

*Mike Berman's*

# WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

No. 83

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## STATE OF THE NATION

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## THE PRESIDENT

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## REORGANIZING THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH?

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## RECONCILIATION

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## ARE YOU ON FACEBOOK? IF NOT, WHY NOT?

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## BEHOLD THE INTERNET

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## THE CONGRESS

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## THIS AND THAT

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## RESTAURANTS

The East and West of Michael Mina

San Francisco

D.C. Delis

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Americans are frightened and feeling insecure.

Around them, things which they cherish and on which they have relied, their homes and their jobs, are disappearing. They are uncertain about the future.

They are also more uncertain about the ability of their political, business, and social leaders to show them the path to the kind of security on which they had come to rely.

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Four days before Barack Obama was inaugurated 78% of Americans thought the country was on the wrong track. At the end of March that number had dropped to 57%, and the number who thought to the contrary – that it was going in the right direction – had jumped from 19% to 42%. [WP/ABC 3/09]

At this same time in 2001, as George Bush began his tenure, 32% thought the country was on the wrong track and 52% thought the country was going in the right direction. [NBC/WSJ 2/09]

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The public is evenly divided, 49%-48%, on whether it approves of the Federal Government's response to the economic situation. This is an improvement from mid-December when 72% disapproved. [WP/ABC 3/09]

So far, the blame for the current economic situation is not falling on Obama.

84% said that Obama inherited the current economic situation and that he is not mostly responsible for it. [WSJ/NBC 2/09]

Here is who the public does blame when given 5 specific choices:

Banks and other financial institutions	80%
Large business corporations	80%
Consumers	72%
Bush Administration	70%
Obama Administration for not doing enough to turn it around	26%

64% of the country is at least fairly confident that Obama's economic program will improve the economy. This is a slight drop from the 72% who had that view just before the inauguration. [WP/ABC 3/09]

There is considerable angst about the large bonuses paid to employees of companies who have accepted Federal funds, and the overall levels of compensation paid to top corporate executives. 80% are angry about the former and 74% about the latter. [WP/ABC 3/09]

83% believe that if a company is receiving assistance from the Federal Government, the Government should limit the amount executives can earn. [NYT/CBS 2/09]

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While 53% of us are more trusting of the U.S. government than U.S. businesses to solve the country's economic problems, within those numbers there is a dramatic break between the views of Republicans and Democrats.

	<u>Trust government</u>	<u>Trust business</u>
All Americans	<u>53%</u>	42%
Republicans	29%	<u>64%</u>
Democrats	<u>72%</u>	24%
Independents	<u>49%</u>	47%

69% of Republicans think the Federal Government has too much power, a view that is shared by only 32% of Democrats. [Gallup 3/09]

No wonder there is such an "air of cooperation" among Republicans and Democrats in the Congress.

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In a recent edition of his newsletter, Jack Martin, of Public Strategies, made a point that helps to explain why folks feel so strongly. Martin noted that over the last 20 years, there has been "a growing public view that our country is divided into two groups, the 'haves' and the have-nots." The number of folks who see themselves as have-nots has doubled from a quarter to a half of Americans.

Martin credited Pew Research for this information, so WW pulled the relevant data. Here it is.

Is America divided into "haves" and "have-nots"?

	<u>1988</u>	<u>2007</u>
Yes	26%	48%
No	71	48
DK	3	4

Democrats (63%) are twice as likely as Republicans (33%) to think that America is divided into the "haves" and "have-nots".

If you had to choose, are you a "have" or "have-not"?

	<u>1988</u>	<u>2007</u>
Haves	59%	45%
Have-nots	17	34
Neither/DK	24	21

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Over the last two years there has been a strong increase in the number of people who think race relations in this country are very/fairly good.

	<u>January 09</u>	<u>April 07</u>
All adults	77%	58%
African-Americans	64	40
Whites	79	59
Hispanics	76	55

[NBC/WSJ 1/09]

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81% of Americans rate the economy as "very bad" (51%) or "fairly bad" (30%). Yet 72% believe that in America you can still start out poor and become rich. [NYT/CBS 4/09]

There has also been improvement in the number of people who say the economy is getting worse. 51% took that position in mid-February, and now 34% have that view. [NYT/CBS 4/09]

In mid-February 63% of us thought that the current recession would last at least 2 years. However, 77% were generally optimistic about the next 4 years with Obama as President. The same number are convinced that he is trying to bring about real change in Washington. [NYT/CBS 2/09]

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On the question of whether it is more important to increase spending or to avoid a big increase in the Federal deficit, there is a 49% to 47% split.

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The national unemployment rate of 8.5% as of April 4, 2009, is the highest rate of unemployment since November 1983.

The previous high point of the period occurred in 1982, when the rate hit 10.8% in November/December. The rate began to drop in early 1984, and continued downward to March 1989, when the rate bottomed at 5%. The next high point was June 1992, when the rate hit 7.8%. It then went downward through President Clinton's tenure, reaching a low of 3.8% in April 2000. The rate fluctuated in the 4% to 6% range during President G.W. Bush's two terms in office. It reached 7.2% during his last full month in office.

However, the unemployment rate may be misleading by understating the real rate of unemployment in the country. If you take into account the so-called marginally-attached workers and those who are involuntary part-time workers (either group making as much as they need to live), the current rate of unemployment stands at 15.6%.

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Many States exceed the national average in their unemployment rates. The following is a list of the 7 States that had unemployment rates in excess of 10% in February.

Nevada	10.1 %
California	10.5
Rhode Island	10.5
North Carolina	10.7
Oregon	10.8
South Carolina	11.0
Michigan	12.0

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In the 10-year period between 1999-2008, 27,210,000 jobs were created in the United States. Taking into account the total number of jobs lost during the same period, a net 7,600,000 additional jobs were created.

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As the country looks forward to hoped-for job growth over the next several years, the following chart may be of interest.

Percentage change in job growth from  
beginning of term for each of the last 10 Presidents\*

Truman	21.0%
Eisenhower	7.1
Kennedy	6.7
Johnson	21.3
Nixon	13.2
Ford	2.6
Carter	12.9
Reagan	17.7
Bush I	2.4
Clinton	20.7
Bush II	2.0

\* Keep in mind that Presidents on this list served different lengths of time, e.g., Ford served for 29 months, while Clinton served 96 months.

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By 49% to 41% Americans opt to maintain the current healthcare system, based mostly on private health insurance, as opposed to a replacing it with a new Government-run healthcare system.

As recently as 2005, that spread was 31% points, 63% to 32%.  
[Gallup 12/08]

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29% of Americans deferred medical treatment in the 12-month period ending in November 2008 because of the amount they would have to pay for the care. In 2003, only 19% of Americans reported having to make that choice. The rate of deferral has been flat since 2006. Not surprisingly, the lower the annual family income, the higher the percentage of those having put off treatment. [Gallup 12/08]

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77% of Americans believe that the Government should increase financial support and incentives for producing energy from alternative sources, like wind and solar. 39% favor increased support of traditional energy sources ,like oil and gas. 33% favor increasing support for both/all sources of energy.

There seems to be an increased consciousness of the trade-offs between protecting the environment and developing further energy supplies.

In 2001, 52% of Americans said the priority should be protection of the environment, while 36% opted for developing further supplies. Today, there is equal support for both. 47% say protect the environment, while 46% say the priority should be developing supplies. [Gallup 3/09]

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Concerns about "water" top the list of environmental problems about which Americans worry a great deal. The top concern expressed by 59% of those interviewed is "pollution of drinking water." In 2nd place on the list, with each garnering 52%, are "pollution of rivers, lakes and reservoirs" and "contamination of soil and water by toxic waste." Last on the list is global warming.

The balance of the list is:

Maintenance of the nation's supply of fresh water for household needs - 49%  
Air pollution - 45%  
Loss of tropical rain forests - 42%  
Extinction of plant and animal species - 37%  
Greenhouse effect or global warming - 34%

[Gallup 3/09]

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Notwithstanding the strongly voiced official position of the Catholic Church in opposition to abortion and embryonic stem-cell research, the same percentage of American Catholics as non-Catholics find abortion (40%) and stem-cell research (63%) morally acceptable.

However, the overall figures mask the impact of church attendance on folks' opinions.

Among regular church attenders, only 24% of Catholics and 19% of non-Catholics find abortion morally acceptable. Embryonic stem-cell is found to be morally acceptable

among 73% of non-church attending non-Catholics and 70% of non-church attending Catholics. [Gallup 2006-08 Values and Beliefs polls]

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There has been no change during the past year in the role that religion plays in Americans' lives, even though many Americans are going through particularly difficult times. 64% say that religion is important in their daily lives, and 42% report attending church every week or nearly every week. [Gallup 2/08-3/09]

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63% believe that the Republicans opposed the stimulus package for political reasons and not because they believed it was bad for the economy. [NYT/CBS 2/09]

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A majority of Americans (53%) don't like the North American Free Trade Agreement. 51% of Canadians applaud it. 57% of Mexicans don't have an opinion or are neutral. [Gallup 12/08]

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## **PRESIDENT OBAMA**

Approval of the overall job President Obama is doing was running at 66% at the end of March in the WP/ABC survey, and 66% in the early April NYT/CBS survey. It was at 60% in the NBC/WSJ survey at the end of February.

At the end of March, 60% approved of the job Obama is doing on the economy, up a bit from the 56% approval in the NBC/WSJ survey. It is 56% in the April NYT/CBS.

A late March Gallup poll shows 61% approving Obama's foreign policy efforts, along with 59% having the same view in the early April NYT/CBS poll.

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Obama's job performance approval among Democrats is 61% points higher than among Republicans - 88% to 27%. This is the greatest partisan spread experienced by any President, starting with Richard Nixon, at this time in their tenure.

Obama 61% - Bush II 51% - Clinton 45% - Bush I 38% - Reagan 46% - Carter 25% - Nixon 29%. [Pew 4/2/09]

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As favorably as Obama is rated (69% have that view), his popularity is eclipsed by Michelle Obama, who clocks a 72% favorable rating. [Gallup 3/09]

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There are about 3,000 political appointees in the Federal Government. That is to say, they are appointed by the President or by others that the President has appointed. 616 of these people are subject to Senate confirmation.

Although there has been a glitch or two, the Obama administration is ahead of the 4 most recent Presidential Administrations in the number of people who have been nominated to fill Government positions that are subject to Senate confirmation.

Here is the tell of the tape as of March 31st:

	<u>Total nominated</u>	<u>Confirmed</u>	<u>Waiting for confirmation</u>
Obama	<u>104</u>	38	<u>66</u>
Bush II*	46	27	19
Clinton	58	37	21
Bush I	46	26	20
Reagan	95	<u>61</u>	34

\* President Bush II was late in starting his transition as a result of the post-election day lawsuit challenging his victory in Florida.

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### **IS THERE A DISFUNCTIONALITY THAT NEEDS TO BE FIXED?**

An argument can be made that there are ways in which the Federal Government is organized or operates which don't make a lot of sense.

Here is one of WW's favorite examples. On a trip out West your editor was standing at the head of a little valley. I was told that the forest on the hill on the right side of the valley was controlled by the Department of Interior, and the forest on the left side was controlled by the Department of Agriculture. To my untrained eye, the trees looked a lot alike.

Subsequently, I learned that, if the forest lands were seen as producing timber (a growing crop), they were under the control of the USDA. If the lands were seen as range or park lands (more tourism and less economic value of the land itself), they were under Interior.

In general, USDA's management has been perceived to be more production- and business-oriented, while Interior has been perceived as more conservation and environmentally focused, especially in land management issues.

In fact, it turns out that there are some timber lands under the management of Interior, and some park and tourism land under control of USDA.



Apparently, the whole thing caused an enormous feud between Harold Ickes and Henry Wallace in the 1930s.

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Observing the campaign and now the new Administration, it is easy to come to the conclusion that President Obama likes to operate through a relatively small group of individuals who are close at hand.

Could this be an effort on his part to effectively "reorganize" parts of the Executive Branch without going through the endless process of changing organizational structures? Each of these structures has its own set of constituencies, Congressional and otherwise, who defend the current structures, whether or not they make overall sense.

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Obama came to a White House that already had two czar/czarina-like positions on the staff, the National Security Advisor and the Director of the National Economic Council. Within the "coordinating" reach of the National Security Advisor (and staff) is the Defense Department, State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, and the Homeland Security Department.

Within the reach of the Director of the National Economic Council (and staff) is the Treasury Department, the Council of Economic Advisors, the Commerce Department, the US Trade Representative, and the Department of Labor. There is a secondary connection with other agencies on a case by case basis. In the current White House add to that a side-bar interest in energy and healthcare.

For some many years, the President has usually received a daily briefing from his National Security Advisor. Obama has added a similar daily briefing from the Director of the National Economic Council.

To those two, Obama has added czarinas for Energy/Environment/Climate and Healthcare, and an Urban czar.

The Energy czarina is likely to be able to reach into the Environmental Protection Agency, The Council on Environmental Quality, Energy Department, Interior Department, Agriculture Department, Department of Transportation, and Commerce Department.

The Healthcare czarina has a span that likely includes at least HHS (Medicare, etc.), Tricare, Veterans Administration, FDA, and the Federal Employee Health Benefit Plan.

The Urban Czar would seem to reach into the Department of Transportation, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Education Department.

Will it work? Like anything this early in a new Administration, it is anyone's guess. The immediate response of many commentators is that there are bound to be a number of internecine conflicts. That may well be. But given the apparent disdain of the President and his close advisors for unnecessary drama, and his Chief of Staff Rahm

Emanuel's ability to cut through nonsense, my guess is that any such conflicts will be dealt with expeditiously.

If it works, the country will be well-served.

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Centralizing power in the White House, beyond the traditional area of national security, is not new.

In early January, 1973, newly re-elected President Richard Nixon rolled out a expansion of the White House staff. He appointed at least three "czars".

Caspar Weinberger, Secretary of HEW, was named as a White House Counselor to run Human Resources. James Lynn, Secretary of HUD, was named as the Counselor for Community and Regional Development. And Earl Butz, Secretary of Agriculture, was named as Counselor for Natural Resources, in charge of resource use, lands and minerals, and environment.

Somewhat later, Nixon appointed William Simon, then serving as Deputy Secretary of Treasury, as the first energy czar. Formally, he headed the Federal Energy Office during the Arab oil embargo.

Of course, all of the folks that Nixon turned to for this role were Senate-confirmed political employees, subject to being called to testify before Congress.

And then in September, 2001, President Bush appointed Tom Ridge as the Homeland Security czar.

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## **RECONCILIATION**

The House and Senate have passed the Budget Resolution, which is the ostensible blueprint for Federal spending beginning on October 1st, 2009.

In the House, 233 Democrats voted for the Resolution, while 20 Democrats did not follow their leadership. 176 Republicans voted against the Resolution, and not a single GOPer crossed over to be with the majority Democrats.

55 Senators supported the Resolution, again without the assistance of a single Republican. Two Democratic Senators, Evan Bayh (IN) and Ben Nelson (NEB), voted with 41 Republicans to reject the Resolution. Had Senator Byrd voted, he would undoubtedly have supported the Resolution, as would Al Franken had his election contest been over.

The President's Budget request was shaved in both Houses of Congress, but not in ways that anyone would consider significant.

Perhaps of greatest significance, the House budget includes healthcare as a potential reconciliation item. Boiled down, that means that the President's healthcare plan, as modified by the Congress, can pass the Senate with only 51 votes, rather than the 60 votes that would likely be necessary if the plan were to come to the Senate floor as a freestanding piece of legislation.

While the Senate version of the Budget Resolution does not include a reconciliation instruction, it is assumed that the final Resolution that comes out of a House/Senate conference after the recess will include healthcare as a potential reconciliation item.

On the other hand, no mega climate/energy legislation was included by either body in its Resolution. An attempt to include it in the Senate version failed by 61-37. The size of that vote also suggests that the mega climate/energy legislation that is anticipated by the Administration will not have a smooth path going forward as freestanding legislation.

While Republicans in both bodies have expressed great consternation at the idea of using reconciliation in this manner, this technique has been used to enact controversial legislation by Republicans and Democrats in the past.

For those who may have forgotten the history of reconciliation here is a short reminder.

Of course, in any of these efforts, proponents will need to deal with the Byrd Rule. [Further explanation will be attempted in a later edition.]

The reconciliation process came into being as part of the Budget Act of 1974. It was not until the 1980s that it became a regular part of the budget process.

The reconciliation process was used:

6 times during the last 5 years of Ronald Reagan's term.

Partisan split of Congress

- 1 Congress - Senate D/House D
- 5 Congresses - Senate R/House D

5 times during the 1st George Bush's term.

Partisan split of Congress

- 2 Congresses - Senate R/House D
- 3 Congresses - Senate D/House D

7 times during Bill Clinton's term.

Partisan split of Congress

- 1 Congress - Senate D/House D
- 6 Congresses - Senate R/House R
- Clinton vetoed 3 reconciliation bills

5 times during the 2nd George Bush's term.

Partisan split of Congress

- 4 Congresses - Senate R/House R
- 1 Congress - Senate D/House R

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## **SOCIAL NETWORKS**

Are you on Facebook or My Space or one of the dozens of other social networks on the internet? If not, you ought to get with it.

You are too old, you say; or you don't have the time; or you don't want to share information about yourself with a bunch of strangers.

Consider the following: 175 million people worldwide are on Facebook. My Space has 130 million users, of which 6.9 million are 55 years of age or older.

I have chosen to be on Facebook because it is so easy to get on the network and to participate. I don't spend more than 10 minutes a day engaged in it, and most of that time is spent answering emails from folks who could otherwise be emailing me at my regular address. I control the amount of information about myself that I post, and it is a whole lot less than anyone can find by googling me.

In the not-all-that-distant future, all but a few newspapers will be gone. The evening news programs on the national TV broadcast networks will have signed off for the last time.

We will be receiving more and more of our daily dose of news and other information over the internet. An ever-increasingly important source will be the social networks. If you have not already done so, you might as well come to understand this new paradigm, because eventually you will have to.

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## **THE INTERNET IS BECOMING OMNIPRESENT**

The internet is growing rapidly as a primary source of national and international news. The change is particularly dramatic among those aged 18-29.

When asked on which medium they rely for national and international news, the results are as follows:

	<u>TV</u>	<u>Newspapers</u>	<u>Internet</u>
2001	74%	45%	13%
2004	74%	46%	24%
2007	74%	34%	24%
2008	70%	35%	<u>40%</u>

Among those under 30 years of age the change over the last 3 years is reflected below.

	<u>TV</u>	<u>Newspapers</u>	<u>Internet</u>
2006	62%	29%	32%
2007	68%	23%	34%
2008	59%	28%	<u>59%</u>

[Pew 12/08]

48% of Americans use the internet for more than one hour a day. This is an increase from the 26% who reported that level of usage in 2002. [Gallup 1/09]

Evidence of the growing role of the internet as a primary news source can be found in the matter of the anti-woman law signed by the President of Afghanistan.

The first report available in the U.S. seems to have come on various internet blogs and digital news services on March 31st. It was not until April 2nd that conventional newspapers and cable news services began to report the story. The Washington Post and New York Times published major stories in their print editions on April 5th.

When WW asked a group of 15 students on April 4th whether they had heard of the story, 2/3rds of them had seen the story on the internet.

At any rate, the internet led the way on this story, as it increasingly does. It is worth keeping in mind that conventional newspapers also have on-line editions, which often report particular news ahead of the print edition.

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Ordinarily WW does not venture into commentary about foreign policy, so please indulge this exception.

According to news reports, Harmid Karzai, the President of Afghanistan, has signed a law, which according the UN Development Fund for Women, "legalizes the rape of a wife by her husband." It is suggested that the bill, which was rushed through the Afghan legislature, was signed by Karzai in an effort to improve his chances for re-election.

Apparently, the law only affects the Shia population of the country. According to one woman Parliamentarian, who opposed the law, "It is one of the worst bills passed by the Parliament this century. It is totally against women's rights. The law makes women more vulnerable."

For Shia women, this rolls back the progress toward equality that Afghan women have achieved during the last several years.

Various governments, including the U.S., have voiced their concerns to the Afghanistan government. Karzai subsequently announced that the law, which he has already signed, but which has not been made public, will be reviewed. However, he has announced that he sees no problem with the legislation.

This is the person on whom the United States and its allies have pinned their hopes for resolution in Afghanistan.

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## 2010 CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGNS

### FIRST ELECTORAL TEST OF OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

The 2010 election is effectively the first electoral test for Barack Obama. Of course, his name is not on the ballot. If a voter is unhappy with the President's performance, her/his only recourse is to vote against the Democrat on the ballot from his/her Congressional District. Or in those States in which there is a Senate election on the ballot, the Democratic candidate in those States.

Here is what that first bi-election for a new President has looked like since Franklin Roosevelt. The results relate to the President's Party.

<u>President</u>	<u>Election</u>	<u>Result</u>
Roosevelt	1934	Picked up 9 seats in Senate Picked up 9 seats in House
Eisenhower	1954	Lost 1 seat in Senate - and control Lost 18 seats in House
Kennedy	1962	Picked up 2 seats in Senate Lost 4 seats in House
Nixon	1970	Picked up 1 seat in Senate - 2 seats went Independent - Dems lost 3 Lost 12 seats in House
Carter	1978	Lost 3 seats in Senate Lost 15 seats in House
Reagan	1982	Picked up 2 seats in Senate Lost 24 seats in House
Bush I	1990	Lost 2 seats in Senate Lost 8 seats in House
Clinton	1994	Lost 9 seats in Senate - and control Lost 54 seats in House - and control

Bush II	2002	Lost 1 seat in Senate - and control Picked up 8 seats in House
Obama	2010	?

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During 2008, 36% of Americans identified with the Democratic Party, while 28% identified with the Republicans. [Gallup 12/08]

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63% disapprove of the job Congress is doing. [NYT/CBS 2/09]

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It is still pretty early to get a good handle on the 2010 races, in part because there is no way to know how the public will feel about the Obama Administration as they head to the polls.

There are at least seven Senate seats in the Toss Up category, and some of them look a little dicey for the incumbent Parties. Certainly, the Democrats are going to turn heaven and earth to pick up at least two more seats.

When it comes to the House, there is some question how many more net seats there are for the Democrats to pick up. Certainly they will try. But from a policy point of view, their current position in the House is likely to prove sufficient to do just about anything the Democrats want to do.

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THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats 55  
Republicans 42  
Independents 2 (caucus Dem)  
Open 1

Here is how the 37 Senate elections (17 Democratic incumbents, 20 Republican incumbents) look to me at this time (underlining reflects retirement). (D=Dem incumbent in office, R=GOP incumbent in office, I=Ind. incumbent in office)

Safe	Leaning		Leaning	Safe
<u>Democratic(9)</u>	<u>Democratic(6)</u>	<u>Toss-Up(7)</u>	<u>Republican(4)</u>	<u>Republican(11)</u>
Arkansas	California	Connecticut	Louisiana	Alabama
<u>Delaware</u>	Colorado	<u>Florida</u>	Pennsylvania	Arkansas
Hawaii	Nevada	Illinois	No. Carolina	Arizona
Indiana	No. Dakota	Kentucky	Oklahoma	Georgia
Maryland	Washington	<u>Missouri</u>		Idaho
New York(A)	Wisconsin	<u>New Hampsh.</u>		Iowa
New York(B)		<u>Ohio</u>		<u>Kansas</u>
Oregon				So. Carolina
Vermont				So. Dakota
				Texas
				Utah

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Ind</u>
Seats not up in 2008	38	22	2
Safe in 2008	9	11	0
Leaning in 2008	6	4	0
Total	53	37	2
Toss-ups	7 (5R/2D)		
Open	1		

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## THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Democrats	255
Republicans	199
Vacancy	1

	<u>4/1/10</u>
Total Dem	255
Solid Dem	204
Likely Dem	29
Lean Dem	20
Toss Up	2
D	2
R	0
Lean GOP	6
Likely GOP	26
Solid GOP	147
Total GOP	179

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## **THIS AND THAT**

What do the following words have in common?

Banana  
Dresser  
Grammar  
Potato  
Revive  
Uneven

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

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63% of Americans view President G.W. Bush and Vice President Cheney unfavorably. [Gallup 4/09]

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## ONE MORE POINT ABOUT THE 2008 ELECTION

Barack Obama did not receive a majority of white votes in any of the States still covered by the Voting Rights Act.

Percent of White Votes for President Obama  
2008 by State

Less than 15%	15% - 30%	31% - 50%		More than 50%	
LA	TX	NV	OH	WA	RI
MS	OK	AZ	WV	OR	CT
AL	AR	NM	PA	CA	DE
	GA	ID	VA	MN	DC
	SC	UT	NC	IA	
		MT	NJ	WI	
		WY	MD	IL	
		CO	AK	MI	
		ND	HI	ME	
		SD	IN	NH	
		NE	KY	VT	
		KS	TN	NY	
		MO	FL	MA	

In States covered by the Voting Rights Act

Less than 15%	15% - 30%	31% - 50%	More than 50%
LA	TX	AK	
MS	GA	AZ	
AL	SC	VA	

[WP 4/1/09 - National Exit Polls]

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SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

- \* Borrow money from pessimists - they don't expect it back.
- \* Half the people you know are below average.
- \* 42/7% of all statistics are made up on the spot.
- \* A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory.
- \* If you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.
- \* How do you tell when you're out of invisible ink?
- \* When everything is coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.

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Answer to word quiz: If you take the first letter of each word, place it at the end of the word, and then spell the word backwards, it will be the same word.

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## RESTAURANTS

### THE EAST AND THE WEST OF IT

In a first for Washington Watch, this edition's restaurant review section includes two restaurants run by the same Executive Chef, 2500 miles apart.

The first, is "Bourbon Steak" in the Four Seasons Hotel, Washington, DC, the latest opening of Chef Michael Mina. The second, is "Michael Mina," the first restaurant that Mina started, in the St. Francis Hotel, San Francisco, California.

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#### Bourbon Steak

2800 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC  
202-944-2026  
(In the Four Seasons Hotel)

Beginning with WW's first dinner at Bourbon Steak, the day it opened, December 19, 2008, through April 6th, WW has eaten dinner in this restaurant at least 24 times and lunch 4 times. In the same time period, WW also had 13 breakfasts in the old Seasons Restaurant, where breakfasts and weekend and holiday brunches are still served.

The restaurant is physically located where the Terrace Lounge used to be. The lounge is no more.

The restaurant is entered directly from the newly redecorated lobby and is essentially open to the lobby. There is a bar area directly to your right as you enter, and on most evenings it is relatively full. It also is open to the restaurant. The crowd is on the young side, and quite different than anything seen at the hotel before the new restaurant and bar opened.

The difference in guests in the bar is also true of the restaurant. While there are some regulars from the downstairs days, most of the guests are new.

The restaurant itself has 2 distinct eating areas. The first is directly ahead as you enter and down a couple of steps. To the right are a series of booths that separate this section from the other section. The other section is open to the kitchen, which is at the end of the room, where the bar used to be.

Ordinarily, I would note the folks with whom I have eaten, but given the number of times I have been there, so I am eschewing what is a pretty long list. Suffice to say, it

is a perfect place to take folks these days, because so many of them have not yet been to the restaurant in these early months.

The average night's menu has 6 shellfish and caviar dishes, 13 appetizers, 8 dishes listed as entrees, and then an additional group of entrees cooked on the wood-burning grill, including 8 steaks ranging from 8 - 28 ounces and 4 ocean fishes.

In addition, there are 3 so-called accompaniments, and 10 side dishes.

The following is a listing of the dishes I have eaten.

Shellfish & Caviar - Bay scallops, Florida stone crab, & Louisiana Gulf Shrimp

Appetizers - Bibb Wedge, Market Salad, Root Vegetable Soup, Cape Cod

Squid, Red Wine Braised Oxtail

Entrees - Dayboat Sea Scallops, Atlantic Striped Bass, Elysian Fields Lamb Loin,

Liberty Farms Duck, Michael's Lobster Pot Pie, Pan-Roasted Gianone

Chicken, Worcestershire-Braised Short Ribs

Wood-Burning Grill - Tasmanian Sea Trout, Florida Cobia

Accompaniments - Marrow Bones

Side Dishes - Salt-Baked Potato, Crispy Sweet Onion Cakes, Classic Potato puree,

Black Truffle Mac&Cheese, Spaghetti Squash, Caramelized Brussels

Sprouts, Wood-roasted "magical" Mushrooms, Chick Pea Fries.

While I usually do not discuss particular dishes, this is an exception. The braised short-ribs that I ate on a recent evening were so tender that I literally cut the meat with a fork.

Every dinner starts with delivery of three silver cones, each filled with a different flavor of French-fried potatoes, with three different sauces in which to dip the fries. I prefer them without the dip.

Bread is delivered in the form of small truffle oil buns. Combinations of 4-6 buns are cooked in a small iron skillet and that is how they are delivered. You have likely never eaten anything quite like them.

The service is quite attentive. It sometimes takes an inordinate amount of time to get something simple, like a glass of ice tea or a glass of wine, but the course of your meal, even when the restaurant is busy, comes at a reasonable rate. To be fair, some folks have suffered delays in receiving their meal, but I have chalked that up to restaurant startup. All but one of the wait staff, is new to the Four Seasons. That is to say, but for one of them, the Seasons wait staff did not migrate upstairs.

At my first lunch, the restaurant passed an important test. My favorite lunch at the old Seasons Restaurant was a bowl of tomato soup and a grilled chicken sandwich. That first time, I believe, the items came from the Seasons kitchen downstairs. Now both are prepared in the Bourbon Steak kitchen. At a recent lunch one of our party ordered a grilled cheese sandwich and it came without so much as a raised eyebrow.

And then one night, as a special treat, the resident chef offered up a roast chicken with steamed vegetables. The chicken could not have been more perfectly done. And the

mixed vegetables were nicely prepared as well. Unfortunately, the chicken is not part of the regular menu.

Now the desserts. I have ordered the Comice Pear Tart, Bitter Chocolate Cake, Bananas Split, Coconut Candy Bar, and a variety of ice creams. They leave nothing to be desired.

There are two things that you should know about the restaurant.

First, the food is very rich. For example, steaks are poached in clarified butter, pork in bacon fat, and lamb in olive oil. It seems that just about every dish has some form of fat added to it. Even the fish dishes seem to have added fat in one form or another. However, the kitchen has been responsive when I asked that care be taken to avoid as much extra fat as possible.

Second, when the restaurant is filled at dinner time, it is very noisy. And, periodically, music is broadcast which adds to the din. About the only place you can have a conversation without straining at least a little is in one of the booths. By the way, the booths are of sufficient size and the tables move so they can accommodate my girth on one side and a regular sized person on the other.

The restaurant seats a maximum of 144 people. Each of the 4 tops is expandable to 5 or six.

There is a private dining room that comfortably seats 20 people. There are windows on two sides of the room, so it is quite cheery. This room is designed so that it can be divided into two private dining rooms with separate doors, each seating up to 10 people.

There are minimum charges and guarantees for these dining rooms. There is also a minimum and required guarantee for large parties in the main dining room.

There are two choices of restrooms if you are in the restaurant.

Just off the lobby, at the entrance to the restaurant, there are two restrooms, across the hall from one another. As you would expect, one for men and the other for women. Each is designed to be used by a single person at a time.

There is a single white ceramic commode and single washbasin in a marble counter in the men's room. The floor is covered with very large dark tiles, with light accents, and the walls are covered in brown wallpaper.

If the restroom of choice on the lobby level is occupied, you can either stand in line or go down one flight of stairs to the multi-person restrooms. [See special restroom ideas at end of the restaurant section.]

The restaurant is open for dinner seven days a week, and for lunch Monday through Friday. Reservations are pretty much required at dinner. [Lunch is served in the old Season's Restaurant on Saturday and Sunday.]

The bottom line....try it. I think there is a very good chance you will like it.

[Note: The Bourbon Steak manager, Mark Politzer, is on top of just about everything and is very accommodating. And add to that, the new hotel food and beverage manager is Marc Bromley. Yes, the son of the ubiquitous Stan Bromley.]

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Michael Mina  
335 Powell Street  
San Francisco CA 94102  
415-397-9222  
(In the St. Francis Hotel)

Michael Mina came to San Francisco as Executive Chef at Aqua, where he made a name for himself.

Eventually he opened "Michael Mina" in the St. Francis Hotel. This was the first of many restaurants that he has subsequently opened, Bourbon Steak being the most recent.

The two restaurants could not be more different, except for the fact that each of them is directly off the lobby of a major hotel.

As bright, energizing, and noisy as Bourbon Steak is, that is how quiet, dimly lit, and laid back is this restaurant. It is just plain fancier than its DC cousin.

Dinner was with Julia and Stan.

At first blush, the menus seem to be quite different, and in general they are, but there are some dishes that are available in both restaurants. For example, the Lobster Pot Pie, Japanese Kobe beef, Elysian Fields Lamb, and Ahi Tuna Tartare show up on both menus, and there are iterations of various dishes that seem to have a common root.

The "amuse buse" was a Caviar Parfait.

Julia, who prefers vegetarian dishes, had "Seasonal Squash Trio," including pumpkin soup, tempura squash salad, and a grilled sandwich. She also enjoyed "Scotch" Hen Egg, Forest mushrooms, Heirloom radishes, and Consomme. As an entre she requested and received a specially-made vegetarian dish, which included such delicacies as fried ravioli.

Stanley started with the Ahi Tuna Tartare, Scotch Bonnet Pepper, Bosc Pear, Sesame Oil. For his entree he selected the Elysian Fields Farm Lamb, Cassoulet of Pole Beans, Dry Farmed Tomatoes, Herb Bread Crumbs. [Note: Stanley seems to like lamb. You will note that it was also his selection at "piperade" which is written up later.]

I began with Roasted Heirloom Beets, Braised Endive, Mache, Black Truffle Vinaigrette, followed by a main course of "Bouillabaisse - Mina Style. [Note: I also had the Fish Soup at "piperade."]

And then there were the desserts. Julia selected an assortment of Cheeses - Goat, Sheep, Cow. Stanley chose the White Chocolate Panna Cotta, Passion Fruit, Almond Crumble.

I went with the ordinary. A Root Beer Float accompanied by Warm Chocolate Chip Cookies. Notably, the DC menu includes a Banana Split.

The food was great tasting, but as served is quite fancy and a bit fussy.

It almost goes without saying that the service was excellent.

At the bottom line, Bourbon Steak is more my kind of restaurant than Michael Mina. But for that special quiet evening, you can't beat Michael Mina in the St. Francis.

The restaurant seats about 100 people and is open for dinner only, Tuesday - Saturday. Reservations are recommended, although the restaurant does accept walk-ins. The night we were there, a Tuesday, the restaurant was not half full.

The restaurant uses the basic hotel restrooms, so a review is not included.

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Garibaldi on Presidio  
347 Presidio Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94115  
415-563-8841

This restaurant was selected by Peter and Florence, and Moira was also part of our culinary quartet.

The restaurant is on two levels. We were seated near the back-end of the upper level which is smaller than the lower/entry level. There is also a bar on the entry level. Because the entire restaurant is relatively small, it tends to be on the noisy side.

Florence chose the prix fixe selection for that evening, which included "laura chenal goal cheese fritter", "bracole di carne, spinach-mushroom stuffing, pancetta, iacopi farms butterbeans, salsa verde."

Moira started with a chicken liver pate and then a main course of "marinated lamb tenderloins, pistachios and golden raisin couscous, green beans, tarragon sauce."

Peter selected the "Garibaldi's salad, sweet lettuces, Gorgonzola, fuji apples, spiced pecans, white balsamic vinaigrette." For his entree he enjoyed "linguini con frutti di mare, Dungeness crab, manila clams, prawns, Calabria chilies, tomato."

I chose the "chopped salad, cauliflowers, broccoli, sieved egg, ricotta salata, pumpkin seeds, buttermilk dressing," followed by "chicken breast Milanese, roasted garlic mashed potatoes, arugula, white wine-caper sauce."

And to end the meal, Moira and Florence chose "White Chocolate Creme Brulee; Peter savored "Chocolate Budiino;" and I managed to work my way through a "Bread and Butter Pudding."

The food was just plain good, and the portions were substantial.

There are two unisex Water Closets. The one that WW used has dark brown walls and large brown floor tiles.

There is a white ceramic commode and a horizontally shaped, white ceramic washbasin that sticks out into the room. To the right, as you stand in front of the commode and the washbasin, there is a dark wood cabinet.

There are mirrors above the washbasin and above the cabinet.

Garabaldi's is open for dinner every night, for lunch Monday - Friday, and for brunch on Saturday and Sunday.

Reservations are recommended.

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piperade  
1015 Battery Street  
San Francisco, California 94111  
415-391-2555, Fax 415-391-1159  
[www.piperade.com](http://www.piperade.com)

Once again, Stanley has demonstrated his taste for really good food. That is the story of "piperade."

The restaurant seats 66 people at tables of 2, 4 and 6 people. Larger parties can be accommodated by combining tables. The bar, which runs nearly the length of the restaurant as you enter, can handle a dozen folks on high chairs. In addition, there is room for another 20 folks on tables on an open area just outside the door of the restaurant.

Stanley started with a Grande white bean salad with bouquerones, fresh herbs and crushed eggs. I opted for the mixed chicory and endive salad, with pears and perfect blondes.

Stanley was quite lyrical about his main course of lamb chops. On the menu the offering is lamb chops and lamb sausage, but he ordered it with the sausage replaced by an additional lamb chop. As he savored the first bite he exclaimed "this lamb chop is (expletive deleted) amazing."

I chose the Wednesday special, "seafood and shellfish soup toro". What was first delivered was the soup special of the day, "pea and ham." It was quickly replaced, and the seafood soup special was excellent.

At Stanley's suggestion, we shared a side dish, "Manchego potato gratin." It was delicious.



For dessert we shared an excellent "caramel custard 'koka.'"

Overall, the food was really good, nicely plated, but not fussy or overdone. It had the affect of comfort food, but was many notches above that which is usually described with that phrase.

I did not go to the men's room ,but Stanley described it as large and clean.

Dinner at \$105 for two (without the tip) for two appetizers, two entrees, one dessert, and 1 glass of wine was quite reasonable.

The service was good and attentive and appropriately friendly.

Reservations are recommended, especially given its relatively small size.

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Town's End Restaurant and Bakery  
2 Townsend Street  
San Francisco, California 94107  
415-512-0749

Breakfasts with Stanley are always a treat. The joints to which he takes WW always have "character."

Town's End was no exception.

There are about 80 seats in this long and relatively narrow restaurant that wraps around the end of an office building. It is the perfect breakfast place ,in part, because the entire front wall is glass, so there is a freshness and brightness about the whole place.

At one end of the restaurant there is a coffee and pastry bar that draws a fair amount of street traffic.

On the average Saturday the restaurant serves 300 people, turning most tables about 5 times. On the last Mother's Day the restaurant served 450 people.

The woman who owns the restaurant also runs it. She seems to be ever-present, filling in at the coffee bar, seating patrons, serving and clearing, and exhibiting a great personality.

Shortly after you are seated and get your first beverage, a basket of miniature pastries arrives, all of them fresh from the restaurant's own bakery.

Stanley's selection was pretty boring, a fresh fruit bowl, yogurt and pastry.

I went for sliced bananas and the "Salmon & Onion Scramble" – Wild Alaskan Sockeye salmon, smoked over hardwood, scrambled with yellow onions & three eggs. Of course, I also partook of the pastry basket. We ended up ordering a basket refill.

The concoction I ate was excellent, well-cooked, without an excess of added fat.

The miniature muffins were so good I bought a couple dozen to take to Peter and Florence, who invited me to their apartment for dinner that night.

Happily, the restrooms, at least the men's room, are not the high point of the restaurant. The men's room has a urinal and a commode. In the corner opposite the commode there is a V-shaped marble counter top, in which there is a white ceramic washbasin. There are mirrors on two walls above the marble counter top.

It has large dark floor tiles and tan painted walls. It is rather dimly lit, and is a bit on the beaten-down side.

The restaurant is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner every day.

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### A COUPLE OF DELIS

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Eli's Restaurant  
1253 20th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-785-4314  
[www.elisdc.com](http://www.elisdc.com)

My cousin Jesse suggested Eli's Restaurant. Chances are, if you regularly drive up 20th Street, NW, from M Street to Dupont Circle or Massachusetts Avenue, you have passed Eli's without noticing it or without giving it a second look.

It is a certified kosher restaurant. There are no milk-based products or pork products on the menu. Beyond those differences, it is like most other delis of the type.

The appetizers and sides range from Spicy Potato Wedges to a Cold Appetizer Sampler of smoked turkey, salami, chopped liver, pastrami, and hummus. I opted for a potato knish with Israeli salad. Then, throwing any consideration of calories to the wind, I order a 50 Ways sandwich – Chopped liver and Pastrami with Onions and sliced tomatoes on Rye.

For dessert I ordered chocolate "ice cream." Of course, it is made with tofu. But if you didn't know, you could easily believe it was regular ice cream.

Don't bother calling or going to the restaurant between sundown Friday and sunset Saturday...the restaurant is closed for the Jewish Sabbath.

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Morty's Delicatessen  
4620 Wisconsin Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20016  
202-686-1989  
Fax 202-686-3566  
mortysdc.com

Morty's (it used to be called Krupin's) is a more conventional kosher style deli. You can get pork products and milk products. So you will find tasty morsels like "Bacon Cheddar, Chix sandwich," a tender chicken breast grilled and served with crisp bacon, and melted cheddar cheese with lettuce on a Kaiser roll.

The potato pancakes are a treat, and the chicken soup is served with up to two matzo balls the size of tennis balls.

There are a variety of omelets, and a dozen smoked fish salads, ranging from belly lox to sable to whitefish, and a variety of combinations thereof.

Choose from a dozen salads, an egg salad platter to a California fruit salad.

Of course, there is an endless supply of sandwiches, like "The Chevy Chase," corned beef, roast beef, turkey and Swiss cheese, rolled up with lots of coleslaw and Russian dressing.

The restaurant is open every day, and after 4 p.m. there are a variety of entrees, the likes of "Chicken in the Pot," half-boiled chicken, vegetables, vermicelli noodles, and matzo balls. If you prefer, you can get this dish with boiled short ribs.

Morty's has its own bakery and offers up a delightful array of pastries. And, of course, it has a full line of deli take-out meats, salads and noodle dishes.

There is parking in the basement of the building. To find the garage you need to go down one of the Avenues on either side of the block to the ally.

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### A SPECIAL DISH

Equinox  
818 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Washington, DC  
202-331-8118  
- Previously reviewed -

Imagine my delight, when arriving at Equinox one noon, to find the following item on the menu:

"Michael Berman's Favorite Vegetable Arrangement"  
Braised Mustard Greens-Fingerline Potatoes-Caramelized Cauliflower-Spaghetti Squash-  
(the vegetables may vary)

On a number of occasions I had asked Todd Gray to fix me a vegetable plate as an entree. This was the result. Try it.

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### ABOUT RESTROOMS

Especially when an individual restroom is designed to be used by one person at a time, WW believes that unisex is the way to go. On those occasions when it seems appropriate, WW has recommended to women waiting outside the women's restroom to use the men's restroom.

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### ABOUT RESERVATIONS

Many folks have a restaurant they have been meaning to try, but every time you call for a reservation, unless it is far in advance, they are full.

Well, if you have such a restaurant in mind, give it a try, even if it is the last minute. An awful lot of restaurants are not nearly as busy or "stuffy" as they used to be about last minute reservation requests or even walk-ins.

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*Mike*

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