

Mike Berman's

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

No. 129

October 19, 2013

State of the Nation

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There is a Middle

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Action outside of Washington

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Pro-Life/Pro-Choice

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President Obama

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The Congress

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Restaurants

Chicago

Washington, DC

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State of the Nation

78% say that the country is off on the wrong track. This is a jump of 16% since early September.

Only 14% say the country is going in the right direction, down 16% from September. The wrong track number was in the 70s during most of 2008, and hit 78% in October 2008. Going back further, to September 2001, the wrong track

number never reached 78%. The last time the right track number hit 14% or lower was in October 2008, when it dropped to 12%. [NBC/WSJ 10/7/13]

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Employment

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has not published unemployment statistics for September as a result of the Federal government shut down.

The Gallup 30-day rolling average survey has continued. As of September 30th it found unemployment to be 7.7% and underemployment to be 17.1%.

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In 2005, 78% of us trusted the “American people” to make judgments about political issues facing the country, and 58% trusted “politicians” to make those judgments. Today, only 61% trust the “American people” and only 46% trust the “politicians.”

In mid-2012, 38% of Americans thought it was best to have a one-party Federal government, with the President and Congress being of the same party. Over the last decade it has been as high as 40% (in mid-2010). Today, it is 25%.

In that same time period, the expressed need for a third major U.S. political party has reached a new high, with 60% holding that view. The previous high was 58% in mid-2010 and mid-2007. [Gallup 9/27/13, 10/11/13]

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21% of U.S. married households have one spouse who is foreign-born.
[U.S. Census Bureau]

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Americans now cite dysfunctionality of the Federal government as the most important problem facing the country today, with 33% having that view. It exceeds the number citing the economy (19%) and unemployment (12%) combined (31%). [Gallup 10/9/13]

In late 2006, 40% of Republicans thought there was too much regulation of

business. Only 36% of Democrats held that view. Now, 73% of Republicans and 26% of Democrats hold that view. [Gallup 10/3/13]

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The median, inflation-adjusted income of households in the U.S. has not yet returned to its 1999 high.

\$51,017 -- 2012

\$55,627 – 2007

\$56,080 – 1999

\$48,884 -- 1993

Women earned 76.5 cents for every dollar earned by men in 2012. This is slightly less than the 77 cents they earned in 2011. The current median income for men is \$49,398. The median income for women is \$37,791.

From 1980 to 1990, women moved up 11.4 cents for every dollar earned by a man, an increase from 60.2 cents to 71.6 cents. However, in the 22 years from 1990 to 2012 the upward movement has only been 4.9 cents.

19.7% of Americans are living in or near the poverty level (125 % of poverty level), while 15% are living below the poverty level.

The mal-distribution of income continues to be a growing problem.

<u>% of population</u>	<u>Share of U.S. income</u>
Top 5%	22.3%
Next 15%	28.7%
Top 20%	51%
Middle 40%	37.4%
Bottom 40%	11.6%

[WSJ 9/18/13]

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In the current NBC/WSJ survey, the Tea Party Movement has its lowest positive feelings rating, at 21%, and its highest negative rating, at 48%. The high point, as recorded by this survey was in June 2010, when 34% had positive feelings and 31% had negative feelings.

		<u>Men</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Dem</u>	<u>Rep</u>	<u>18-34</u>	<u>35-49</u>	<u>50-64</u>	<u>65+</u>
Positive	21%	25	17	6	45	18	20	22	22
Negative	49%	46	48	68	22	36	47	55	55

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In a survey of 24 countries, the United States ranks 16th in the proportion of those indicating that social media is important to them. In those 24 countries over all 42% say that social media is important to them:

Turkey (64%), Brazil (63%), Indonesia (62%) China (61%), India (59%), Saudi Arabia (59%), Mexico (54%), South Africa (52%), Argentina (45%), Russia (44%), Spain (42%), Poland (37%), Hungary (36%), Sweden (35%), Germany (33%), Great Britain (33%), United States (32%), Australia (30%), Italy (30%), Belgium (29%), Canada (28%), South Korea (28%), Japan (24%). [Ipsos OTX]

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There is a Middle and This is What they Think

NBC News and Esquire Magazine have conducted a fascinating study entitled the “New American Center.” The summary of the research is that there is a “large group of American voters -- even a majority -- who make up a ‘New American Center’.”

Through a variety of screens the survey develops a picture of America’s political spectrum today as 21% on the left, 28% on the right, and 51% as the “New American Center.”

Here are selected findings from the survey of the attitudes of the people in the New Center.

- When it comes to political issues
 - 28% identify as Republican
 - 36% identify as Democrats
 - 36% identify as Independents
- 75% (58% strongly, 17% somewhat) support requiring all registered

voters to show a photo ID, such as a valid driver's license, at the polling booth

- 54% (38% strongly, 16% somewhat) support providing illegal immigrants with a path to citizenship, even though they have broken the rules
- 54% agree that the Constitution can't provide guidance for many of the modern problems we face now
- 49% agree that the two-party system we have in this country is broken and out of date, and America would be better off if there were more than just major two parties
- 58% are pessimistic about the politics in this country
- 72% say that in deciding who to vote for, the fact that they agree with the candidate on important issues is most important
- 65% say they are willing to vote for someone they personally dislike if they strongly agree with his or her positions on the issues
- 71% say that, more often than not, they feel as though they are voting for the lesser of two evils
- 34% own a gun or live in a household where someone owns a gun
- 45% think that background checks do not violate the Second Amendment
- 59% agree that churches and religious organizations should have no role in politics
- 67% (44% strongly, 23% somewhat) agree that government should guarantee that people get equal pay for equal work, regardless of gender or race
- 44% believe that marriage is between two people who love each other and are committed to each other, regardless of whether they are men or women. An additional 11% believe that preventing the marriage of gay

people is discrimination. Further, 23% would support civil unions that give gay couples the same rights as married couples.

When it comes to government spending

- 40% believe it is wasteful and inefficient
- 39% believe gov't spending should never exceed what it takes in
- 77% (50% strongly/27% somewhat) support a Constitutional amendment to require a balanced budget each year

- 78% (59% strongly, 19% somewhat) support raising taxes on those who make more than \$1 million a year

- 80% (54% strongly/26% somewhat) believe the government should expand exploration for U.S.-based oil and gas reserves.

- 64% (46% strongly, 18% somewhat) oppose ending the death penalty

- 58% agree that, when it comes to politics, they often agree with some ideas that Democrats have and some ideas that Republicans have

- 44% agree that, when it comes to politics, both Democrats and Republicans get it wrong most of the time, and they rarely agree with the ideas of either Party

[Research was conducted in August by The Berenson Strategy Group (Obama's pollster) and Public Opinion Strategies (Romney's pollster)].

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Abortion

Over the last dozen years, as the pro-life v. pro-choice battle has waged, there has been little change in public attitudes about abortion.

In 2001, 42% said that abortion was **morally acceptable**. The number is the same in 2013. 45% said abortion was **morally wrong**. In 2013, 49% hold that view.

In 2001, 48% considered themselves to be **pro-choice**. In 2013 the number is 45%.

In 2001, 42% considered themselves to be **pro-life**. In 2013 the number is 48%.

In 2003, 23% thought abortion should be **legal** under any circumstance. Today that number is 26%.

In 2003, 19% thought it should be **illegal** under all circumstances. Today that number is 20%.

Americans' perception is that 51% of us are pro-choice, while 35% are pro-life.

In 2006, 44% thought the **Democratic Party** better represented their views on abortion. Today that number is 41%.

In 2006, 33% thought the **Republican Party** better represented their views on abortion. Today that number is 36%.

In 2006, 28% saw abortion as a **critical issue**. Today that number is 18%.

In 2006, when asked (without prompting) what is the **most important** problem facing this country today, 1% listed abortion. Today that number is less than 0.5%. [Gallup]

In 1992, 34% wanted the Supreme Court to overturn **Roe v Wade**. Today 29% have that view.

Gallup Polls

Do you think abortions should be legal under any circumstances, legal only under certain circumstances, or illegal in all circumstances?

Numbers from polls in the month of May in each year	Legal under any circumstance %	Legal under certain circumstances %	Illegal in all circumstances %
2013	26	52	20
2012	25	52	20
2011	27	50	22
2010	24	54	19
2009	22	53	23
2008	28	54	17
2007	26	55	18

2006	30	53	15
2005	23	53	22
2004	24	56	19
2003	23	57	19
2002	25	51	22
2001	26	58	15

Next, I'm going to read you a list of issues. Regardless of whether or not you think it should be legal, for each one, please tell me whether you personally believe that in general it is morally acceptable or morally wrong. How about abortion?

Numbers from polls in the month of May in each year	Morally Acceptable %	Morally Wrong %	Depends on Situation %	Not a moral issue %	No opinion %
2013	42	49	8	*	2
2012	38	51	9	*	2
2011	39	51	7	*	3
2010	38	50	9	*	3
2009	36	56	6	*	1
2008	40	48	10	*	2
2007	40	51	7	*	1
2006	43	44	11	*	2
2005	40	51	8	-	1
2004	40	50	8	*	2
2003	37	53	9	*	1
2002	38	53	8	*	1
2001	42	45	11	1	1

* Less than 0.5%

With respect to the abortion issue, would you consider yourself to be pro-choice or pro-life?

Numbers from polls in the month of May in each year	Pro-choice %	Pro-life %	Mixed/Neither %	Don't know what terms mean %	No opinion %
2013	45	48	3	3	2
2012	41	50	4	3	3
2011	49	45	3	2	2
2010	45	47	2	4	3
2009	42	51	2	4	1
2008	50	44	1	2	2
2007	49	45	3	2	2
2006	51	41	4	2	3

2005	48	44	3	3	2
2004	49	44	2	3	2
2003	48	45	2	4	1
2002	47	46	3	3	1
2001	48	42	4	4	2

Americans' Perceptions of Public Opinion on Abortion: *What is your impression of how most Americans feel about abortion—do you think most Americans are pro-choice or pro-life?*

May 2-7, 2013	
Pro-choice	51%
Pro-life	35%
Mixed/Neither (volunteered)	7%
Don't know what terms mean (volunteered)	2%
No opinion	5%

Pew Research Surveys

Would you like to see the Supreme Court...

Year	Completely Overturn Roe v. Wade	Not Overturn Roe v. Wade
	%	%
2013	29	63
2003	31	62
1992	34	60

Which party can do a better job representing your views on abortion?

Date	Republican Party	Democratic Party	Both/Neither/DK	Dem adv.
	%	%	%	
January 2013	36	41	23	+5
March 2013	31	47	22	+16
October 2011	36	44	19	+8
August 2009	33	41	26	+8
September 2006	33	44	23	+11

Issue of abortion is...

Date	Critical Issue	One among many important issues	Not that important compared to other issues	Don't Know/Refused
January 2013	18	27	53	2
August 2009	15	33	48	3
March 2006	28	38	32	2

COMPARE WITH:**Gallup Poll: The Nation's "Most Important Problem":**

Asked (without prompting) to name the most important problem facing this country today:

Nov 16, 2006:

-Situation in Iraq/War	36%
-Economy in general	10%
-Dissatisfaction with Gov./Congress/Candidates/ Poor leadership/Corruption	9%
-Poor healthcare/hospitals; high cost of healthcare	9%
-Abortion	1%

Sept 9, 2009:

-Economy in general	29%
-Healthcare	26%
-Unemployment	15%
-Dissatisfaction with government	10%
-Abortion	1%

June 1-4, 2013:

-Economy in general	25%
-Unemployment/Jobs	18%
-Dissatisfaction with government	17%
-Healthcare	9%
-Abortion	* Less than 0.5%

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Action Outside of Washington

In 1973, 60% of Americans had confidence in the Federal government's handling domestic problems. By 2002 that number was 77%. Today it is 42%, the lowest number ever recorded by Gallup. [Gallup 9/13/13]

Trust in the legislative branch of the Federal government has reached a new low. 34% now say they have confidence in that body. 51% retain confidence in the executive branch and 64% have confidence in the judiciary. [Gallup 9/26/13]

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Seven states, Utah, Arizona, Wyoming, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, and Idaho, have either passed or considered legislation demanding that the Federal

government turn over to the States control of millions of acres of Federal public land within their borders. For example, 81% of the land in Nevada and 66.5% of the land in Utah are under control of the Federal government.

The short term prospects for such exchanges is low, but the recent shut down of national parks, etc. gave the States a new opportunity to make their argument. [WP 10/18/13]

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President Obama

The public's grade for the job President Obama is doing (as found by Gallup) is 42% approval/52% disapproval as of 10/16/13. Of the 5 previous two-term Presidents at this point in their second term Obama's current approval rating is better than George Bush II and Richard Nixon. The list of 6 follows:

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
Reagan	63	29 (10/14/85)
Eisenhower	57	27 (10/15/57)
Clinton	55	36 (10/5/97)
<u>Obama</u>	42	52 (10/16/13)
G Bush (II)	39	58 (10/16/05)
Nixon	27	60 (10/22/73)

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

From a high of 51%, the approval of the President's job performance by business owners is currently at 37%. That is up from the low of 31% recorded in mid-2011. Among "all workers" Obama's approval has dropped from 63% in 2009 to 45% today. It has been as low as 41% (also in 2011). [Gallup 10/2/13]

Obama's performance on the economy continues to be rated negatively. Fox

News reported disapproval 56% to 40% on 10/2/13. On 9/23/13, CBS/NYT poll showed disapproval at 54% to 41%.

The rating of the President's performance on foreign policy is almost as bleak. The CBS/NYT survey 9/23/13 reported disapproval at 49% to 40%.

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While the public disapproves of the way Obama has handled the negotiations over the budget by 51% to 45%, and while the Democrats in Congress are rated less negatively than Republicans in the Congress, neither of these groups has much to crow about. The Democrats are rated negatively by 61% to 35%; the Republicans are rated negatively by 70% to 24%. [WP/ABC 10/6/13]

Since January Barack Obama's positive rating has dropped from 52% to 47% (-5). The other two principle players in the budget drama have remained steady, although much in negative territory. House Speaker John Boehner had a positive rating of 18% in January and today it is 17%. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid had a positive rating of 16% and has bumped up to 18% today. [NBC/WSJ 10/6/13]

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We do not yet have a measure of the President's job approval rating since the end of the government shutdown and the extension of the debit limit. Thus, the public score for his actions during the last few weeks has yet to come.

Whatever that score turns out to be, the President's active involvement and the firmness of his position, both publicly and privately during the shutdown/debt ceiling action, portends well for a better than expected second term.

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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. The Republican list has been expanded since the September edition of WW.

<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	
Scott Walker	
Ted Cruz	

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In the 2012 election, the percentage turnout of eligible black voters exceeded the percentage turnout of non-Hispanic whites and of Hispanics. 66.2 % of eligible blacks turned out, an increase from 64.7% in 2008. Non-Hispanic whites turned out at a 64.1% rate, which was down from 66.1% in 2008. Hispanic turnout dipped from 49.9% in 2008 to 48%.

Women outvoted men by 64% to 60%. [AP 8/13]

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The Congress

In the most recent Gallup survey, 11% approve of the job being done by Congress, while 85% disapprove. This is a drop of 8 percentage points in the last month. Notably, while Congressional job approval has dropped from 17% to 15% among Republicans, it has dropped from 20% to 5% (15 points) among Democrats. The average overall approval rating for this year is 15%, the lowest annual average since the question was first asked in 1974. [Gallup 10/13]

At least for the moment, the Republican Party is rated favorably by 28%. This is the lowest number reported for either Party since Gallup began asking the relevant question in 1992. The previous low of 31% was also achieved by the Republicans in 1999.

The Democratic Party is rated favorably by 43% of the public. The previous low was 42% in 2010. [Gallup 10/9/13]

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On the question of whether respondents would prefer a Congress controlled by Democrats or Republicans in 2014, 47% said they would prefer a Democrat-controlled Congress, and 39% would prefer Republican control. In a September 2013 survey the spread was only 3 points, 46% to 43%, preferring Democratic control.

Looking back at the last seven general elections (1998-2012) , there seems to be little relationship between the Congressional control preferences in September/October of the year before the election and the outcome of the subsequent election.

If given the opportunity on the next general election ballot to replace the entire Congress, 60% would take that option. This is the highest number recorded since NBC/WSJ began asking this question in March 2010. [NBC/WSJ 10/13]

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THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats	52
Republicans	46
Independents	2

* Italics denotes the retirement of a current member.

Safe Democrat(13)	Leaning Democrat(3)	TossUp(3)	Leaning Republican(4)	Safe Republican(12)
Colorado	Alaska	Arkansas	<i>Georgia</i>	Alabama
Delaware	Iowa	Kentucky	<i>Montana</i>	Idaho
Hawaii	No. Carolina	Louisiana	<i>So. Dakota</i>	Kansas
Illinois			<i>West Virginia</i>	Maine
<i>Massachusetts</i>				Mississippi
<i>Michigan</i>				<i>Nebraska</i>
Minnesota				Oklahoma
New Hampsh.				So. Carolina
<i>New Jersey</i>				So. Carolina
New Mexico				Tennessee
Oregon				Texas
Rhode Island				Wyoming
Virginia				

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2014	34	31
Safe in 2014	13	12
Leaning in 2012	3	4
Total	50	47

Toss-ups 3 (2D, 1R)

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THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

There has been some change in the structure of the House of Representatives races since the September issue of the Watch, based on the Cook Political Report. These changes were driven by the role of the Republican members of Congress in the recent government shutdown.

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>4/17/13</u>	<u>6/20/13</u>	<u>9/5/13</u>	<u>10/17/13</u>
Total Dem	201	201	201	201	202
Solid Dem	167	166	163	163	165
Likely Dem	17	18	18	14	12
Lean Dem	11	11	12	15	15
Toss-up	7	8	9	10	12
D	6	6	8	9	10
R	1	2	1	1	2
Lean GOP	7	10	10	11	15
Likely GOP	18	18	17	17	16
Solid GOP	208	204	206	205	200
Total GOP	234	234	234	234	233

“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>	<u>8/23</u>	<u>10/9</u>
Total Democrat	201	200	194	202	202	202
Safe Democrat	176	176	177	175	175	175
D Favored	10	10	8	8	8	7
Lean D	6	6	9	10	11	11
Toss Up/Tilt D	6	6	5	5	5	6
Toss Up-D	3	2	3	3	3	3
Toss Up-R	2	3	1	1	1	2
Toss Up/Tilt R	5	5	5	5	5	4
Lean R	5	5	5	5	5	6
R Favored	13	13	10	10	11	11
Safe Republican	207	208	212	212	211	211
Total Republican	234	234	227	233	233	233

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Restaurants

Chicago, Illinois
RL Restaurant

Washington, DC
Fiola
Firelake Grill

RL Restaurant (Ralph Lauren)
115 East Chicago Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611
312-475-1100
www.rlrestaurant.com

The restaurant, opened by Ralph Lauren, is adjacent to the Polo store in Chicago.

The restaurant was the first opened by Lauren, in 1999, and was not very successful for a number of reasons, one being that the food was not very good. Management has since been taken over by the team that runs Gibson's Steak House in Chicago (and a number of other restaurants). It became a hit and remains a must-stop on any tour of Chicago culinary hot spots. [Note: Three years ago, Lauren opened an all-American restaurant on the Left Bank in Paris. It is very successful. He plans to open a third restaurant in New York City. (NYT 10/13/13, Style Section)]

Debbie and I went to RL with Bill and Bernie.

As you enter the restaurant, on a weather-permitting evening, you walk through a number of sidewalk tables to get to the main door. Straight ahead is the reception stand. Directly to the left are a relatively small bar and a few tables. The dining room is straight ahead.

The decor is as you would expect in a restaurant designed and opened by Lauren. It is relatively dark, with heavy dark wooden walls and lots of art. There are banquettes around the entire restaurant. The dining room seats up to 81 people at 2s, 4s and 6s. The tables are quite close to each other, and one moves through the room with care, although the serving folks move through the maze with ease.

Bernie started by asking for Smoked Salmon which she had ordered before but was not on the current menu. It came. Bill selected a half dozen oysters. Debbie picked a Heirloom Tomato salad and I chose a Caesar Salad. (I was sore tempted to order something that I have not seen on a menu -- Baked Cheese, Saint Andre Triple Cream, Phyllo Dough, Poached Pear, and Maple syrup, but I resisted.)

For her main course Bernie requested Halibut, which was an off-the-menu special for the evening. Bill and Debbie each chose Bone-in Ribeyes, which neither of them was able to finish. (Bernie suggested that Bill should have requested the steak without the added butter. He did not follow the suggestion.) I opted for Lake Perch, which I do not recall having found on a restaurant menu since I left Duluth.

For dessert Bill ordered Cheesecake, which he and Debbie basically shared. I ordered Sorbet, of which Bernie had a bite.

Getting to the restrooms is a bit of a trek. First, you work your way to the back of the dining room, and then take an elevator down one floor. The decor in the elevator area is like the rest of the restaurant. As you enter the men's room there is a short hallway with a very large mirror at the end. You then enter the men's room.

Immediately to your right is a light marble counter top, with two sunken washbasins with golden faucets and a huge mirror dead ahead. There are two separate, fully-enclosed commode rooms. There are no urinals. The floor is covered with small white tiles. The walls are painted off-white.

The restaurant's website says that walk-ins are welcome, but don't count on being able to get a table all that quickly. Better to take no chances and make a reservation.

The bar is open to midnight seven nights a week, and there is valet parking after 8 p.m.

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Fiola
601 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004
Entrance 678 Indiana Avenue
202-628-2888
info@fioladc.com

Debbie and I went to Fiola soon after it opened, but for reasons I cannot now recall, I decided not to write about it.

We have now been to the restaurant several times, most recently with Judy and Ray.

As you enter the restaurant the greeting stand is to your left and the multi-seat oblong bar is straight ahead. To the left there is an area for cocktails and a reasonable amount of room to stand and imbibe.

The dining area is a couple of steps down, but fully visible from the entry way. The main dining room is split in two sections that run the length of the main dining area. There are a number of oval banquettes with tables for four people along the far walls. At the far end of the room is an area that can be used as part of the main dining room or as one or two private eating areas.

It was a bit noisy, and while you could easily talk to the person next to you, it was hard for the person at the end of the table to participate in the same conversation.

All in all, I like the atmosphere.

Judy and I started with Maine Peekytoe Crab, Maria's Chilled Gazpacho, Sea Urchin, Paddlefish Caviar. Debbie and Ray had the Earth'n East Farm Greens, Radish, Honeycrisp Apples, Birbetta Cheese, Pine nuts.

Judy and Ray selected as their main course the Duo of Veal Ribeye, Veal Cheek, Ossobuco Sauce, Alba Hazelnuts, Wild Mushrooms, Cremolada. Debbie opted for the Fiola Maine Lobster Ravioli, Ginger, Chives. I picked Wild Cod, Chanterelle Mushrooms, Kabocha Squash, Hudson Valley Foie Gras, Black Truffle.

The restaurant offers a five or six course tasting menu. Everything on those menus can be ordered a la Carte. While we did not try any of these dishes, here is the six course menu for the night we were at the restaurant:

Adriatic Frutti di Mare, Paddlefish Caviar; Poached Kampachi, Baby Artichokes, Salsa Verde; Ravioli of Sheep's Ricotta, Fresh Herbs, Black Truffle; Wild Scottish Wood Pigeon, Fair Gras, Wild Huckleberry; Artisanal Cheeses from Fossa Dell' Abbondanza; Vanilla Panna Cotta, Turkish figs. The price was \$130. The wine pairing almost doubles the cost.

There is valet parking.

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Firelake Grill
4200 Wisconsin Ave NW
(Corner of Wisconsin and Van Ness)
Washington, DC 20016
Tel 202-363-1330
Fax 202-363-1550
Firelakeg@yahoo.com

The Firelake Grill is a relatively new addition to the Tenley Park area. It is located in the space previously occupied by Ruby Tuesday. It has been open since August.

Debbie and I first went to Firelake with Bob and Rita, who had been there a couple of times before.

The restaurant is very large, seating over two hundred people in a combination of booths, tables, and a square, three-sided bar with high stools for about 20 people.

The hosts and the serving people are all young and as nice as can be. Although they are not as quite as alert to signals for attention from their customers as might be desired, but that will come over time.

The music coming through the sound system was pretty loud in the area at which you enter the restaurant. We asked for a table that was as far away from the sound as possible, and ended up in a booth at the far end of the restaurant, on the Wisconsin Avenue side.

The menu demonstrates that it is an American-style restaurant. There are 13 Starters & Sides ranging from Spinach & Artichoke Dip to Texas Toast.

If Burgers and Sandwiches are your choice, there are 6 ranging from Hickory Burgers to Fish Sandwiches.

Looking for a salad? There are 7 that run the gamut from Thai Steak & Noodle Salad to a Classic Wedge Salad.

There is a different soup each day and 12 Entrees running from Barbecue Ribs to Tuna Steak.

And finally, there are 4 Desserts. There is also a children's menu.

Rita had the fish of the day, which was Halibut, accompanied by mashed potatoes and grilled veggies. True to form, Bob ordered the Rotisserie Chicken with Mashed Potatoes and Cole Slaw.

Debbie ordered the Roasted Prime Rib (you can choose a 12 or 16 oz. portion), medium rare with Onion Rings. About half of the meat was too rare to eat at the time, but was excellent taken home and eaten for lunch the next day.

I ordered the Jumbo Lump Crab Cakes with Mashed Potatoes and Coleslaw. The crab cakes were particularly good.

Bob and Rita shared Key Lime Pie for dessert, and Debbie and I shared Apple Walnut Cobbler.

As you enter the men's room, to the left is a wall hanging urinal. To the right of the urinal are two commode stalls with doors that are open at the top and bottom. To the right, as you enter, are three oval, white ceramic washbasins with individual stands, as well as a mirror that hangs over them.

The floor is covered with large black and white tiles. The walls are white tile, with the exception of a strip of black at floor level and at about the six foot level. There are also some diamond-shaped black tile designs just below the six foot level tiles on the far wall.

There is free parking in the building garage 7 days a week, and free valet parking on Wisconsin Avenue, Wednesday night through Sunday Brunch.

Mike

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