its picture of the philosophical political positioning of Americans. There are some differences in that picture between the general public and registered voters.

	<u>Gen. Public</u>	<u>Registered Voters</u>
<u>Mostly Republican</u>		
Staunch Conservatives (Highly engaged Tea Party Support)	9	11
Main Street Republicans (Conservative on most issues)	11 [20]	14 [25]
<u>Mostly Independent</u>		
Libertarians (Free Market, small gov't seculars)	9	10
Disaffecteds (Downscale and cynical)	11	11
Post-Moderns (Mods, liberal on social issues)	13 [33]	14 [35]
<u>Mostly Democratic</u>		
New Coalition Democrats (Upbeat, majority-minority)	10	9
Hard-Pressed Democrats (Religious, financial struggling)	13	15
Solid Liberals (Across-the-board liberals)	14 [37]	16 [40]
<u>Bystanders</u>	10	0
(Young, politically disengaged)	[10]	[0]

47% have the view that Wall Street hurts the economy more than it helps –
38% hold the contrary view. 54% believe business makes too much profit. [Pew]

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Confidence in Institutions

In 2011, Americans are more confident in the military and less confident in the Congress than they have been historically.

Among 17 institutions tested, the Congress is the one in which folks have the least confidence. Only 12% have confidence in Congress, while 48% have little or no confidence in the Senate and House.

On the other hand, the military, which historically has had a positive confidence rating of 67%, is now regarded positively by 78%.

Among the other institutions of government:

	Great deal/ Quite a lot <u>Of Confidence</u>	Very little/ <u>None</u>
The Presidency	35%	36%
The U.S. Supreme Court	37%	20%
The Police	56%	13%

In business:

Small Business	64%	8%
Big Business	19%	39%
Banks	23%	36%

In media:

Newspapers	28%	31%
Television News	27%	32%

[Gallup 6/11]

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PRESIDENT OBAMA

The President's job approval rating has settled in at just under 50%. He ranks 5th when matched against the previous 8 Presidents at this point of their 3rd year in office. [Based on Gallup surveys]

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
G Bush (I)	72%	22%
GW Bush (II)	61	36
Eisenhower	67	19
Kennedy	61	26
Obama	49	<u>43</u> (6/17-19)
Clinton	48	42

Nixon	48	39
Reagan	42	44
Carter	28	59

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His job approval rating also jumped to varying degrees in other major surveys.

	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>
June 2011	62/29%	48/43%(CBS)	47/49%
May 2011	52/41% (NBC)	57/37%	56/38 (WP)
April 2011	49/45%	46/45%	47/50%

While Obama has gotten great credit for his handling of foreign policy with the death of bin Laden, the public's assessment of his handling of foreign policy has consistently been more positive than negative during his time in office. Currently, his job approval on foreign policy is 50%, compared to a disapproval of 44%. At no time has disapproval exceeded approval. The spreads between approval and disapproval have been as small as 3 points (4/11) and as high as 25 points (4/09).

The same cannot be said of the public's assessment of how he has handled the economy. Currently, 54% disapprove of how he is handling the economy, while 41% approve. Disapproval has exceeded approval consistently since December 2009, with one exception. The exception was in May 2010, when approval exceeded disapproval by 2 points. [NBC/WSJ 6/11]

Given their choice of whether Obama or the Republicans in Congress would do a better job of handling:

The economy – Republicans by 45% to 42%	
The Federal budget deficit – Republicans by 47% to 39%	
Protecting the Medicare system – Obama by 49% to 35%	
Creating jobs – Obama 43% - Republicans 42%	[WP/ABC 6/11]

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49% are at least somewhat positive in their feelings toward the President, while 37% have negative feelings. [NBC 6/11]

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By 62% to 25% folks believe that Obama inherited the current economic condition.

2 ½ years after he left office, President George W Bush is still being held more accountable than President Obama for the country's current economic conditions. In fact, Bush is being held more accountable now than he was a year ago. [NBC/WSJ 6/11]

	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Bush</u>	<u>Bush 6/10</u>
Solely responsible	10	14	12
Mainly responsible	24	33	28
Only somewhat responsible	48	43	46
Not really responsible	16	9	14

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44% of Americans say they are worse off now than they were at the beginning of 2009, and 55% expect that American children will have a lower standard of living than their parents.

45% of respondents “strongly agree,” and another 16% “mostly agree,” that if the economy isn't much improved by election day, he will have had his chance and it will be “very hard to vote for him.” [Bloomberg Poll 6/11]

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2012 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

The Primaries

In a May 31st column, Mark Mellman makes the case that the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries, seen together, have a dramatic impact on the selection of Presidential nominees. He notes that, “Since 1976...every single nominee but one in both parties, won either Iowa or New Hampshire.”

Conceding their impact on the process, the question that remains is whether they *should* have the impact they seem to have. The bottom line is that neither of these States are close to resembling the country as a whole.

WW looked at just a few characteristics. Here is the result:

	<u>65+</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Black</u>	<u>Hispanic</u>	<u>Asian</u>
United States	13.0%	63.7%	12.2%	16.3%	4.7%
Iowa	14.9%	88.7%	2.9%	5.0%	1.7%
New Hampshire	13.5%	92.3%	1.0%	2.8%	2.1%

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The Republican Nomination -
And then there were 15

The Republican nomination field is not yet complete. At least 19 people have indicated an interest in thinking about or securing the Republican nomination. 8 people have announced that they are running and have taken the requisite steps to launch their campaigns. 7 putative candidates have not made a final decision to run or to punt. Finally, 4 potential candidates have already announced that they are not going to engage in this race.

The chart below notes the status of each of these people.

Republican Nomination Score Card

Given the ever increasing number of people who are being talked about as potential candidates for the Republican nomination for President, WW has decided to publish the following score card until the final field is established. [“Exploring” means that the person has established a Presidential Exploratory Committee or a political action committee designed to fund early efforts.] [“Running” means that the person has filed a regular Presidential Committee with the FEC or has made an unequivocal announcement of intention.]

<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Exploring</u>	<u>Running</u>	<u>Not Running</u>
		Bachman	
		Cain	Barbour
			Daniels
DeMint		Gingrich	
Guiliani			Huckabee
		Huntsman	
	Johnson		
McCotter			
Palin		Paul	
		Pawlenty	
Perry			
	Roemer		
		Romney	
		Santorum	
			Trump

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The following survey of registered Republican voters was essentially complete by the time of the New Hampshire Republican debate on June 13th.

After the respondents had made their selections from the longer list, they were asked to vote again from the shorter list. [NBC/WSJ 6/11]

	Round <u>One</u>	Round <u>Two</u>
Romney	30%	43%
Palin	14%	
Cain	12%	
Perry	8%	
Paul	7%	11%
Gingrich	6%	8%
Pawlenty	4%	7%
Santorum	4%	9%

Bachman	3%	11%
Huntsman	1%	

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Of registered voters who say they will vote in the Republican primaries, 45% are satisfied with the current choices and 45% are dissatisfied. [NBC/WSJ 6/11]

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In what is a modest shift from 2008, Republicans prefer a Presidential candidate who has the best chance to beat President Obama, as opposed to one who agrees with them on almost all of the issues.

50% prefer the “best chance to win” candidate, while 44% are more concerned that the person agree with them on most issues. Leading up to the 2008 Presidential election, a slight majority of Republicans opted for the candidate with whom they agreed on the issues, and about 40% went for the person who could win.

Of interest is the fact that more conservative Republicans (52%), rather than Liberal/moderate Republicans (43%), speak out for the candidate who has the best chance to win. [Gallup 6/11]

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The Tea Party Movement will have an impact on the Republican primary and the general election. How its energy is directed will affect both of those elections.

28% of Americans are at least somewhat positive about the Tea Party Movement. 43% are at least somewhat negative. There are twice as many people who are “very negative” (27%) than are “very positive” (13%). The high point for the Tea Partiers was in June 2010, when 34% were at least somewhat positive and 31% somewhat negative. [NBC 6/11]

If the energy of this movement results in the selection of a Republican nominee who primarily represents the most conservative element of the party, then it will have aided Obama’s re-election effort.

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The following are random thoughts about the various Republican candidates.

(References to positive/negative feelings toward each candidate come from the 6/11 NBC/WSJ]

Mitt Romney

He is clearly the front runner. He was expected to be the “winner” of the New Hampshire debate and he did that. He will be able to raise significant sums, and he has personal resources on which he can fall back, if need be. Questions for Romney include the health care initiative he passed in Massachusetts, and whether the more conservative elements of the Party will feel a need to bring him down.

He must also deal with public attitudes about the Mormon faith. (Jon Huntsman faces the same issue.) This attitude may well impact the Republican nomination process, and if one of these men is the Republican nominee, it could have an impact on the general election.

Some 22% of Americans (19% of Independents) say they would not vote for a Mormon. This number is greater by some margin than the number of folks who say they would not vote for a person because he or she is Jewish, Baptist or Catholic. [Gallup 6/11]

[27% positive/26% negative/30%neutral/17%DK]

Sarah Palin

Palin has not announced whether she will make the race. Her recent bus tour of the eastern United States, starting on Memorial Day and continuing for several days leading up to the New Hampshire debate, was pretty ham-handed. But, of course, she claimed that this had nothing to do with a possible Presidential race.

Michelle Bachmann’s entry into the race makes life more difficult for Palin. Bachmann appeals to the same folks, and her capacity to deal with issues undoubtedly exceeds Palin’s by some margin.

When asked whether they would consider voting for Sarah Palin for President in 2012, 64% said they would definitely not vote for her. 7% definitely would vote for her, and 28% will consider it. [WP/ABC 6/11]

[24% positive/54% negative/19% neutral/3%DK]

Herman Cain

The most interesting thing about Herman Cain's candidacy is his ranking in this survey. He has no previous electoral experience, and yet he is running 3rd at 12%. More than anything it is a statement about the relative satisfaction with the other better known candidates.

Rick Perry

The Governor of Texas has not yet announced whether or not he will run, but he is drawing a fair amount of attention. It is assumed that fundraising would not be a problem for him. There are many things about his tenure as Governor that will work for or against him should he join the fray. He brings to the contest great strength among the conservative elements of the Party who are currently drawn to other candidates already committed to the race. He is not well known which gives him lots of room to grow.

[12% positive/ 15% negative/18% neutral/44DK]

Ron Paul

Paul has a distinct point of view about the Federal government – he would do away with much of the Executive branch, but his commentary is not easily understood. As he has in the past, he will be an "also ran" once again.

Newt Gingrich

While he may continue to amble around the country at a relatively leisurely pace, his campaign never got off the ground and is essentially over. The loss of many of the principals of his operating and fundraising staff simply will not be overcome.

Even before the latest blowup, Gingrich's positive intensity score, as measured by Gallup, had dropped precipitously among Republicans and Republican-leaning Independents. From a recent high of 19 in March/April, he had fallen to 6 in the last half of May.

What WW found unfortunate was the effort by a number of the departing staff to lay blame for Newt's problems at the feet of his wife, Callista Gingrich. The role of the spouses of various candidates varies dramatically. At the end of the day, it is the candidate who is responsible for his or her actions or non-actions. If these staff

wanted to blame someone, rather than just quietly walk out the door, they should have blamed Newt alone.

[16% positive/48% negative/23%neutral/13%DK]

Tim Pawlenty

Pawlenty's star, which had started to rise, slipped down below the horizon as a result of his less than stellar New Hampshire debate performance. Having gigged Romney hard the day before on "Obamney Care," Pawlenty ducked when given the opportunity to reprise his comments during the debate.

Pawlenty had been touted as everyone's second choice, but that is no longer the case.

At least at this time, the people who know Pawlenty best, the people of Minnesota, are supporting Obama over Pawlenty by 5 points. [Survey USA 5/11]

[14% positive/15% negative/25%neutral/46%DK]

Rick Santorum

Santorum is competing to be the most conservative in the Republican firmament. His opposition to abortion (no exception for rape or incest) includes the belief that any doctor who performs an abortion should be subject to criminal charges.

Santorum will not be a contender for the nomination.

Michelle Bachmann

Bachmann was the surprise of the New Hampshire debate. While none of the existing candidates or potential entries has positions that are more conservative than hers, Bachmann's performance was particularly strong.

During the last couple of years, colleagues in the House of Representatives have come to regard her as an effective and prepared Member.

She is an Iowa native, which gives her a leg up on that State. However, like Pawlenty, those who theoretically know her best do not support her as a general

election candidate. Most recently, she trailed Obama in Minnesota by 25 points.
[USA Survey 6/11]

One clear advantage that Bachmann has is in the fundraising department. In the 2005-06 election for her Minnesota House seat, she raised \$2.6 million. Then in 2007-08 she took in \$3.5 million. Then came 2009-10, when she decided to break the bank. Total receipts were \$13.6 million. Through the first quarter of this cycle she had raised \$1.75 million.

Jon Huntsman

Huntsman is the wildest of wild cards. He was a very successful two-term governor of Utah. Most recently, he was selected by Obama as the U.S. Ambassador to China. Many Republicans are not wild about the idea of an Obama Administration official as their nominee. And, on a number of issues, he is not as hard a conservative as many in the Party would like. On the other hand, he is close to being the least known of the candidates.

Time will tell on this one.

7% positive/9% negative/20% neutral/64% DK]

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There will not be a significant contest related to the re-nomination of Obama. In five separate surveys to date in 2011, CNN/OPR has asked whether Obama should be re-nominated. The range of support for his re-nomination was 76% to 83%.

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General Election

24% of potential voters say they will definitely vote to re-elect President Obama, and an additional 29% say they will consider voting for him. 45% say they will definitely not vote for him. [WP/ABC 6/11]

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Two early June surveys reach different results when President Obama is matched against a Republican general election candidate.

The NBC/WSJ survey found that 45% of respondents said they would probably vote for Obama, and 40% said they would vote for the Republican candidate.

The Gallup survey taken on the same dates found 39% more likely to vote for Obama, and 44% for likely to vote for the Republican candidate.

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With the caveat that all of the following is meaningless this far before the general election, here are the numbers by which Obama leads various Republican candidates.

Romney	+ 6	NBC/WSJ
Pawlenty	+13	NBC/WSJ
Palin	+15	ABC/WP
Bachman	+20	ABC/WP
Cain	+10	Reuters
Gingrich	+19	Fox
Paul	+18	Reuters
Huntsman	+10	ABC/WP

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For the first time in memory, an incumbent President has not set up his re-election campaign headquarters in DC, Virginia or Maryland. The Obama campaign has returned to its roots in Chicago.

Many political and media types (including yours truly) have treated this decision as a big mistake. On reflection it may be a pretty good idea. It has the effect of allowing the campaign staff to focus on its particular job, without having to be encumbered by the atmosphere and clamor that are so much a part of Washington.

After all, given modern communication, it is just as easy for David Axelrod, Jim Messina, Juliana Smoot, and David Plouffe to have a conversation from the White House to Chicago, as it is to have a conversation from Arlington or downtown D.C to the White House. And, if they forget what each other looks like, they can always use video conferencing, Skype or Facebook.

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THE CONGRESS

* Approval of the job being done by Congress is at a resounding 17%. This is the 4th lowest rating recorded by Gallup since it began testing this question. The lowest was 13%, recorded just 6 months ago.

* 42% have little or no confidence in the Congress. 10% do express confidence, but it is likely the lowest confidence level on record going back to 1975. [NBC/WSJ 6/11]

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THE SENATE

Depending on who you talk to, either Republicans are going to take six Senate seats currently held by Democrats/Independents, giving the Republicans a 53/47 margin, or the Democrats will hold the Senate with a tie, in which the Vice President, presuming Obama's re-election, will cast the deciding vote.

Looking at seats not up in 2012, and seats that are up but are safe or leaning to one Party or the other, Democrats end up with 45 seats and the Republicans with 46 seats. Of the Toss-up seats, Obama won 5 of them in 2008 and McCain won 4.

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THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats	51
Republicans	47
Independents	2 (caucus Dem)

At this point, your guess is as good as anyone's.

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

Safe	Leaning		Leaning	Safe
<u>Democrat (9)</u>	<u>Democrat (6)</u>	<u>Toss-Up (9)</u>	<u>Republican (4)</u>	<u>Republican (5)</u>
California	<u>Connecticut</u>	Massachusetts	<u>Arizona</u>	Indiana
Delaware	Florida	Missouri	Maine	Mississippi
<u>Hawaii</u>	Michigan	Montana	<u>North Dakota</u>	Tennessee
Maryland	Ohio	Nebraska	<u>Texas</u>	Utah
Minnesota	Pennsylvania	Nevada		Wyoming
New Jersey	Washington	<u>New Mexico</u>		
New York		<u>Virginia</u>		
Rhode Island		W. Virginia		
Vermont		<u>Wisconsin</u>		

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2012	30	37
Safe in 2012	9	5
Leaning in 2012	6	4
Total	45	46

Toss-ups 9 (2R/7D)

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THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The generic Congressional ballot is dead even: Democrats 44%/Republicans 44% . [NBC/WSJ 6/11]

53% of registered voters are inclined to look around for someone other than their current Congressperson for whom to vote. 37% are satisfied with the incumbent. [WP/ABC 6/11]

Early reports suggested that the Democrats would lose seats as a result of re-districting. Now it appears that the Democrats will not lose seats, and in fact may pick up a few.

WW has regularly reprinted the “House Dashboard” published by the Cook Political Report. The data below, through May 16, 2011, is from the Dashboard. However, the Dashboard is not being published at this time because of the uncertainties caused by re-districting. Therefore the chart below reflects the Cook’s current Competitive House Race Chart through June 21, 2011.

THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Republicans 241
Democrats 194

	<u>1/20/11</u>	<u>3/28/11</u>	<u>5/16/11</u>	<u>6/21/11</u>
TOTAL Dem	193	193	191	---
Solid Dem	150	151	153	---
Likely Dem	27	24	21	22
Lean Dem	12	10	11	13
 Toss-up	 10	 16	 16	 17
D	4	8	6	6
R	6	8	10	11
 Lean GOP	 15	 18	 16	 18
Likely GOP	38	38	41	42
Solid GOP	183	178	177	---
TOTAL GOP	242	242	244	---

[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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Gabrielsbarandrest.com

I have eaten at Gabriel’s more often by far than any other restaurant in New York City. It is my New York “commissary,” just like the several restaurants that fall into that category in Washington, DC.

I do not know why I have not written about it before now. It is everything I like about a restaurant. It is physically comfortable; casual dress is totally acceptable and is, in fact, the norm; the food is varied, interesting, and well prepared;

the service is excellent and friendly; and the dominant color in the men's room is bright blue.

When you enter the restaurant there is a long L-shaped bar to the left, and the dining room tables begin within 10 feet of the entrance, where the greeter's stand is located.

There is a large main dining room, as well as a large separate room at the back of the restaurant that can be used either for a private party or as part of the main dining room. There are a number of booths and tables ranging in size from twos to rounds of six or eight.

Debbie had as an appetizer a chopped tomato, cucumber and crab salad, followed by sautéed flounder.

I started with a Caesar salad, and then had the baby chicken, which is marinated in garlic, lemon, and rosemary, and then served with garlic mashed potatoes and broccolini. Just in case there were not enough carbs in the meal already, we shared a plate of spaghetti in tomato sauce. Dessert was, as usual, ice cream.

On this evening I did not have the dish which I have ordered there more than any other, the Kid Arrabbiato. It is slow roasted goat, marinated with red wine vinegar and hot pepper, and served with roast potatoes and snow peas. Another of my favorite dishes is a salad of beets and red leaf lettuce, with Dijon mustard dressing, served with roasted almonds and goat cheese.

As noted earlier, the dominant feature in the restroom is the bright blue walls. Immediately behind the entry door is an old-style floor-based urinal of white ceramic. There is a short divider, and then a white ceramic washbasin with a mirror. On the opposite side of the restroom are two commode stalls with partial walls enclosing them. Of course the dividing walls are bright blue.

The restaurant is open Monday-Friday for lunch and dinner, and for dinner only on Saturday. Try it, you will like it.

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Lincoln Restaurant
Lincoln Center
142 West 65th Street
NY, NY 10023
Reservations 212-359-6500
lincolnrestaurant.com

This restaurant is located on the Lincoln Center Plaza. The floor-to-high-ceiling, glass, window walls provide a terrific view of the theaters surrounding the plaza and the reflecting pool.

Everything about the restaurant is metal, hard woods and straight lines. However, the seats are much more comfortable than are sometimes found in the “modern” format restaurants.

Debbie and I went to Lincoln with Robie and Bill for lunch before attending a performance of “Warhorse.” (While WW does not do theater reviews this show is well worth making an effort to attend.)

As her appetizer Robie requested plain asparagus that were offered as part of another dish, followed by Insalata Di Pollo Alla Griglia – chicken breast, arugula, orange, red onion and Parmigiano-Reggiano.

Debbie started with Linguine Alle Vongole – Littleneck and Razor Clams, Pancetta. For her second course she selected Frittata Di Asparagai E Spugnole, green asparagus, mushrooms, Parmigiano-Reggiano.

Bill and I had exactly the same meal. Acciuga E Radicchio -- anchovy, bibb lettuce, radish, cucumber, salsa tonnata -- followed by Pollo Alla Marsala -- braised chicken legs, crimini mushroom, red bliss potatoes.

Chicken is generally a favorite dish of mine, and this chicken dish was as good, if not better than, any I have ever enjoyed.

Requested modifications of dishes were treated by the server as routine, and when the relevant dish arrived the requested modification had been made.

The service was excellent. As soon as we were seated we were asked about the time frame of our visit, i.e., were we going to a show? And from then on we could not have enjoyed better service.

The restaurant seats about 140 people at tables that seat 2 to 6 people. These tables can easily be modified to build large tables. Of particular interest is the open kitchen and bread preparation area. Both are behind a floor-to-ceiling glass wall.

The restrooms are in the basement. The obvious course to reach them is a set of stairs to which I was directed by the serving personnel. However, there is an elevator.

There are six unisex restrooms, in two lines of three, facing each other. One downside to this particular arrangement is that there is no apparent way to know which of the restrooms is in use except to try each of the doors. Each of the restrooms has a commode and washbasin. The interior color is light gray, with a square wall cutout in which are stacked cloth towels. The floor is covered with large tiles.

The restaurant is open seven days a week for lunch, pre-theater, and dinner. There is also a weekend brunch.

Generally reservations are suggested, but there is a bar that offers the full menu.

Mike

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