

Mike Berman's

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**State of the Nation
The Youngest Members– Page 2
Polarization – Page 4**

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2014 – A Little More – Page 6

* * * * *

President Obama – Page 7

* * * * *

Congress- Page 8

* * * * *

2016 – Page 11

* * * * *

This and That – page 14

* * * * *

**Restaurants – Page 14
Do you need a Numi?
Cleveland
Washington**

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State of the Nation

In the 3rd week of November, the NBC/WSJ poll found that 65% of us think the country is on the wrong track while 25% of us think the country is on the right track.

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The official BLS unemployment rate for November 2014 is 5.8 %. There is no change from October and it is down 1.2% points from a year ago. If one takes into account the total unemployed + those marginally attached to the labor force + those working part-time who want full-time work, the rate is 11.4 %. This is down from 13.1% in November 2013. 2.7% have been unemployed for 15 weeks or longer, down from 3.7% in November 2013.

In the first week of December, Gallup found an unemployment rate of 6.1%, down from 8.3% at the same time in 2013. It also found an underemployment rate (unemployed + those working part-time, but wanting full time) of 15.1%, down a touch from 17.3% in December 2013.

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The Youngest Members

In 2015, the youngest woman ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and the youngest person ever elected to any of the 50 State legislatures will be Republican women.

Elise Stefanik, age 30, won her election in New York's 21st Congressional district. She will also be the youngest member of the House when it convenes.

Saira Blair, age 18, won her election in West Virginia's 59th legislative district. She will be the youngest member of the West Virginia legislature when it convenes.

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In a recent article in Politico, pollster Anna Greenberg wrote in part,

“Looking forward, the lesson of this election is that Democrats lacked an economic narrative that could convince voters that they would do a better job looking out for people who are struggling to get into or stay in the middle class.”

Greenberg then went on to write, “Now more than 40 percent of children are born to unmarried women, and women head more than 80 percent of single parent households. Forty percent of all households with children age 18 or younger include a mother who is the sole or primary source of income – compared with just 10 percent in 1960. Overall, 41 percent of all mothers are the primary breadwinner, and 22 percent are co-breadwinners. Women make up two-thirds of the low-wage workers in the United States, and women are more likely to live in poverty than men.”

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The following are a series of feelings expressed by the American public as reported by the NBC/WSJ 11/17/14.

- * 56% believe “the economic and political systems in the country are stacked against people like me.”
- * 41% believe there will not be much change as a result of the election, while 9% believe there will be a great deal of change.
- * 63% want folks elected to office this year “to make compromises to gain consensus on legislation.”

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During 2013, 76% of those over 18 years of age read at least one book. The number of folks who read an e-book has grown to 28%. Half of us now own a tablet or an e-reader.

Over the period of May 2010 to January 2014 the percentage of adults who own a tablet has grown from 3% to 42%, and the number of folks who own e-readers has grown from 4% to 32%. While one might expect that the largest number of owners of tablet computers or e-readers would be those from 18-29 years of age, only 48% have one or the other. The largest number of owners are

those 30-49 years of age – 52%. Only 25% of those 65 and over own one of these devices. [PEW 1/14]

Of those same three age groups, 39%, 38% and 37% respectively, used text messaging, a cellphone or email on a given day in late 2014. Only 15% used a business landline phone. [Gallup]

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23% of men and 17% of women 25 years of age and older have never been married. This is more than double the number of unmarried in 1980. [PEW 9/14]

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72% of Americans think that religion is losing its influence on American life and many are not happy about that reality. 49% of us think that houses of worship should express their views on social and political questions. And a record number, 32%, think that houses of worship should come out “in favor of one candidate or another.” [PEW 9/14]

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If you spend any time observing or participating in the electoral political process you know instinctively that the number of people who consistently express liberal or conservative opinions has grown, with the attendant result that the country is increasingly polarized. In June 2014, the Pew Research Center put numbers to the obvious. Here are some of the findings:

1. The number of Americans who “express consistently conservative or consistently liberal opinions” has grown from 10% to 21% in the last 20 years.
2. The percentage of Republicans who have a “very unfavorable” opinion of the Democratic Party has grown from 17% to 43%. The percentage of Democrats who have a “very unfavorable” opinion of the Republican Party has grown from 17% to 38%.
3. In 2004, roughly 50% took an equal number of conservative and liberal positions. Now that number is down to 39%.

4. 62% of liberals think that compromise means that any deal between Obama and the Republicans should be closer to the Obama position, and 57% of conservatives believe any deal should be more on the GOP's terms.

5. Three quarters of conservatives prefer living in communities that are quite different than those preferred by roughly the same number of liberals.

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Since 2000, the number of people who think having a gun in the house make it a safer place, rather than a more dangerous place, has grown from 35% to 63%. This latter number includes 67% of men and 58% of women. Twice as many Republicans (81%) as Democrats (41%) are in the 63% group. [Gallup 11/14]

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33% of Americans say that they or some member of their family has put off medical treatment in the last year because of cost. This is the highest number recorded in the last 14 years. The largest cohort some 38% of folks putting off treatment are in the group earning \$30,000-74,999; 35% of those making under \$30,000 have put off treatment; and 28% of those making \$75,000 or more have put off treatment. [Gallup 11/14]

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As the Supreme Court began its Fall 2014 term, 48% of Americans disapproved of the job it is doing, as opposed to 44% who approved the job being done. In 2000, the Court received a 62% approval rating. In 2009, it had an approval rating of 60%. At only one time, in 2005, did disapproval exceed approval. [Gallup 10/14]

By a small margin of 49% to 46%, we believe that the Supreme Court should base its rulings on what the Constitution means in current times as opposed to what it meant as originally written. Democrats favor the "current times" view by 70% to 28%, while Republicans favor the "as originally written" view by 69% to 29%. Independents split evenly. [PEW 7/14]

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The 2014 election – A little more

The Winston Group recently made the following point. Of the 48% who rated the economy as “not so good” in 2014, 58% voted Republican and 41% voted Democrat, a spread of 17 points in favor of the Republicans. In 2012, when 45% had the “not so good” position, 55% favored the Democrats and 42% the Republicans, a 13 point spread.

In a further analysis, the Winston Group reported on the ideological shift among the Parties in the last six national elections.

Based on the exit polls, David Winston and Myra Miller write in part:

“Republicans and Independents moved slightly farther to the right, but Democrats moved slightly to the left.”

“The 2014 elections also show a consolidation of independents as a center-right group, in part because of Republicans who have left the party to become independents. Based on the results from this election, the ideological composition of independents has moved from a leaning center right group to a solidly center-right group.”

“While the high water mark for the conservative composition of the Republican Party was 2010 (71%), 2014 marks a 4% net increase in conservatives (66%) in the party since 2004 (62%).”

“Democrats have moved from being a center-left party to a liberal party, with nearly one in two Democrats (48%) identifying themselves as liberals, a significant increase since 2008 (39%)”

	<u>2014</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2004</u>
Republican						
Conservative	66	65	71	64	60	62
Moderate	30	30	26	32	36	34
Liberal	14	5	3	4	4	4
Independent						
Conservative	33	31	39	28	24	23
Moderate	50	50	47	54	57	56
Liberal	17	19	14	17	18	20
Democrat						
Conservative	11	12	13	13	11	12
Moderate	42	43	44	47	51	50
Liberal	48	46	43	39	38	39

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Following the 2014 election, only 36% have a favorable rating of the Democratic Party, the lowest score achieved by the Democrats at least since 1992. In the intervening period the Democrats have posted favorable ratings as high as 61%.

The Republicans, who in the fall of 2013 had scored their lowest favorable rating in the 1992-2014 period of 28%, jumped up to 42% in the post-2014 election survey. [Gallup 11/14]

When asked about the impact of President Obama on the 2014 election, one astute non-partisan observer of the election scene said, “When Obama gets up to speak, folks hit the mute button.”

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President Obama

The public's grade on President Obama's job approval (as found by Gallup 12/6) is 43% approval/51% disapproval. The NBC/WSJ survey found the President's job approval at 44%, up a smidgen from a year earlier.

Americans' approval of how Obama is handling the economy is at 43%, up 4 points from a year ago. However, his approval rating on handling foreign policy is down 6 points from a year ago. [NBC/WSJ 11/14]

Obama's job approval among blacks so far this year is 84%, among Asians 64%, among Hispanics 53%, and among whites 32%. [Gallup]

<u>Date</u>	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN/ORC</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>
Nov 2014	44/50%	xxx	44/53%	xxx
2014 Election				
Oct 2014	xxx	42/56%LV	45/53%	xxx
Oct 2014	42/52%RV	39/57%LV	xxx	42/50% (CBS)ALL
Sept 2014	40/54%	42/51%	44/52	40/50%
August 2014	40/54%	xxx	xxx	41/50% (CBS)
June 2014	42/53%	xxx	43/55%	40/54%
Jan 2014	43/51%	45/52%	45/51%	46/47%(CBS)
Jan 2013	52/44%	55/41%	55/43%	51/41%

Among the last five Presidents to serve two full terms, Obama's approval rating at this time ranks 4th.

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
Clinton	66	30 (12/6/98)
Eisenhower	57	32 (12/8/58)
Reagan	47	44 (12/5/86)
<u>Obama</u>	43	51 (12/6/14)
G W Bush	38	59 (12/10/06)

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When it comes to how Americans "feel" about Obama, 45% say they have positive feelings and 43% have negative feelings. A year ago, 42% had positive feelings and 46% had negative feelings. [NBC/WSJ11/14]

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Congress

53% of us want the Republicans in Congress, rather than President Obama, to have the most influence over the direction of the nation in the next year. Early in 2012 Obama was chosen by a margin of 46% to 42%. By 2013, the Republicans were slightly ahead. That trend has continued. This response is similar to what happened in other recent non-presidential year elections.

After the 2010 election the Republicans were selected by 49% to 41%. But after the 2006 election, the Democrats were selected over President Bush by 61% to 31%. [Gallup 11/14]

The House

Currently 434 House seats have been decided, with 188 to be held by Democrats and 246 to be held by Republicans. Arizona's 2nd District is the subject of a recount.

Democratic House candidates lost by 30 points in the 2014 U.S. House elections among white working class voters, according to Gallup.

Just for the fun of it, the following chart matches the percentage of the votes cast for the Democratic and Republican candidates for the House of Representatives as reported by the 11/17 NBC/WSJ survey and the percentage of actual votes cast for each party as reported by the Cook Political Report.

	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Other</u>
Cook Political Report	51.41%	45.71%	2.8%
NBC/WSJ	47%	44%	3%

[Note: The Cook Political Report numbers represent 100% of the votes cast as of the day of calculation. The NBC/WSJ numbers only add up to 94% because 6% would not say or were not sure.]

The Senate

24 Republican Senators and 10 Democratic Senators are up for re-election in 2016. To date, none of them have announced they are not planning to stand for election.

Republican Senators up for Reelection in 2016 (24)

State	Incumbent	First Year Elected	% of Vote in most recent victory (2010 election unless noted)
AL	Richard Shelby	1986	65%
AK	Lisa Murkowski	2002	40%
AZ	John McCain	1986	59%
AR	John Boozman	2010	58%
FL	Marco Rubio	2010	49%
GA	Johnny Isakson	2004	58%
ID	Mike Crapo	1998	71%
IL	Mark Kirk	2010	48%
IN	Dan Coats	1989-1999, retired and ran again in 2010	55%
IA	Chuck Grassley	1980	65%
KS	Jerry Moran	2010	70%
KY	Rand Paul	2010	56%
LA	David Vitter	2004	57%
MO	Roy Blunt	2010	54%

NH	Kelly Ayotte	2010	60%
NC	Richard Burr	2004	55%
ND	John Hoeven	2010	76%
OH	Rob Portman	2010	57%
OK	James Lankford	2014 Special Election to fill unexpired term of retiring Senator Tom Coburn	68% 2014 special election
PA	Pat Toomey	2010	51%
SC	Tim Scott	2014 Special Election to fill seat vacated by Jim DeMint	61% 2014 special election
SD	John Thune	2004	Unopposed
UT	Mike Lee	2010	61%
WI	Ron Johnson	2010	52%

Democratic Senators up for Reelection in 2016 (10)

State	Incumbent	First Year Elected	% of Vote in most recent victory (2010 election unless noted)
CA	Barbara Boxer	1992	52%
CO	Michael Bennet	2010 (Appointed in 2009)	48%
CT	Richard Blumenthal	2010	55%
HI	Brian Schatz	2014 Special Election, Appointed in 2012 to replace Daniel Inouye	69.8% 2014 special election
MD	Barbara Mikulski	1986	62%
NV	Harry Reid	1986	50%
NY	Chuck Schumer	1998	66%
OR	Ron Wyden	1996	57%
VT	Patrick Leahy	1974	64%
WA	Patty Murray	1992	52%

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Looking Ahead to 2016 – Contest for President

This is the current list of potential contenders. Inclusion on this list requires very little connection to an actual intention to run for President. For example, if someone suggests publicly that you should or might be a candidate and you do not deny it, you are on the list.

<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
Mike Pence	Elizabeth Warren
John Kasich	Howard Dean
Scott Walker	Deval Patrick
Ted Cruz	Brian Schweitzer
Rick Santorum	Mark Warner
Rick Perry	Jay Nixon
Michelle Bachman	Jim Webb
Ben Carson	Bernie Sanders
Mike Huckabee	Joe Manchin
John Huntsman	
Joe Scarborough	
Donald Trump	
Mitt Romney	
Carly Fiorina	
Rob Portman	
Peter King	
Greg Abbott	
Jim Gilmore	
Bill Haslam	

The numbers below represent the Real Clear Politics average of public surveys in the respective Party “nomination contests” from 7/20-11/23. [For reasons that are not evident, RCP does not include Ben Carson or Mitt Romney.]

<u>Democrats</u>		<u>Republicans</u>	
Clinton	62.7%	Bush	14.3%
Warren	11.3	Christie	10.8
Biden	10.8	Paul	10.8
Cuomo	2.3	Ryan	11.2
Sanders	3.5	Huckabee	9.7
O’Malley	1.2	Perry	6.6
Webb	1.4	Walker	6.7
		Rubio	5.8
		Cruz	5.8
		Jindal	2.8
		Santorum	2.8

Here are the results of a CNN/ORC survey conducted on 11/21-23 that does include Romney and Carson. In the same CNN/ORC survey respondents were asked for their second choice. When those two answers are combined and Romney is left off the list, the Republican list is

<u>Democrats</u>		<u>Republicans</u>		<u>Republicans #2</u>	
Clinton	65%	Romney	20%	Bush	14%
Warren	10	Carson	10%	Carson	11
Biden	9	Bush	9	Huckabee	10
Sanders	5	Christie	8	Christie	9
Cuomo	1	Huckabee	7	Ryan	9
Patrick	1	Paul	6	Paul	8
Webb	1	Ryan	6	Cruz	7
O’Malley	*	Cruz	5	Perry	5
		Walker	5	Walker	5
		Perry	4	Kasich	3
		Rubio	3	Rubio	3
		Kasich	2	Santorum	2
		Santorum	2	Jindal	1
		Jindal	1	Pence	1
		Pence	1	Portman	*
		Portman	*		

One interesting potential Republican ticket that is making the rounds is Jeb Bush of Florida for President and Ohio U.S. Senator Rob Portman for Vice-President. While Portman is up for re-election in 2016, Ohio law does not prohibit a person from running for two Federal offices on the same ballot. You may recall, Congressman Paul Ryan did the same thing.

Bush recently said that he will shortly announce whether he plans to run for President, and Portman has recently announced that he is not running for President to focus on his re-election to the Senate. Of course, this does not preclude him from deciding in July of 2016 to accept an offer to run for Vice President.

Obama won both of these States in 2008 and 2012. In 2008, he won Ohio by 4.58 points, and 2012 he won the state by 2.98 points. In 2008, he won Florida by 2.81 points, and in 2012 he won the State by 0.87 points.

Based on those results, a home State candidacy is likely to put both of these States in play. Together, they have 67 electoral votes (Florida 47, Ohio 20). In 2012, without these States, Obama would have been 5 votes short of the required 270 electoral votes.

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As a regular feature, the NBC/WSJ survey asks respondents to rate their “feelings” toward various individuals and organizations on a scale ranging from “very positive” to “very negative,” as well as whether they don’t know the name and are unable to rate the individual or organization.

The following chart is based on data from the 11/14-17/14 NBC/WSJ survey.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Able to Rate</u>	<u>Positive overall</u>	<u>Positive among own Party</u>
Clinton	99%	43%	78%
Biden	95%	35%	62%
Warren	61%	23%	36%
O’Malley	26% (7/13)	xx	10%
Bush	86%	26%	44%
Christie	82%	29%	40%
Huckabee	78%	25%	52%
Paul	75%	26%	48%
Perry	73%	20%	33%

Rubio	61%	21%	37%
Cruz	60%	16%	27%
Walker	46%	15%	29%
Carson	42%	17%	33%
Kasich	39%	11%	23%

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This and That

In the last decade the number of Americans who would like to lose weight has been as high as 62% (2005) to the current low of 51%. The number of people who are seriously trying to lose weight during that period has gone from 24% in 2003 to 30% in 2009, to the current 26%. [Gallup 11/14]

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Restaurants

Do you need a Numi?

As regular readers of the Watch know, most of the Watch's restaurant reviews include comments about the restroom.

This fixation on the quality of the restrooms led Debbie to suggest that she wanted to buy a Numi for me.

The Numi is a rather unusual commode. For openers it has a touch-screen remote control that is somewhat large than an iPod Touch.

Rather than try and describe the Numi myself I have chosen to select certain descriptive material from "The New York Times" in October 2011.

"All the Numi controls are handled through a touch screen remote control that is somewhat larger than an iPod Touch. That remote controls flushing, cleaning, drying, music, heating, and other settings and preferences; combinations of preferences can be stored in user profiles for different family members."

“The rear panels are translucent, and LED lights gently illuminate the toilet when the Numi’s sensor determines that the room has gone dark. Another LED is mounted in the bowl itself for additional nighttime guidance;...”

“Walk up to the Numi, and a location sensor will detect your presence and cause the toilet’s lid to rise, revealing the rectangular-on-the outside, round-where-it-counts seat. If you are a man standing in front of the toilet, you will notice a blue beam of light projected on the right-side-floor, adjacent to the toilet. Place your foot in the path of that beam and the toilet seat will rise; break the beam again and the toilet will flush and the seat will lower itself.”

“The Numi has what is referred to in the industry as “bidet features;” it can wash and dry its user (there are modes for women and men). Both functions are accomplished via a wand that extends from under the seat that can spray water or blow air.”

“ An FM radio and stereo speakers are also built in. Up to three pre-sets can be stored on the remote, which has settings for base, treble and balance.”

I declined Debbie’s sweet offer.

* * * * *

Giovanni Ristorante
25550 Chagrin Boulevard
Beechwood, Ohio 44123
216-831-8625

I went to this restaurant for lunch with Debbie, Chris and William.

As you enter the restaurant the reception desk is straight ahead, immediately inside the front door. To the right is a private dining room that seats 16 people. The walls are lined with filled wine racks. Directly to the left are a series of tables seating various numbers of people. The tables wrap around a U-shaped bar with high stools that seats about 14 people. At the end of a corridor to the right of the reception desk there is a large dining room with tables that seat 2s, 4s, 6s, and at least one eight.

Debbie had made a reservation for a table in the bar area. The hostess suggested we not go to the left because it tended to be noisy, especially because the

first table was occupied by a group of men who would likely be there for a while, playing cards and talking loudly. (As we left after our lunch, they were in fact playing dollar bill poker, otherwise known as liar's poker. If you are unfamiliar with the game, check Wikipedia for a description.)

Our table ended up at the opposite end of the bar, against the wall.

The restaurant is interesting for a number of reasons besides the food. Most of the guests appeared to be regulars. And, there was a whole lot of kissing going on between the manager and serving people and the guests, particularly those seated at the bar.

The serving person who had our table was as good as any we have experienced. She took our order and the orders for several other tables at the same time without taking a single note. The order delivered, including mine which included a variety of changes from descriptions on the menu, was exactly correct. She could not have been more welcoming and pleasant.

The lunch menu included a separate menu of specials for the day and a printed menu of 8 antipasti, 8 insalata, 5 pasta, 7 second and 2 panini.

Chris selected the Trio of Composed Salad; a tasting of our lobster salad, chicken salad, and Swiss chard. Debbie opted for Giovanni's gyro; house made gyro, iceberg, tomato, red onion, cucumber, local black pepper feta, made to order pita, thrice cooked fries.

William had Ohio Amish chicken parmigiano, capellini, slow roasted marinara, bruleed fontina. I selected the pickled beets, chef's garden greens, lemon-basil vinaigrette (sans the goat cheese that is otherwise included). The pickled beets were the best I have ever eaten. I followed the beets with a classic BLT! House-cured Berkshire pork bacon, iceberg lettuce, house brioche, house mayo (sans the heirloom tomato).

The restrooms are outside the restaurant in the building in which the restaurant resides. For whatever the reason the men's and women's restrooms are at opposite ends of the restaurant.

As you enter the men's room, immediately to the right are two black ceramic washbasins in a great figured marble top. To the left are two completely enclosed commode rooms with louvered dark wood doors. Further ahead on the right are

two black ceramic, hanging urinals without any form of divider between them. The floor is covered with large grey figured tiles as well as large white tiles around the edges. The walls are covered with black figured tiles.

There is plenty of parking in the lot around the building.

* * * * *

Shanghai Lounge
Asian fusion & Bar
1734 Wisconsin Ave NW
Washington DC 20007
Tel: 202-338-1588
202-333-3919
Fax: 202-338-1168

I had dinner at this restaurant with Debbie and Bob.

This is a very small, two-story restaurant. On the main floor there is a kitchen at the back of the restaurant. Just forward of that important feature is a small bar with five high stools. Next is the main floor seating area. As you face the bar, on the right is a four top and on the left there are two tall two-tops which can handle a party of four. Then there are floor-to-ceiling partial walls separating those tables from the front seating area. On the right there are 2 two tops. On the left there are 4 two tops.

Debbie made a reservation for three, specifically requesting the first floor so I would not have to tackle the stairs. She was told that would work at the time requested. When we arrived there was not a table that would accommodate three of us. The person who received us assured us there would be a table.

In the area with the four two tops the table closest to the front door was occupied, as was the third table on that side. Both parties were in the midst of their meal. A few minutes passed with no solution in sight. Then, as the party at the third table finished their first course, they were asked to move to the fourth table which they did, and we had our table for three.

The second floor seats a number of additional patrons.

Bob started with Shrimp Wonton Soup, followed by Sweet and Sour Chicken and Combination Fried Rice. Debbie and I started with Steamed Pork Soup Buns; I also had Seaweed Salad and then Mongolian Beef and Shrimp Mixed Veggie. The trick to eating the Soup Buns is to take a small bite of the bun and suck out the soup, and then eat the whole bun. As one would expect we all shared, except for the Seaweed salad of which I am the only devotee, and the soup buns which Bob avoided.

The service was prompt and accurate.

Subsequently Debbie, William and I enjoyed a takeout meal from this restaurant. The dishes which we shared included Seaweed Salad, Chicken Mixed Veggie, Mongolian Beef (again), Pineapple Prawn, and Combination Fried Rice.

Perhaps the highest praise for the restaurant came from Bob, who ordered from the menu with no changes and noted that he had no complaints.

The restroom is in the basement and I did not venture down.

The restaurant provides a delivery service within three miles.

Mike

Suite 500
2100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20037
202- 728-1100

mberman@dubersteingroup.com