

Mike Berman's

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

No. 127

August 10, 2013

State of the Nation

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The Role of Washington is Changing

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President Obama

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2016

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The Congress

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Restaurants ~

Cleveland
Sun Valley
Washington, DC

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State of the Nation

NBC/WSJ [7/21/13] found 61% of Americans believe that things are on the wrong track in this country. ABC/WP [7/21/13] also found 61% with that

view. PEW [7/21/13] found 67% dissatisfied with the way things are going in the country.

For the month of June 2013 “unemployment” stands at 7.4%, down 0.2 % from May 2013, and 0.1% from April, when the rate was 7.5%. However, this number does not include people who are working part-time, but want full-time employment. Nor does it include those who have not looked for work in the last four weeks. When those folks are added, we get an unemployed/underemployed number that is 13.8% for July 2013. [U.S. BLS]

Following is the July data for 2009-2013.

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Unemployed	9.5	9.5	9.0	8.2	7.4
Unemployed +	16.4	16.6	15.8	14.8	13.8

Gallup also does a survey which is a running, 30-day rolling average. Note that the unemployment number varies from that put out by the BLS. Following are the results for the years 2010-2013.

Unemployed	8.7	9.1	8.2	7.9
Underemployed	18.2	18.2	17.2	17.3

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Although it seems hard to believe, according to the Associated Press, citing exclusive research , “4 out of 5 U.S. adults struggle with joblessness, near-poverty or reliance on welfare for at least parts of their lives....”

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31% of single-parent households report that, at times during the last year, they have had a hard time affording food. This is also reported by 19% of two-adult households with at least one child.

Overall, 69% of Americans say they have enough money to do what they need to do. This includes

- 43% of those making less than \$24,000
- 61% of those making \$24-36,000
- 71% of those making \$36-48,000

- 80% of those making \$48-60,000
- 82% of those making \$60-90,000
- 87% of those making \$90-120,000
- 86% of those making \$120-180,000
- 87% of those making \$180,000,000+ [Gallup 7/2-13]

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PEW Research reports the following about 18-31 year olds, the so-called “Millennials,” based on U.S. Census Bureau data.

- 36% of this group lived in their parents’ home in 2012, up from 32% in 2007
- 63% had jobs in 2012 down from 70% in 2007
- In 2012, 39% are enrolled in college, up from 35% in 2007
- In 2012, 25% are married, down from 30% in 2007

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Currently, 47% think that the Affordable Care Act is a bad idea, while 34% think it is a good idea. Since September 2009, the highest number to think it is a good idea was 40% (7/2012), and the highest number to think it is a bad idea was 49% (6/2013). There has never been a time when more people thought it was a good idea than a bad idea. The closest that public attitudes have come to that is in January 2011, when 39% thought it was a good idea and the same number thought it was a bad idea. [NBC/WSJ7/13]

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Of those who lean Republican, 52% think the leadership of the Republican Party is taking the Party in the wrong direction. 38% say they are taking it in the right direction. Of those who lean Democrat, 72% think the leadership of the Democratic Party is taking the party in the right direction, while 21% think the Party is being taken in the wrong direction. [WP/ABC 7/21/13]

Roughly equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans think their Party has compromised too much in deal with the other Party.

	<u>Rep/Lean Rep</u>	<u>Dem/Lean Dem</u>
Compromised too much	35%	31%
Not compromised enough	27%	32%
Handled this about right	32%	33%

67% of GOP voters believe that in order to do better in Presidential elections the Republican Party needs to address major problems with policy and strategy.
[PEW 7/31/13]

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Whether Democrats or Republicans are “satisfied with the work the federal government is doing” in various areas depends on which Party controls the White House.

In 2013, with Barack Obama in the White House, 73% of Democrats are satisfied with the work being done by the government on the nation’s military and national defense, but only 35% of Republicans hold that view.

In 2005, with George W. Bush in the White House, 88% of Republicans, but only 34% of Democrats, were satisfied with the work being done on the military and national defense.

Seventeen of the same government actions were included in the questions asked in both 2013 and 2005. On not a single issue in 2013 (Obama is President) were the Republicans more satisfied than the Democrats. And, on no issue in 2005 (Bush is President) were the Democrats more satisfied than the Republicans.
[Gallup 7/13]

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For the first time since mid-2005, more people disapprove than approve of the way the U.S. Supreme Court is handling its job. 43% approve and 46% disapprove. As recently as mid-2009, 61% registered approval, while only 28% registered disapproval of its work. [Gallup 7/14/2013]

When a different question is asked, the Court is seen in a more favorable light. Currently, 48% have a favorable view of the Court, while 38% hold an unfavorable view. Looking at 2009, 64% saw the Court favorably. In early 2007, 72% expressed a favorable view. [PEW 7/21/13]

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85% of Americans are still proud to be an American. This number is down

some from mid-2002 when 92% expressed that view. Since 2005, the number expressing this sentiment has varied from 85% to 82%. [Gallup 7/2013]

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Over time , Americans accept change. In 1959, 4% of Americans favored marriage between blacks and whites. Today 87% see such marriages favorably. [Gallup 7/2013]

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The military is ranked on top when Americans are asked whether certain groups contribute “a lot to society’s well being.” 78% of respondents make that choice. Bringing up the bottom of the list are lawyers at 18%. Every group but one, business execs, has dropped some since PEW last asked this question in 2009. Here is the list: military 78%, teachers 72%, medical doctors 66%, scientists, 65%, engineers, 63%, clergy 37%, artists 30%, journalists 28%, business execs 24% (was 21%), lawyers 18%. [PEW March-May, 2013]

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In recent months considerable attention has been paid to the question of sexual assaults in the military. Pentagon reports suggest that 3,374 instances of sexual assault were reported in the fiscal year that ended last September 30th. And the Pentagon estimates that as many as 26,000 sexual assaults may have occurred in that year.

Legislation has been introduced in the Senate and House to change the way in which the military handles these cases.

One recent article on this subject caught WW’s eye. The author is Monica Medina, who served in the army for four years and was a special assistant to the Secretary of Defense. The article suggests a four step solution which seems to make sense.

First, crack down on hard drinking and drugs. The military’s attitude toward these “bad boy” behaviors is the true “don’t ask, don’t tell” issue among the ranks.

Second, show offenders to the door.

Third, provide victims of sexual assault with their own lawyers.

Fourth, hire and promote more women. Half the U.S. population is female, but the share of women in our armed forces has peaked at around 15 percent.

The full article can be found in the Washington Post and The Cap Times.

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The Diminishing Role of Washington

In the last issue of the Watch it was noted that “the inability of the Congress to get little of consequence done, and the increasing dysfunction of the Executive Branch, have led Americans to the conclusion that they cannot look to the Federal government to solve the problems they face in their daily lives.”

A case can be made that Washington is no longer the governmental center of the United States and will not be in the future. This evolution has come to pass because the Congress is currently unable to act, and much of the Federal Executive Branch defies reasonable management and control.

There are certain governmental responsibilities that will always be centered in Washington; for example, national defense, immigration policy, social security and Medicare (as long as they exist), control of planes in flight, broadcast airways, and monetary policy.

But, when it comes to the other issues of daily life, such as education, healthcare, support for those unable to support themselves, and social issues like birth control, abortion, same gender marriage, and voting rights, control will be centered in a series of regional enclaves, States, or even cities.

The enclaves are and will be designed based on philosophical political control. And at this time more of the country’s population lives under republicanism /more conservative control than lives under democratic/more liberal control.

The national political parties have long ceased any role as the instigator, developer or manager of political policy. And, while for some period, they were the primary vehicle of organizational activity and fundraising, even those roles have been diminished.

The mechanics of political engagement are now more often than not administered by a variety of office holders, candidates, and private, politically oriented organizations.

The maps and data that follow illustrate the political control of the States. The first map is based on actual State boundaries. In the second map, the contours of the States are based on their 2012 population.

23 States have a Republican Governor, Senate and House

- Population 150,081,395
- 262 electoral votes
- 34 Republican U.S. Senators/12 Democratic U.S. Senators
- 154 Republican U.S. House members/62 Democratic House Members

14 States have a Democratic Governor, Senate and House

- Population 91,437,994
- 160 electoral votes
- 26(+1 Ind) Democratic U.S. Senators/1 Republican U.S. Senator
- 95 Democratic U.S. House members/36 Republican House Members

30 States have a Republican Governor, but not necessarily the House and Senate

- Population 177,220,111
- 315 electoral votes
- 40 Republican U.S. Senators/19+1 Ind Democratic U.S. Senators
- 176 Republican U.S. House members/79 Democratic House Members

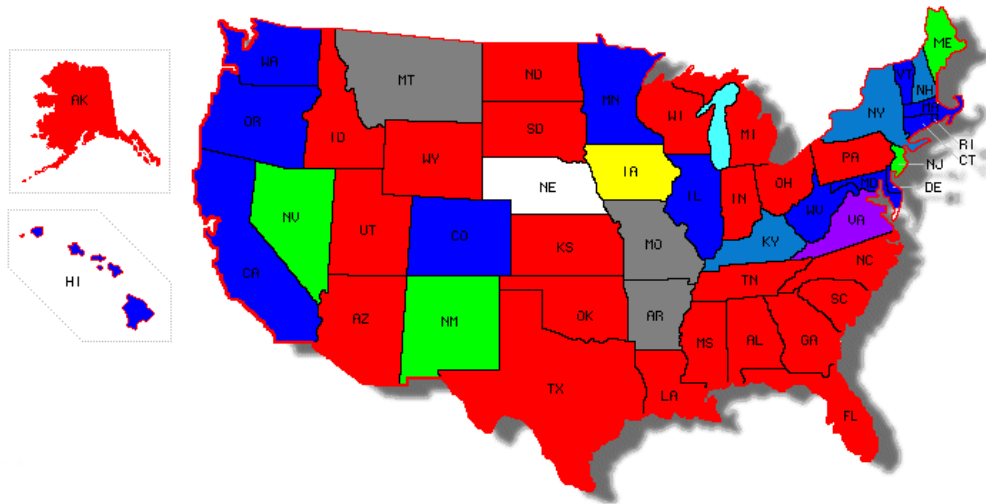
20 States have a Democratic Governor, but not necessarily the House and Senate

- Population 126,247,780
- 220 electoral votes
- 33+1 Ind Democratic Senators/6 Republican U.S. Senators
- 122 Democratic U.S. House members/58 Republican House Members

Political Control of State Government

- -- Dem Governor, House, and Senate (14)
- -- Dem Governor and House, Rep Senate (3)
- -- Dem Governor, Rep House and Senate (3)
- -- Rep Governor, House, and Senate (23)
- -- Rep Governor and House, Dem Senate (1)
- -- Rep Governor, Dem House and Senate (4)
- -- Rep Governor and House, Split Senate (1)

*Nebraska: Rep Governor, Nonpartisan legislature

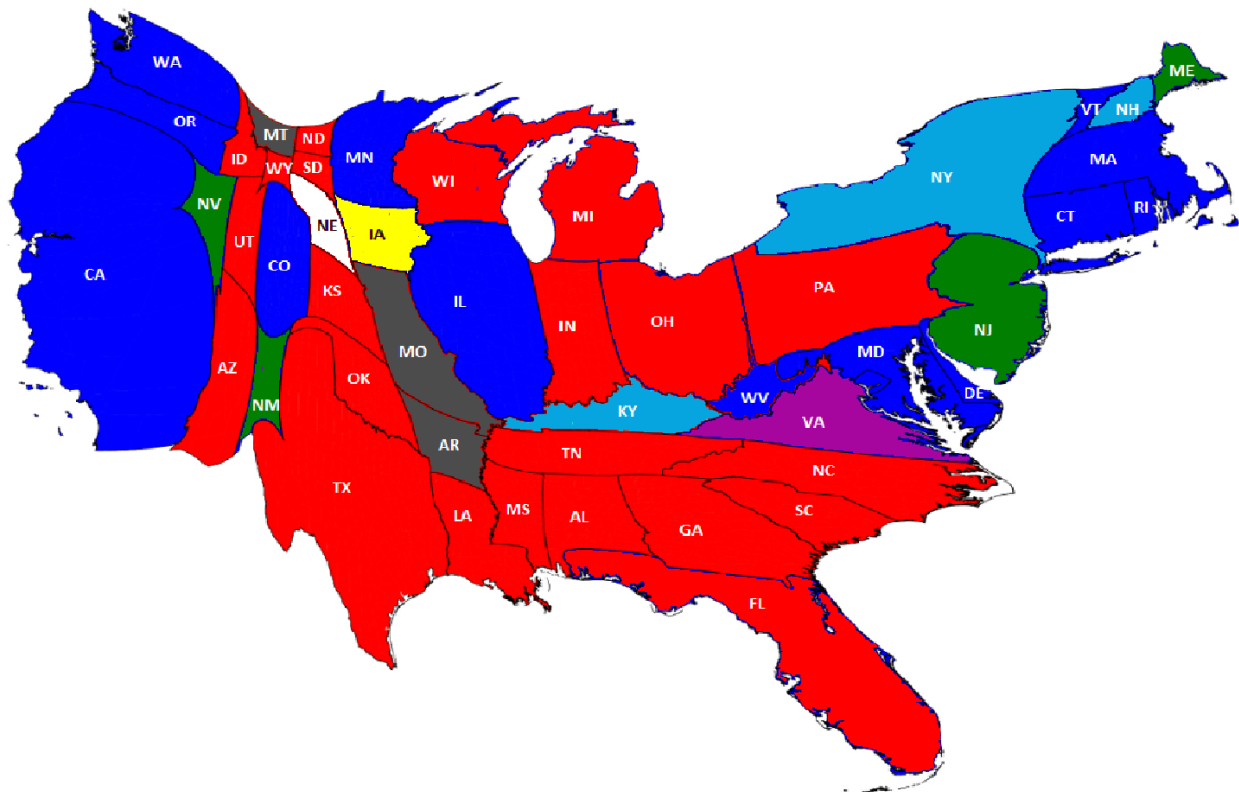


Notes:

District of Columbia: Dem Mayor and City Council

	Total Population	Electoral Votes	Political Division	
			U.S. House Rep/Dem	U.S. Senate Rep/Dem
● -- Dem Governor, House, and Senate (14)	91,437,994	160	36/95	1/26 + 1 Ind.
● -- Dem Governor and House, Rep Senate (3)	25,075,351	41	11/24	3/3
● -- Dem Governor, Rep House and Senate (3)	9,734,435	19	11/2	2/4
Total	126,247,780	220	58/122	6/33 + 1 Ind.
● -- Rep Governor, House, and Senate (23)	150,081,395	262	154/62	34/12
● -- Rep Governor and House, Dem Senate (1)	3,002,555	6	2/2	1/1
● -- Rep Governor, Dem House and Senate (4)	14,583,640	29	9/12	3/4 + 1 Ind.
● -- Rep Governor and House, Split Senate (1)	7,769,089	13	8/3	0/2
*Nebraska- Rep Governor, Nonpartisan legislature	1,783,432	5	3/0	2/0
Total	177,220,111	315	176/79	40/19 + 1 Ind.
* District of Columbia	632,323	3	0/1	NA
		538	234/201 (+1 D.C.)	46/52 + 2 Ind.

Political Control of State Government Based on Population



- -- Dem Governor, House, and Senate (14)
- -- Dem Governor and House, Rep Senate (3)
- -- Dem Governor, Rep House and Senate (3)
- -- Rep Governor, House, and Senate (23)
- -- Rep Governor and House, Dem Senate (1)
- -- Rep Governor, Dem House and Senate (4)
- -- Rep Governor and House, Split Senate (1)

*Nebraska: Rep Governor, Nonpartisan legislature

Notes:

District of Columbia: Dem Mayor and City Council

*Per the map's author: "**Where are Alaska and Hawaii?** Not on the maps. I know. Sorry. There are some technical problems with non-contiguous cartograms that make it difficult to produce nice maps.

*Adapted from map created by Mark Newman, University of Michigan, November 8, 2012 © 2012 M.E.J. Newman: This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). Text and images may be freely distributed.

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President Obama

Charlie Cook (Cook Political Report) summarizes President Obama's situation: "...voters increasingly seem to have hit the mute button on President Obama. They are no longer listening to him and his approval numbers seem to be dropping by about a point every two weeks. This does not seem to be because of any of the so-called scandals that got Republicans so worked up during the winter and spring, but more because voters have a perception of Obama as a not particularly effective leader."

50% say they have a generally favorable opinion of Obama, while 46% view him unfavorably. In another national survey, 48% have positive feelings toward Obama, while 40% have negative feelings. [Fox News 7/23; NBC/WSJ 7/21]

The public's grade for the job President Obama is doing (as found by Gallup) is 46%/45%. This is better than only 1 of the 5 previous two-term Presidents at this point in their second term. The list of 6 follows:

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
Reagan	65	26 (8/15/85)
Eisenhower	63	20 (8/13/57)
Clinton	61	32 (8/13/97)
G Bush (II)	46	51 (8/11/05)
<u>Obama</u>	46	45 (8/6/13)
Nixon	36	54 (8/20/73)

<u>Date</u>	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN/ORC</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>
July 2013	45/50%	49/44%	xxx	48/45% (CBS)
June 2013	48/47%	xxx	45/54%*	47/43%
May 2013	xxx	51/45%	53/45%	xxx
Apr 2013	47/48%	50/45%*	51/47%	47/45%
Mar 2013	xxx	50/46%	47/50%	45/46% (CBS)
Feb 2013	50/45%	xxx	xxx	xxx
Jan 2013	52/44%	55/41%	55/43%	51/41%
July 2013	49/46%	50/45%	49/48%	48/42%

Obama's performance on the economy has been rated negatively since December 2009, with the exception of December 2012/January 2013. In its most recent survey, NBC/WSJ found 51% disapproving of Obama's performance on the economy. 45% currently approve of his performance in this area.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
July 2013	45%	51%
June 2013	46%	49%
Apr 2013	47%	50%
Feb 2013	44%	51%
Jan 2013	49%	48%
Jan 2012	45%	50%
Jan 2011	45%	50%
Jan 2010	43%	49%
Jan 2009	56%	31%

The Washington/ABC survey (7/21/13) found a similar result, with 49% disapproving of the President's performance in this area, while 45% approved. And Quinnipiac University (7/31/14) found 54% disapproving his performance, while 42% approved.

Obama's performance on foreign policy is rated dead-even (46%/46%) by those who approve of what the President has done on foreign policy and those that do not.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
July 2013	46%	46%
April 2013	46%	43%
January 2012	51%	41%
April 2011	49%	46%
January 2010	50%	37%

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By 48% to 38% Americans want to see Congress rather than Obama take the lead role in setting policy for the country. And among those who picked the Congress to set policy, 58% want Republicans in the House taking the lead. Only 19% think Senate Democrats should take the lead. [NBC/WSJ 7/13]

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44% of Americans are optimistic or satisfied with how they feel President Obama will do during the rest of his term, while 56% are uncertain or pessimistic about how well he will do. The number of those who are pessimistic, 34%, is double the number who are optimistic, 17%.

53% believe that Obama will not be able to get much done during the balance of his term, while 43% believe he can be effective. [NBC/WSJ 7/21/13]

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2016

It is way too early to handicap the 2016 Presidential race. So, for the foreseeable future the Watch's only attention to the race will be to keep a running list of folks who are getting serious mention.

<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Democrats</u>
Jeb Bush	Joe Biden
Chris Christie	Hillary Clinton
Bobby Jindal	Andrew Cuomo
Rand Paul	Kristin Gillibrand
Marco Rubio	Amy Klobuchar
Paul Ryan	Martin O'Malley
	Elizabeth Warren

68% of Americans favor a “nationwide popular vote” on any issue if enough voters sign a petition requesting it.

- 74% of Republicans
- 69% of Independents
- 64% of Democrats

58% believe that nationwide, one-day Presidential primaries should be used to select party nominees.

- 69% of Republicans
- 57% of Independents
- 57% of Democrats

61% would “shorten Presidential campaigns to just five weeks in late September and October before the November election.”

- 62% of Republicans
- 66% of Independents
- 55% of Democrats

[Gallup 7/2013]

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The Congress

83% disapprove of the job being done by Congress. [NBC/WSJ 7/13]
The average disapproval of five surveys taken during July is 77%. [Polling Report] This is the highest level of disapproval of Congress that has been recorded since 1994, although it is in the range of the ratings published since the middle of 2011.

The job that Democrats in Congress are doing has a disapproval rating of 55%, and the job Republicans are doing is disapproved by 67%. [CBS 7/13]

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The “partisanship and inability of Congress to get things done” leads the list of the reasons why folks are most unhappy with the performance of the government in Washington. 27% cite that reason. Coming in second, with 16%, is “the needs and challenges facing average middle class Americans are being ignored.” Third place goes to “the policies and leadership of the Obama administration,” with 13%. [NBC/WSJ 7/21/13]

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Adults are now equally divided, 44% to 44%, in their preference as to whether they want the Democrats or Republicans to control the Congress. In June the Democrats had a 3-point advantage. The last time the Democrats didn’t have at least a one point lead was August 2011, and in June of that year it was also 44% to 44%.

Of particular note, among self-identified Independents, 46% prefer a Republican-controlled Congress, while 27% prefer that the Democrats be in control.

When asked in July whether their representative deserves re-election, 57% chose “give a new person a chance.” The last time 57% expressed this view was in June 2010, followed by 56% expressing that view in August 2010.

Again in July 2013, 57% said that, given the option on the ballot, they would replace every single member of Congress. In October 2010 only 45% expressed that view. The number has been growing ever since. [NBC/WSJ 7/13]

Democrats lost 63 House seats in the 2010 election.

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THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats	52
Republicans	46
Independents	2

Earlier this year, with the Democrats controlling the U.S. Senate by 55 to 45, the idea that the Republicans might regain control of that body seemed like a bit of a dream. (The passing of New Jersey Senator Frank Lautenberg resulted in the appointment of a Republican to fill his seat until a special election in the fall. It is anticipated that Democrat Cory Booker, Mayor of Newark, will win that election, returning the Senate to a 55/45 Democratic majority.)

Now, some six months later, it is not beyond the pale that Vice President Joe Biden will spend more time on Capitol Hill after the 2014 election, ever ready to assume the Chair in the Senate.

In the June WW, six Senate races were rated as Toss-Ups: Alaska, Arkansas, Louisiana, Iowa, Montana, and North Carolina. In this issue only two States, Arkansas and Louisiana, remain as Toss-ups.

With the decision of ex-Governor Brian Schwitzer to not enter the race, Montana moves to Leaning Republican. Most recent polling suggests that Alaska, Iowa, and North Carolina are now Leaning Democrat.

This leaves Democratic incumbents in Arkansas and Louisiana in the Toss-Up column. Republican U.S. House member Tom Cotton has now announced that he will challenge Democratic Mark Pryor. Democratic incumbent Mary Landrieu in Louisiana is in a better position than Pryor.

A new entry in the Toss Up column (Cook Political Report) is Kentucky. Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell now faces a double header. He is being challenged in the primary by Matt Bevin, a wealthy businessman. Assuming he gets through the primary challenge he will face the current Democratic Kentucky Secretary of State Alison Grimes, a member of a prominent Democratic family.

Bevin is in the Rand Paul school of Republicanism. It appears that, if McConnell gets through the primary, he will have a hard fight against Grimes. If Bevin wins the primary, he will likely be in a better position to win the general election as well. One thing is likely, McConnell will not lack for resources, financial and human.

Michelle Nunn's entry into the Georgia Senate race has created hope in Democratic circles that this open seat might switch. There is not enough information to make a real assessment at this time.

In February, Nate Silver used his own brand of analysis to suggest that the Republicans would finish 2014 with 49 or 50 U.S. Senate seats. His most recent analysis published on July 15th suggests that Republicans may be on a path to 50 or 51 seats.

* Italics denotes the retirement of a current member.

Safe Democrat(11)	Leaning Democrat(5)	TossUp(3)	Leaning Republican(4)	Safe Republican(12)
Colorado	Alaska	Arkansas	<i>Georgia</i>	Alabama
Delaware	Iowa	Kentucky	<i>Montana</i>	Idaho
Hawaii	<i>Michigan</i>	Louisiana	<i>So. Dakota</i>	Kansas
Illinois	New Hamp.		<i>West Virginia</i>	Maine
<i>Massachusetts</i>	No. Carolina			Mississippi
Minnesota				<i>Nebraska</i>
<i>New Jersey</i>				Oklahoma
New Mexico				So. Carolina
Oregon				So. Carolina
Rhode Island				Tennessee
Virginia				Texas
				Wyoming

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2014	34	31
Safe in 2014	11	12
Leaning in 2012	5	4
Total	50	47

Toss-ups 3 (2D,1R)

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THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

There is little or no evidence that the Democrats can retake control of the House of Representatives in 2014.

Here are the facts from the Cook Political Report.

- Only 90 of the 435 House Districts are competitive. In 2012 there were 99 such districts.
- Only 9 House races are rated as toss-ups and, of those, 8 are held by Democrats
- Only 5 of the 234 Republicans in the House represent Districts that lean Democratic
- 15 Democrats represent Districts that lean Republican

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

	<u>1/24/13</u>	<u>2/21/13</u>	<u>4/17/13</u>	<u>6/20/13</u>	<u>7/19/13</u>
Total Dem	201	201	201	201	201
Solid Dem	167	166	166	163	163
Likely Dem	17	18	18	18	15
Lean Dem	11	11	11	12	15
Toss-up	7	7	8	9	9
D	6	6	6	8	8
R	1	1	2	1	1
Lean GOP	7	10	10	10	11
Likely GOP	18	17	18	17	17
Solid GOP	208	206	204	206	205
Total GOP	234	234	234	234	234

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

	<u>3/12</u>	<u>4/19</u>	<u>6/14</u>	<u>7/19</u>
Total Democrat	201	200	194	202
Safe Democrat	176	176	177	175
D Favored	10	10	8	8
Lean D	6	6	9	10
Toss Up/Tilt D	6	6	5	5
Toss Up-D	3	2	3	3
Toss Up-R	2	3	1	1
Toss Up/Tilt R	5	5	5	5
Lean R	5	5	5	5
R Favored	13	13	10	10
Safe Republican	207	208	212	212
Total Republican	234	234	227	233

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Restaurants

Sign in a unisex restroom – not at a restaurant

**IF YOU SPRINKLE
WHEN YOU TINKLE
PLEASE BE A SWEETIE AND
WIPE THE SEATIE.....
THANK YOU**

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The photograph below was taken a few weeks ago in a well known Washington restaurant which was featured in the Watch two years ago. These rolls of toilet paper take up an entire wall in the very small men’s room of the restaurant.



BRAVO Eton
Cucina Italiana
28889 Chagrin Blvd
Woodmere, Ohio 44122
216-360-0099

Debbie and I met for lunch with Peta and Rollie. Bravo Eton is part of a chain, and seats more than 300 people.

The main menu is huge. There are eight appetizers, eleven salads and soups, eight sandwiches & combos, twelve pastas, seven signature dishes, five pizza and flatbreads, fifty-two wine selections, thirteen signature cocktails, including two that are alcohol free, and eighteen beers, including one non-alcoholic.

There is also a separate, shorter menu titled “The Lighter Side of Rome.” This includes seventeen items, only some of which are also available on the main menu.

Rollie, Peta and I had the soup of the day, a minestrone. Rollie and I followed with a BRAVO Chopped Salad. Both dishes were from the main menu. Debbie had two selections from the Lighter menu, Flatbread Roma, roasted roma tomatoes, mozzarella, fresh basil, drizzled with extra virgin olive oil, followed by a Chopped Salad.

The restroom was quite satisfactory, and is not included here in more detail because I inadvertently deleted the pictures that I shot in the restroom.

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SPICE
Kitchen & Bar
5800 Detroit Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44102
Spicekitchenandbar.com

Debbie and I went to Spice with Suzie, Jimmy, Zack, and Debbie P.

As you enter the restaurant there is a bar to the right with a dozen high stools. There are also some smaller tables in the bar area. The balance of the

restaurant is various combinations of square 2 tops, 4 tops , 6 tops and 8 tops. The tables are covered with white cloth tablecloths, with white paper covering the table area. Presumably only the paper cover is changed between dining parties. We were offered the opportunity to eat outside, but to accommodate me, everyone in our party agreed to eat inside. The restaurant seats 75-80 people.

Our group started by sharing Polenta Chickpea Fries with spicy remoulade, Zucchini Biscuits with hartzler butter, and Mushroom Beignets with honey goat cheese crème Fraiche.

For the second course Debbie P and Jimmy had the soup of the day, which was a Corn Chowder. Suzie had Spice Acres, goat cheese, radish, cucumber, hazelnuts, lemon vinaigrette. Debbie and I had Tomato Salad, greens, feta, shaved onion & white balsamic dressing.

For the main course (called “Substantials” on the menu) Debbie P and Jimmy had English Pea Ravioli, ratatouille, eggplant puree. Suzie and Zach had Roast Chicken, chive spaetzle, market veggies, green garlic sourbise. Suzie ventured that it was the best chicken she had ever eaten in a restaurant. Debbie had Soft Shell Crab, and I savored the Pan-Seared Walleye, rice fritters, summer beans, scallion mojo.

For dessert we shared two freshly made Peach/BlueBerry cobblers.

Our server was a woman by the name of Raquel. She was one of the best servers I have encountered in a long time. And the wait staff worked with her seamlessly.

There is a basic restroom. In one corner is a square ceramic washbasin on top of a two-drawer chest, with a relatively large mirror on the wall above the basin. There is a white ceramic wall-hanging urinal in another corner, and a small separate commode area with a heavy medium dark wood door.

The floors are covered with large yellowish tiles, and the walls have similar sized grey tiles to about a four foot height, with the balance of the walls being painted.

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Happy Dog
5801 Detroit Road Cleveland, Ohio
www.happydogcleveland.com

The Happy Dog is directly across the street from Spice. As we left Spice I wandered across the street and entered the Happy Dog. It is relatively dark, there is a large bar at the far side of the restaurant, and there is live music. I did not eat at Happy Dog.

There are only four dishes at the Happy Dog; a quarter pound hotdog that is made from the restaurant's own recipe, a vegan Italian sausage, French fries and tater tots. The hot dog and sausage come with a bun and cost \$5. The sides cost \$3 each. (There is also a gluten free item upon request.)

You have a choice of 50 toppings, ranging from house-made ketchup to Thai chili and garlic sauce to Yuengling sauerkraut to house-made chunky peanut butter and Applewood smoked bacon. If you only order potatoes, you may be charged an extra \$1 for several of the 50 toppings.

A Happy Dog hoodie is available for \$30.

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Round House Lodge
Part way up Bald Mountain
Ketchum, Idaho (part of Sun Valley)
[about 7600 above sea level]

There are three ways to get to this restaurant. You can hike, ride a mountain bike, or take the gondola that is used in winter to transport skiers. As you can imagine, Debbie and I did not hike or take a mountain bike, although in fairness Debbie could have done either.

The gondola ride provides an opportunity to look out over Sun Valley and environs from an ever increasing height. (The gondola is not great for picture taking because it is fully enclosed, although a large part of the enclosure is glass.) There is a second gondola/lift that goes from the restaurant level to the very top of the mountain. There is a fee for use of the gondola, but tickets are readily available at the parking lot level before heading up the mountain.

What is not obvious when you head up the mountain even by gondola, is that, once you get to the gondola landing, there are fifty-five stairs up to the Round House Lodge.

The restaurant has three areas. The center has a bar area and regular tables, as well as the restrooms. It is separated from the next “round of the restaurant” by wood/glass walls with large open doorways. This second layer goes half-way around the restaurant, and includes two lines of tables with a large walkway between them. There is a wood and glass wall with doors that close to separate this layer from the final half ring, which is open-air. Interestingly, it is also open in the winter months.

We would have had to wait for at least a half hour to be seated if we wanted to sit outside, so we sat along the outer wall of the second layer.

Debbie ordered Shrimp Ceviche in an Avocado half and an order of Sweet Potato fries. I had an excellent Gazpacho with apples and a Salmon Burger. Happily, this restaurant uses ground salmon along with cornichons, red onion, oregano vinaigrette on a challah bun.

The food was good, but the real treat is the view.

The fifty-five steps down to the Gondola landing were a bit easier than the fifty-five steps up.

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LE DIPLOMATE
1601 14TH Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
202-332-333
Lediplomatedc.com

Debbie and I had a pleasant evening with Hilary and Campbell at Le Diplomate. This French bistro seems to be one of the current hot destinations in Washington. Stories are legend about folks waiting for up to 45 minutes after their reservation time to be seated. One serving person told a customer that, if they wanted to be seated near their reservation time, they should make their reservation for 5 p.m. or 9 p.m.

Hilary made our reservation, and she and Campbell were already at a perfect corner booth in the main dining room when we arrived at 6:30 p.m. There is a large bar on one side of the main room, and by 7:30 p.m. people were many layers deep around that area. It was hard to tell if they were waiting for tables or just enjoying the drinks and socialization. There is another inside room just past the bar. The restaurant is located on the Northeast corner of 14th St. and Q St. There is sidewalk seating on the 14th St and the Q St sides of the restaurant.

We started dinner by sharing an order of Escargots in hazelnut butter. Hilary and Campbell ordered a half Lobster, a Frisee Salad, duck confit, poached egg, and Macaroni Au Gratin. Debbie selected Roasted Duck Breast, lavender-honey, artichoke, fennel, almonds. I started with an excellent Onion Soup Gratinee, sans cheese, and followed that with Lamb Shank, Moroccan couscous, barissa, yogurt.

As the evening wore on, the sound and congestion grew, but the service was timely, friendly and professional.

The men's room is of good size and well maintained. There are side-by-side white ceramic washbasins in a wooden counter top. To the left there is a floor-to-ceiling wall that comes out about four feet, and then there are two white ceramic floor based urinals with a couple foot-long walls between them. The white ceramic commode, along with a diaper changing table, are located in a separate room with a wood, shuttered door. The floor is covered with large grey tiles. The walls are covered with horizontal white tiles to about shoulder height. Above the tiles the walls are painted a goldish color up to the ceiling.

There is valet parking on the Q Street side of the restaurant.

Mike

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