

Mike Berman's

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State of the Nation – page 2
Employment – page 2
Political Parties – page 5
FedEx – page 6
One Country? – page 6
Looking to the Future – page 7
Odds and ends – page 8

* * * * *

President Obama: A Retrospective – page 9
Michelle Obama – page 15

* * * * *

A Last Look at the 2016 election – page 16

* * * * *

Our Elected Leadership as of January 21, 2017 – page 20
President Trump – page 20

* * * * *

Congress – page 27

* * * * *

Women Will Get It Done: Women in Politics – page 27

* * * * *

Spread Some Cheer – page 28

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Restaurants – page 28
Sfolina – and then there were four

As with last month, any statements in this issue of the Watch which are not sourced are mine.

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State of the Nation

The United States is now a country of 323 million people. [Bureau of the Census]

“In 1970, foreign-born people made up less than 5 percent of the U.S. population; today they are about 14 percent.” [WP/Fareed Zakaria, 12/8/16]

33% of Americans say the country is headed in the right direction while 54% say it is on the wrong track. This is the best right direction number since January 2013 and the lowest wrong track number since December 2012. (NBC/WSJ, 12/15/16)

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Employment

The official BLS seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for:

December 2016 is 4.7%
November 2016 is 4.6%
October 2016 is 4.9%
September 2016 is 5.0%
October 2009 is 10.0% (high point)
February 2009 is 8.3%

If one takes into account the total number of unemployed + those marginally attached to the labor force + those working part-time who want full-time work, the unemployment rate for:

December 2016 is 9.2%
November 2016 is 9.3%
October 2016 is 9.5%
September 2016 is 9.7%.
October 2009 is 17.1% (high point)
February 2009 is 15.2%

[BLS data is based on those 16 years of age and older.]

In the first week of January 2016, Gallup found an unadjusted unemployment rate of 5.1%. It also found an under-employment rate of 13.7% (unemployed + those working part-time but wanting full-time). This is based on those 18 years of age and older.

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“By all accounts, white Americans continue to enjoy bar better economic conditions than do Americans of color. The unemployment rate for prime-age white workers is just 3.7 percent. For black workers, it is 7.8 percent and for Hispanic or Latino workers, 5.3 percent.

“Indeed, the employment rate in rural areas was actually 2.9% lower in mid-2016 than it was in early 2007...” [The Atlantic, 1/2/17]

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There were 5.5 million job openings at the end of October. During that month 5.1 million people were hired and 4.9 million were separated from their employment.

In the 12 month period ending in October there were 62.6 million hires and 60.1 million separations yielding a net employment gain of 2.5 million. [BLS]

In 1979, there were nearly 20 million American factory workers. Today there are 12.3 million workers in U.S. factories. This represents a loss of nearly 8 million factory workers. In 1941, there were 600,000 more manufacturing workers than there are today. It is estimated that about 50,000 more manufacturing jobs will be added in the U.S. between now and the end of 2019. There is a general consensus that the primary driver of the loss of these manufacturing jobs in the United States, as in the rest of the world, is automation. [WSJ.com, 12/8/16]

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The United States is second only to Germany in the average hourly manufacturing compensation costs: Germany \$42.42, U.S. \$37.71, UK \$41.44, Japan \$23.60, Brazil \$7.97, Mexico \$5.90, China \$4.42, India\$ 1.59. [Steve Rattner]

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The average hourly earnings of all private employees has grown from roughly \$20 in 2006 to \$25.89 today.

11.1% of the wage and salary workers in the United States were members of unions in 2015. This means that 14.8 million wage and salary workers are members of unions. In 1983, the first year in which comparable data are available, the union membership rate was 20.1% or 17.7 million union workers.

The union membership rate among public-sector workers is 35.2% and among private-sector workers the membership rate is 6.7%. [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics]

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Columbia University graduate students have voted to join the United Auto Workers. The UAW represents 38,500 graduate workers at 48 campuses. Other cases are pending at Harvard, Yale and Duke. The NLRB recently ruled that private universities must treat graduate-student teaching assistants and researchers as employees. [WSJ, 12/10-11/2016]

If you are looking for examples of how unfair things can be, take a look at Reagan National and Dulles airports, two facilities operated by the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, an organization which includes in its membership, Virginia, Maryland, the District of Columbia and the federal government.

Many of those who work at the airport, whether for individual airlines or the airport itself, actually work for private contractors who contract with the airport or the individual airlines. Some of the workers employed by contractors for the individual airlines are paid as little as \$6 per hour. A contractor provides the folks that handle baggage as well as the folks who provide wheelchairs to passengers. Recently, this contractor reduced the hourly wages for baggage handlers from \$9.50 to \$9.00 per hour and the wages for wheelchair attendants from \$7.25 to \$6.15 per hour.

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority is apparently considering these issues but has not been able to resolve them. [Washington Post, 12/30/16]

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The Political Parties

The divisions between Democrats and Republicans are increasingly stark. An example is found in a recent PEW Research Center report (12/14/16) on Americans' view of stricter environmental laws and regulations. Divisions by age are somewhat less stark.

	Cost too many jobs and hurt economy	Are worth the cost
Total	34%	59%
Rep/Lean Rep	58%	35
Dem/Lean Dem	17	78
<u>Age</u>		
18-29	26	70
30-49	29	63
50-64	41	53
65+	43	47

It's no big surprise that Republicans and Democrats have exchanged positions when it comes to the future prospects of their respective parties. Before the election 61% of Republicans say they were "very/somewhat" optimistic about the future of their party. Post-election 77% have that view. Conversely, before the election 79% of Democrats were very/somewhat optimistic about the future of their party. After the election that has dropped to 61%. [PEW 12/20/16]

Somewhat surprisingly Republicans and Democrats hold generally similar views in at least three areas:

54% of Republicans and 58% of Democrats believe their respective political parties do too little for middle-income people,

52% of Republicans and 62% of Democrats believe their respective parties do too little for low-income people, and

45% of Republicans and 43% of Democrats say their parties do too much for high-income people.

Following the election, 34% of registered voters see the Democratic party positively while 42% view it negatively. At the same time, 35% see the Republican party positively and 38% view it negatively. [NBC/WSJ, 12/15/16]

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FedEx

Have you ever wondered what happens along the way when you order something from a distant location and FedEx is the chosen delivery device? Recently I ordered some decorative pins from a source in Metairie, LA. Below is the path those pins took on their way to my home.

February 13, 2016

11:56 a.m.	Picked up,	Metairie, LA
	Tendered at FedEx's office	
12:02 p.m.	Shipment information sent to FedEx	
5:48 p.m.	Picked up	Harahan, LA
8:29 p.m.	Left FedEx origin facility	Harahan, LA
11:06 p.m.	Arrived at FedEx locations	Memphis, TN

February 14, 2016

3:22 a.m.	Departed FedEx location	Memphis, TN
5:45 a.m.	At destination sort facility	Dulles, VA
8:11 a.m.	At local FedEx facility	Washington, DC
8:41 a.m.	On FedEx vehicle for delivery	Washington, DC
12:20 p.m.	Delivered to my home	Washington, DC

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One Country?

If you look at a globe or world map the United States looks to be a single country with a couple of detached islands. But that is where the oneness ends.

In fact, the United States is currently literally divided into "a number of entities or territories. One territory is composed of the east coast and the west coast. The other territories include the economically secure vs those who are not so favored; urban areas vs rural areas: the healthy vs the unhealthy; Republicans vs

Democrats vs Independents” ; union members vs non-union members; those who are being educated vs those who are not.

These various “territories” are crying for leadership; leadership which can again meld them into a single country.

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Looking to the future

Looking to the future of the country, 56% are mainly hopeful and optimistic while 42% are mainly worried and pessimistic.

69% see the American Dream as harder to attain today than it was a generation ago. Only 10% see it as easier. 49% say that a generation from now the American Dream will still be harder to attain than it is today. 17% are a little more optimistic.

42% think the nation’s economy will get better in the next 12 months while 19% say it will get worse.

32% think that Donald Trump’s economic policies will help their personal financial situation. 21% think they will hurt and 46% say they will not make much difference.

Interestingly, these numbers are all but identical to those found in December of 1992, just after Bill Clinton was elected. 31% thought they would help, 21% said they would hurt and 44% said they would make no difference [NBC/WSJ, 12/15/16]

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Folks are feeling pretty good about 2017 according to a Morning Consult poll taken 12/19/16. They describe themselves as: Hopeful – 72%, Optimistic - 61%, Excited – 51%, Peaceful – 49%, Joyful – 47% and Relaxed – 46%.

On the downside they describe themselves as: Anxious – 50%, Fearful - 34%, Distrustful -31%, Pessimistic – 27% and Confused – 26%. There are a variety of other unhappy feelings ranging from 17% to 25%.

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Odds and Ends

U.S. health care spending reached a new high of \$3.2 trillion in 2015. This was an increase of 5.8% from 2014. Of these expenditures the federal government spent 28.7%, individual households spent 27.7%, private businesses spent 19.9%, state and local governments spent 17.1% and other private interest spent 6.7%. [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services]

Americans made \$373.25 billion in total charitable contributions in 2015. Of that amount 71% (\$264.58 billion) came from individuals; 16% (\$58.46 billion) came from foundations; 9% (\$31.76 billion) came from bequest and 5% (\$18.45 billion) came from corporations. [WSJ, 12/12/16]

In 2001, 189,000 unauthorized immigrants were deported from the United States. Of those, 73,000 were criminals and 116,000 non-criminals. The number of deportations peaked at 435,000, 199,000 criminals/237,000 non-criminals. In 2014, the last year for which data is readily available, the total deportations were 414,000, 168,000 criminals/247,000 non-criminals. [PEW, 8/31/16]

Portland, Oregon has passed a tax that is assessed against companies whose CEOs are deemed to make too much money. In this case, “too much money” is defined as the CEO making at least 100 times more than the average employee. All companies pay a tax of 2.2% of net income. If the CEO makes 100 times or more than the average employee, the company is assessed an additional 10% tax. If the CEO makes more than 250 times what the average employee makes the penalty is an additional 25% tax. [CBC-FiveThirtyEight]

92% of children born in 1940, whose parents were in the middle 80% of parental incomes, grew up to earn more than their parents. That number has now dropped to 46%. [Washington Post, 10/9/16]

Last year, 39.5% of people between the ages of 18-34 were living with their parents, siblings or other relatives. The previous high was in 1940 when 40.9% of this group had similar housing arrangements. The low point over the last 75 years was in 1960 when 24.1% of those 18-34 lived with their families. [WSJ, 12/23/16]

59% of Americans want abortion to be all or mostly legal. This number has remained largely unchanged since 1995. [FiveThirtyEight]

52,404 people died from drug overdoses in 2015. [Center for Disease Control and Prevention/CBS News]

517 companies obtained a perfect score from the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index. This is up from 407 companies in 2015.

Of 128 major college football teams, in which the majority of players are African-American, only 14 are coached by African-American coaches. [Washington Post, 12/12/16]

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President Obama: A Retrospective

The time was 9:00 p.m. EST on Tuesday, July 27, 2004. The place was the podium of the Democratic National Convention in Boston. (I was the manager of the schedule for that convention.) The Kerry campaign had selected a 2004 U.S. Senate candidate from Illinois by the name of Barack Obama to make the "keynote" speech of the convention.

None of the three largest national TV networks, ABC, CBS and NBC, chose to air the convention or Obama's speech that night. He was covered by PBS, CNN, FOX and MSNBC. The audience was estimated to be just over 9 million viewers.

Obama wrote the speech himself and it was then passed through the Kerry speech team with modest changes.

I recall thinking that he was quite an orator and that it was too bad that the major networks had not carried the speech.

Nearly thirteen years later, at 9:00 p.m. EST on Tuesday January 10, 2017, Obama gave another speech, now as President. This speech was given in Chicago at McCormick Place with an audience of 20,000 staff, colleagues, friends and supporters. The words were his, including a few that were not included in the circulated version.

This time, all of the major networks and a few transmission networks that didn't exist in 2004 carried what was billed as Obama's "farewell" speech. It was a great speech capped by his expression of adoration for his wife Michelle and his family and his admiration for Vice President Joe Biden.

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At the end of the first week in January 2017, President Obama had an approval rating of 56% in Gallup. The range of his approval ratings in Gallup has gone from a high of 67% on January 25, 2009 to a low of a 40% in September 2011, January 2014 and February 2014.

Compared to the last elected Presidents who completed their full terms, he ranks in Gallup behind Bill Clinton and Ronald Reagan and is tied with GHW Bush.

Lyndon Johnson	49/37%	1/10/1969
Jimmy Carter	34/55%	12/8/1980
Ronald Reagan	63/29%	12/29/1988
GHW Bush	56/37%	1/11/1993
Bill Clinton	66/29%	1/14/2001
GW Bush	34/61%	1/11/2009
Barack Obama	56/42%	1/6/2017

Who was Barack Obama as President?

He was the first African American president, demonstrating that the country was ready for someone other than a white male as its leader.

He and his family and their interactions and time with each other set an example for every family in the country.

His tenure in office was marked by no scandals. It is hard to remember a president who was not investigated for something.

He was a role model as a statesman, president, father and friend.

In public settings he was an orator of note.

In February of 2009, just after he took office, Barack Obama was thought of positively by 68% while 19% thought of him negatively. By August of 2016, in his 6th year as President, he hit a low point with 40% thinking of him negatively while 47% thought of him positively. Now as Obama approaches the end of his second term in office, 52% think of him positively while 36% think of him negatively. [NBC/WSJ, 12/15/16]

The following are some positive changes that have occurred in the country between when President Obama was inaugurated and now.

	<u>Jan 2009</u>	<u>Now</u>
Unemployment	7.8%	4.7%
Dow Jones Industrial Avg	7949	19170
GDP	-5.4	+3.2
Consumer confidence	37.4	107.1
Med Household Income	54,988	56,516
American Living Below Poverty Line	43.6 million	43.1 million
Americans Without Health Insurance	49 million	29.8 million
U.S. Troops in Iraq	139,500	5,200
U.S. Troops in Afghanistan	34,400	9,800

[NBC/WSJ, 12/6/16]

A greater number of Americans view the Obama administration as having more accomplishments than failures. He ranks ahead of George W. Bush and behind the last Democratic president, Bill Clinton.

	Obama	GW Bush	Clinton
Accomplishments will outweigh failures	49	24	60
Failures will outweigh accomplishments	44	64	27

[PEW, 12/14/16]

46% of Americans say Obama will be judged as an Outstanding/Above Average president while 27% say he will be judged as Below Average/Poor.

	<u>Outstanding/above average</u>	<u>Below Average/poor</u>
Barack Obama	46%	27%
George W Bush	11	58
Bill Clinton	44	21
George H.W Bush	36	12
Ronald Reagan	59	14

[PEW, 12/14/16]

Over time, Obama did not spend a lot of time with members of Congress—hail-fellow-well-met is not a part of who he is—at least when it comes to members

of Congress. Last week, Obama met with a joint caucus of House and Senate Democrats. Few can remember the last time he met with all the congressional Democrats.

On the substantive front, Obama will be remembered for the fiscal stimulus that saved the economy early in his tenure, the Iran deal and his actions on climate change. He also led the way toward the acceptance of gay marriage.

But if there is any one thing that President Obama has come to be known for as president, and will be known for in the years to follow, it will be the Affordable Care Act.

It is one of the few major examples in which the President successfully worked with the Democrats in Congress, led by then Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid and then House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. In fact, as leaders of Houses controlled by Democrats, Reid and Pelosi directly led the effort as if they were the members who had introduced a bill. Along the way, the legislation was filled with a number of sections necessary to collect the required votes. The legislation passed without a single Republican vote.

Since its' passage, it has been a Republican goal to repeal the Act. It became a centerpiece of the Donald Trump's campaign for the presidency and for Republicans efforts to protect their majorities in the Senate and House. And now that the Republicans have control of both Houses and the White House, repeal of the Affordable Care Act seems to be their top priority.

What ultimately will happen remains to be seen but whatever the result, the bottom line is that the Affordable Care Act has made it possible for 19.2 million people to have health insurance that they did not have before the Act.

If there was a particular failing of the president and his administration it is that they failed to communicate to those who were positively affected either by the fiscal stimulus or the Affordable Care Act and explain to them that it was the president who had led the way and fought for them. Listening to and reading various news reports about whether people know how either the job they have was saved or the insurance they got was made possible, always surprises me.

The following are some less than positive aspects of President Obama's record as President.

	<u>Jan 2009</u>	<u>Now</u>
Federal Public Debt	10.6 trillion	19.9 trillion
Dems in U.S. House	256	193
Dems in U.S. Senate	58	46
Dem Governs	28	16

[NBC News, 12/6/16]

The president's performance as relates to foreign policy is often challenged by those who spend their time on relevant issues. It could well be that he did not want the United States to engage in further substantial foreign military activity given his work reducing our military activity in Iraq and Afghanistan. Others argue that he has weakened the world position of the United States.

Looking at the president's tenure from a perspective of his record as the head of the Democratic party, his record is not so great.

During Obama's time in office the Democrats lost 66 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, 12 seats in the U.S. Senate and 10 Governors.

In addition, during his tenure Democrats lost a net 958 state legislative seats. This number is greater than the number of legislative seats lost during the tenure of each of the following two term presidents.

	<u>Seats Lost</u>
Obama	958
GW Bush	324
Bill Clinton	524
Nixon/Ford	800
Kennedy/Johnson	437
Eisenhower	843
Roosevelt/Truman	191

Ronald Reagan is the only president in the last 67 years who actually saw his party pickup legislative seats during his tenure (+ 6 seats).

Here is what President Obama had to say about Democratic losses last Sunday to George Stephanopoulos on ABC's "This Week".

"I take some responsibility on that. I -- I think that some of it was circumstances. If you look at -- what happened, I came in in the middle of the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression.... I think we did a really good job in saving this economy and putting us back on the track of growth. But what that meant is in 2010 there were a lot of folks who were still out of work.... And the, you know, whoever is president at that point is gonna get hit and his party's gonna get hit....**So -- so some of this was circumstances.** But what I think that, what is also true is that partly because my docket was really full here, so I couldn't be both chief organizer of the Democratic Party and function as Commander-in-Chief and President of the United States. We did not begin what I think needs to happen over the long haul, and that is rebuild the Democratic Party at the ground level."

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Stan Greenberg & Anna Greenberg wrote an op-ed that appeared in the NYTimes on December 23, 2016. It is entitled, "Was Barack Obama Bad for Democrats." The following is an excerpt from that article.

"President Obama will be remembered as a thoughtful and dignified president who led a scrupulously honest administration that achieved major changes. People argue over whether his impatience with politicians and Republican intransigence denied him bigger accomplishments, but that argument is beside the point: He rescued an economy in crisis and passed the recovery program, pulled America back from its military overreach, passed the Affordable Care Act and committed the nation to addressing climate change. To be truly transformative in the way he wanted, however, his success had to translate into electoral gains for those who shared his vision and wanted to reform government. On that count, Mr. Obama failed. His legacy regrettably includes the more than 1,000 Democrats who lost their elections during his two terms. Republicans now have total control in half of America's states."

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The following are excerpts from a recent column in the New York Times by J.D.Vance, author of "Hillbilly Elegy". I think it is fair to say that Vance does not share President Obama's political views but respects him nonetheless.

“It is one of the great failures of recent political history that the Republican Party was too often unable to disconnect legitimate political disagreements from the fact that the president himself is an admirable man. Part of this opposition comes from this uniquely polarized moment in our politics, part of it comes from Mr. Obama’s leadership style – more disconnected and cerebral than personal and emotive – and part of it (though a smaller amount than many on the left suppose) comes from the color of his skin.”

“On January 20, the political side of my brain will breathe a sigh of relief at Mr. Obama’s departure. I will hope for better policy from the new administration....”

“But the child who so desperately wanted an American dream, with a happy family at its core will feel something different. For at a pivotal time in my life, Barack Obama gave me hope that a boy who grew up like me could still achieve the most important of my dreams. For that, I’ll miss him, and the example he set.”

* * * * *

Michelle Obama

[The quotes in the material below, except for the excerpts from her final speech, are from an article by Jodie Kantor published in the New York Times, 1/7/17. The quotes from her final speech are from the Washington Post, 1/7/17.]

Michelle Obama was an extraordinary First Lady. When her husband was elected president, she gave up her owning blossoming career as he pursued his. She gave up her own public voice on the issues that had previously consumed her attention.

She is remembered by her friends as “an incisive social critic, a lawyer who can drive home an argument, a source of fresh observations and pointed commentary...Long before she arrived at the White House, she had formed her own worldview, based on a life full of dramatic changes and contrasts.”

“In the White House she focused first on their children and she took on issues that were vital but hard to disagree with: she was pro-veteran, anti-child obesity.”

“The themes of the hour – unfairness, opportunity, whether to have even a shred of faith in the system – are ones she has thought about her entire adult life.

Being in the White House has given her eight years' worth of insights she has barely shared. She may be the most powerful black woman in the country a position that begs to be used."

The following is an excerpt from the last public speech Michelle Obama will make before leaving the White House. She spoke at an event celebrating school counselors. The report is that she was quite emotional.

"It is our fundamental belief in the power of hope that has allowed us to rise above the voices of doubt and division...that we have faced in our own lives and in the life of this country. Our hope that if we work hard and believe in ourselves then we can be whatever we dream regardless of the limitations that others would place on us.

That's the kind of hope that every single one of us, politicians, parents, preachers, need to be providing for our kids, because that is what moves this country forward – our hope for the future."

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A Last Look at the 2016 election

Note: Campaigns that lose close elections are plagued for weeks, months or years by the "what ifs". What if this or what if that? Articles are written, lists are developed, speeches are made, forums are attended or organized. And then there is the quieter conversation about who was responsible for not having resolved a "what if" one way or another in a timely fashion. The below includes no "what ifs".

Between January 1, 2015 and October 30, 2016 of the campaign season \$2.3 billion was spent on political ads on all the races up and down the ballot . The presidential campaigns spent \$750 million on 900,000 ads. Clinton's campaign outspent Trump's campaign by \$460 million to \$185 million. However, the amount of free advertising received by Trump from coverage of his tweets is inestimable. In March, the NYT Upshot, estimated that through the middle of March, Trump had received close to \$2 billion dollars in free advertising as a result of "publishing" his tweets.

Voters waited in line to vote for less time than they did in 2012 and 2008.

The average voter waited in line for 11 minutes in 2016, for 13 minutes in 2012 and 16 minutes in 2008. [Charles Stewart, Election Line] It remains to be seen whether this was the result of better administration at voting sites or the fact that more people voted before election day.

The chart below was prepared by the Winston Group and is based on the national exit polls of those who voted in the congressional races in the relevant years. The numbers below describe how the people interviewed described themselves.

	<u>Party Ideology</u>		
	Conservative	Moderate	Liberal
Overall			
2008	34%	44%	22%
2012	35	40	25
2016	35	38	26
Republican			
2008	64	31	4
2012	65	30	5
2016	65	31	4
Independent/Other			
2008	28	54	17
2012	32	49	19
2016	31	47	22
Democrat			
2008	13	47	30
2012	12	43	46
2016	11	39	50

Over the last 120 years, Ohio is the state that has most often voted for the presidential winner having picked the winner in 29 of 31 elections. In second place are the states of Illinois, Missouri, and Nevada which have voted for the presidential winner in 26 of 31 presidential elections.

[Sabato's Crystal Ball, 12/8/16]

This last election is the first time in history where every state that held a US Senate election voted for the same party for both president and the Senate.

[Sabato's Crystal Ball, 12/15/16]

Effectively 77,759 votes in three states (WI/PA/MI) determined the Presidency. Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump won by:

- 22,748 votes in WI, 0.7 of a point (3rd party candidates received: 188,330)
- 44,307 votes in PA, 0.7 of a point, (3rd party candidates received: 218,228)
- 10,704 votes in MI, 0.2 of a point (3rd party candidates received: 250,902)

Orange County, CA voted Democratic for president for the first time since 1936. Meanwhile, Elliott County, KY voted Republican for the first time since it was founded in 1869.

Overall, the national polls were not as wrong as they appeared to be at first glance. The final RealClearPolitics running average had Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton up by 3.2 points. Her actual popular vote margin is 2.1 points. On average, polling in 2016 was closer to the results of the election than it was in 2012. President Obama's final popular vote margin was 3.9 points, but the RealClearPolitics running average before Election Day was 0.7 points, a difference of 3.2 points. The difference in 2016 was just 1.1 points.

Donald Trump won 30 states. Hillary Clinton won 20 states and the District of Columbia. If you do not include the state of California, Trump won the popular vote in the remaining 49 states as a group.

Efforts to convince members of the electoral college to refuse to vote for Trump were close to a total failure. When the electoral votes were cast, only 2 of Trump's electors did not vote for him but 5 of those theoretically pledged to Clinton did not vote for her.

Recently, when Obama was interviewed by David Axelrod for his Axe Files podcast, the President made the point that "if I had run again" he would have beaten Donald Trump. He went on to say that Hillary Clinton's campaign acted too cautiously out of a mistaken belief that victory was just about certain. He made the argument that he had put together a winning coalition...but that the Democratic party and the Clinton campaign had failed to follow through on it. In an interview with the Washington Post, Axelrod said that he believed that Obama went further than he ever had before in critiquing Clinton's campaign. [WPost, 12/27/16]

In September, Salena Zito wrote in the Atlantic, "The press takes him (Trump) literally, but not seriously, his supporters take him seriously but not literally."

“Trump won the presidency the same way he won the primaries: with the support of a loyal, mostly homogenous core of voters who had previously felt disenfranchised from the political process and disconnected from America’s advancements.” [Caldwell & Sarlin, NBCnews.com, 12/14/16]

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The following are two excerpts from an article written by Charlie Cook for National Journal.

“Democrats had become so enamored with the future that they skipped over the present and disrespected the past. Sure, the country has changed, both culturally and demographically, but not as fast as Democrats believed.”

“So as we watch Donald Trump do and say things that no Democrat or conventional Republican would even consider, things that most experts say shouldn’t be done or said, we need to remember that, for better or worse, American voters chose this path. They knew that Trump was inexperienced and untested, but they were so sick of the status quo that they elected him anyway.”

Simply put, Democrats need to expand their sensitivity-training courses to include people who live in small-town and rural America – middle-class white voters, people who live paycheck to paycheck, and whites who attend church at least once a week. Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition of voters is now officially dead. Democrats were losing these voters before Donald Trump came along and will continue to do so beyond his presidency unless they show genuine concern for these constituencies. To be sure, the country is changing and becoming more diverse, but it is not doing so at the same pace everywhere. Democrats are running up the score in places that do not help them with majorities in the House, Senate and Electoral College. [Charlie Cook, 12/23/16]

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In his book, “The Gift of Anger” Joe Solmonese included the following description of Donald Trump.

“Donald Trump, on the other hand, did throughout his campaign what the United States has seen historically and politically in times of economic uncertainty. He tapped into the well of rage from America’s working middle

class, particularly white men who feel that life is unfair. Trump introduced something that is foreign to them (the “other” – in Trump’s case, immigrants), something unknown that gives them someone to blame. He reflected a more dangerous point of view: You’re angry because life hasn’t worked out the way you thought it would. The country doesn’t look the way it used to. It’s being overrun by immigrants who are taking your jobs, bringing the economy to its knees, and threatening your personal safety.”

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The Country’s Elected Leadership as of January 21, 2017

The political leadership of this country, down through the state level, is controlled by Republicans.

	Republican	Democrat	Other
President	1	0	x
U.S. Senate Members	52	46	2 Independents
U.S. House Members	241	194	
Governors	33	16	1 Ind (Alaska)
State Attorneys General	24	22	4 no such position
State Secretaries	27	20	3 no such position
State Treasurer	23	12	
State Senates	37	13	
State Senator Members	1157	803	12
State Houses	31	18	
State House Members	3044	2342	25
Control both Houses of State Legislatures	33	14	3 split
Control of Governor and both Houses	25	6	

* * * * *

President Trump

President-Elect Trump held his first news conference of the pre-January 20th period on January 11th. Most of the press conference focused on a report by a lawyer from Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, a prominent D.C. law firm, as to how Trump plans to deal with possible financial conflicts. Fred Fielding, a former

White House Counsel and recognized ethics lawyer, is part of the firm and is involved in developing the manner in which Trump will handle his business affairs. The head of the Office of Government Ethics described the plan for handling Trump's possible conflicts of interest plan as "meaningless". It remains the case that the ethics rules that apply to all government employees do not apply to the president and vice president.

57% of Americans are "Optimistic and Hopeful" that the President Elect will bring change to Washington, DC; 56% are "Optimistic and Hopeful" that Trump will keep U.S. jobs from going overseas; and 48% are "Optimistic and Hopeful" that he will look out for Americans who are struggling in today's economy. [NBC/WSJ, 12/15/16]

61% of us think it is a good thing that Trump has appointed retired members of the military, including retired generals, to key national security and civilian positions in his administration. 29% think it is a bad thing because the country has had a tradition of civilian control over the military and national security.

By 64% to 32%, American voters believe that Trump should close his personal twitter account. Republicans disagree by 49% to 45%. 71% of those 18-34 years of age believe he should close the account. [Quinnipiac, 1/9/17]

Americans are less enthusiastic about the billionaires and millionaires who Trump is appointing to other key positions in his administration. 47% think their appointment is a bad thing and 43% say it is a good thing.

Respondents are ambivalent about the amount of influence that Trump's family members will have on his administration. 39% say they will have too much influence while 38% say they will have the right amount of influence. [NBC/WSJ, 12/15/16]

55% of Americans disapprove of the job that Trump has done explaining his policies and plans for the future to the American people. 39% approve. Not surprisingly, 83% of Democrats disapprove and 72% of Republicans approve.

There is continuing concern that Trump's relationship with organizations, businesses or foreign governments conflict with his ability to serve the country's best interests. 65% of Americans were at least somewhat concerned about this in December but that number dropped to 57% in January. [PEW, 1/10/17]

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81% of voters say it is likely “Trump will take actions to benefit his businesses when he becomes president. 79% say it is important for Trump to remove himself from the operations of his businesses before he is inaugurated. [Morning Consult/POLITICO, 12/11/16]

* * * * *

The professional media are having an interesting experience as they take on the responsibility of covering the president-elect and his new administration. Ruth Marcus comments on this challenge in an article in the Washington Post. Here are the first and last paragraphs of her article.

“The approaching presidency of Donald Trump poses daunting challenges for the journalists covering him, not merely because he has described them as dishonest, low-life scum or because of anxiety over whether the new administration will adhere to basic norms of access, such as daily briefings and regular news conferences.”

“Perhaps the hardest problem – and the most important, given the millisecond modern attention span – involves how to accurately portray Trump’s conduct within the confined space of a headline, or a broadcaster’s capsule summary. This task will demand constant vigilance and endless creativity on the part of those of us committed to practicing journalism in the Age of Trump. It will, in some circumstances, require some diligence on the part of our audience to probe beyond the first impression.” [WPost, 1/6/17]

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At his news conference on January 11th Trump acknowledged for the first time that he believes Russian operatives hacked the DNC during the election. This places him in concert with Americans generally. 72% of Americans who have heard about the allegations (88% of the public) believe that Russia was behind the hacks at the DNC and the Clinton campaign. [PEW, 1/10/17]

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Trump does not comport to political conventions, and we have no reason to expect him to start behaving like a traditional president or politician. He may well start breaking established rules of behavior. Browbeating companies to keep jobs

in the U.S. may well be one, and it's apt to play well with his base which sees him as the lone politician who will look out for them." (Charlie Cook, Cook Political Report, 12/2/16)

The following are excerpts from a December 1 column by Amy Walter of the Cook Political Report.

"In many ways President-elect Trump is exactly the guy he was when he was candidate Trump. He remains obsessed with real or perceived slights — using twitter to lash out at those who dissed or dismissed him. He is infatuated with how the press covers him and yet has set the record in the modern era for days he's gone without holding a post-election press conference."

"But, when it comes to what he actually DOES as president — namely who he hires and doesn't — Trump is less A.D.D. than his Twitter tirades would have you believe. In fact, if personnel is policy, most of Trump's cabinet picks suggest he'll govern more like a traditional, conservative Republican than a populist, big government or anti-establishment GOPer. Yes, senior advisor Steve Bannon and Michael Flynn, his pick for National Security Advisor, are controversial and potential bomb-throwers. But, the rest of his choice thus far are for more conventional. In fact, his cabinet picks thus far don't look a whole lot different from those a President Ted Cruz would have chosen."

"We are very early into the Trump era. So, we should be careful not to over-interpret his transition effort. However, it's also important for us to focus on what Trump is DOING instead of what he's TWEETING. And, based on what he's doing, he's putting together a team around him that will unite Republicans, but will do little to unite the country"

* * * * *

November 21, 2013 is a date about which Democrats will be reminded numerous times during the next several weeks.

Senator Susan Collins said, "I think the minority will rue the day that they broke the rules to change the rules."

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell said, “You will no doubt come to regret this, and you may regret it sooner than you think.”

The Democrats, led by Senator Reid, pushed through a controversial Senate rules change called the “nuclear option.” The change reduced the threshold from 60 votes to 51 votes for Senate approval of executive and judicial nominees thus ending the use of the filibuster. The rule change does not apply to Supreme Court nominees.

As a result, President-Elect Donald Trump’s nominees to head various departments and his judicial appointments (currently there are 113 vacancies) – other than the Supreme Court—cannot be filibustered unless more than one of the Republican members of the Senate decide to vote against the person. There is not much chance of that happening.

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The Congress

“Women in Congress sponsor and co-sponsor more bills than men do, and bring 9 percent more federal money to their home districts, according to a study in the American Journal of Political Science.” ... “In a new analysis of the 151,824 public bills introduced in the House between 1973 and 2014, to be published in print in Political Science Research and Methods, researchers found that women were significantly more likely than men to sponsor bills in areas like civil rights, health and education. Men were more likely to sponsor bills in agriculture, energy and macroeconomics.” [NYT, 11/10/16]

When it comes to the question of whether Democrats and Republicans in Congress will see the coming year as a period of unity and a time to work together to achieve compromise or a period of division, 70% see it as a period of division and little willingness to compromise. [NBC/WSJ, 12/15/16]

Over the last 21 mid-term elections, the sitting President’s party has lost an average of 4 U.S. Senate seats and an average of 30 U.S. House of Representatives seats.

Over the last 10 mid-term elections, the sitting President’s party has lost an average of 4 U.S. Senate seats and an average of 18 U.S. House of Representatives seats. The exceptions were in 1998 when the Democrats picked up 5 House seats

but no Senate seats and in 2002 when the Republicans picked up 8 House seats and 2 Senate seats.

The task for Democrats in 2018 is formidable. They need to hold the bulk of their Senate seats, make some modest inroads in the House, and make a start on breaking the Republican stranglehold in the states. President Trump could be their best friend. If he shows no signs of making America great again, if he doesn't moderate his temperament in keeping with the dignity of his high office, if he can't avoid conflicts between his business interests and political duties, then the usual pattern of midterm elections could be turned on its head. [Charlie Cook, Cook Political Report, 12/2/16]

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The House

[WW relies on the Cook Political Report for the House data below.]

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Democrats	194
Republicans	241
Vacancies	0

In the new Congress, 87% of House Republicans will be white men, compared to just 41% of House Democrats. [Cook]

The Senate

	Republicans	52	
	Democrats	46	
	Independents	2	
	<u>Democrats</u>		<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2018	23	44	
Safe in 2018	12	6	(See below)
Likely in 2018	8	0	
Menendez			
Stabenow			
Casey			
Tester			
Heitkamp			
Manchin			

Baldwin
Kaine

Leaning in 2018 5
Nelson
Donnelly
King
McCaskill
Brown

2
Flake
Heller

Safe Democrats in 2018
Feinstein, Murphy, Carper,
Hirono, Cardin, Warren,
Klobuchar, Heinrich, Gillibrand,
Whitehouse, Sanders, Cantwell

Safe Republicans in 2018
Wicker, Fischer, Corker, Cruz, Hatch,
Barrasso

* * * * *

The question going forward is how the Senate Democrats plan to approach the Trump administration. A variety of groups seem to be posed to oppose him at every turn. The new Democratic Minority Leader, Senator Schumer, has suggested that he is willing to cooperate with president-elect Donald Trump in some areas- suggesting that, “he isn’t planning on adopting the total-obstruction strategy employed by the GOP against President Obama.”

It has been part of political mythology, that the Republican Senate Majority Leader, Senator McConnell, at the outset of 2009, announced that his number one priority was to make President Obama a one-term president. It was noted by Democrats that McConnell signaled early on he had no intention of cooperating with the new president.

According to Glenn Kessler in the Washington Post blog “Fact Checker”, the facts are slightly different. In a National Journal interview on October 23, 2010, nearly two years after Obama was elected and on the eve of the midterm elections, McConnell said, “The single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president.”

He was then asked by the National Journal, “Does this mean endless, or at least frequent, confrontation with the president?” McConnell then said, “If

President Obama does a Clintonian backflip, if he is willing to meet halfway on some of the biggest issues, it's not inappropriate for us to do business with him."

* * * * *

Women Will Get it Done: Women in Politics

Today, women hold more seats in Congress than ever before, but this record number still only accounts for 20% of total seats. Women comprise more than 50% of the general U.S. population, but only hold 25% of seats in state legislatures, 10% of governorships and 12% of mayoral seats for the nation's 100 largest cities. Women have proven their ability to govern and they are as likely to win races as men are, so the problem isn't that women can't win, but that not enough women are running.

Women face different challenges when considering a run for office. Women are less likely to have been socialized to consider politics as a possible career path in the first place and most women don't want to run for office simply because of the ugliness of politics. Women have to deal with sexism and prejudices that can make the idea of running unappealing even to those who do have the desire—a population which is significantly smaller for woman than men. Studies find a major gender gap when it comes to political ambition: only 37% of women said they had considered running for office, compared to 57% of men. Women don't want their personal lives subjected to national discussion and many women don't consider themselves as viable candidates, even if they have the right credentials.

Once women do decide to run, and if they win, they still have distinctive challenges: 42% of female legislators disagreed with the statement "most men in my legislature are supportive of moving women into leadership positions" and 42% disagreed with the statement "the leaders in my legislature are as likely to consult with the women in their legislature as the men when making important decisions." Politics is still very much an "old boys club" which can be both discouraging and counterproductive to women serving in government.

Our State Houses and Capitols need to be filled with diverse legislatures that reflect the realities of the American citizenry. With the challenges our government is tackling, it is time to take advantage of all of the talent and wisdom that both men and women can bring to the table. To get more women running, society must stop telling its young women that politics is not the place for them and then take

advantage of the talents and experiences they bring once women do decide to enter the political arena.

* * * * *

Spread Some Cheer

“Doing good feels great. Good cheer starts here! You inspire us and we want to inspire you with ideas for spreading cheer. Use one yourself or tear off and pass on to someone else to carry on during the season of warmth and good will. “

“Make someone’s day. Hold back and hold the door open for someone. Nice!”

“Make a small step for change with a donation to your favorite charity.”

“Morning perk. Treat the person behind you in the coffee line to a nice hot beverage.”

“Royal treatment. Declare that it’s teatime and treat someone to a cup.”

“A simple “hello” can make a world of difference in someone’s day.”

* * * * *

Restaurants

Sfoglina
4445 Connecticut Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20008
202-450-1312
Info@Sfoglinadc.com
Reservations@FabioTrabocchi.com

Lee, Whitney, Debbie and I went to Sfoglina on a Tuesday night a few days before Christmas, just a couple of weeks after it opened. We attempted to make a reservation online but the times we wanted, 7 or 7:30 p.m., were not available for several days. We contacted a friend who is connected to the restaurant and he arranged for a 7:30 p.m. reservation for four.

As you enter the restaurant, the reception desk is dead ahead. To the left, there is a small room with a table for up to 8 people. Interestingly, that table is available only at night. During the day that room is used for the preparation of various pastas that will be used throughout the day.

The general décor of the restaurant is white with a variety of red and black accents. The restaurant seats up to 80 people.

To the right of the reception desk is the balance of the relatively narrow restaurant. First, there is a long bar with high chairs that fronts the open kitchen. There are a number of seating areas at the bar. Initially, there is seating for two people at the bar. A few feet further on, past a column there is seating for eight people at the bar than a few feet further on there is seating for two people. Finally, a few feet further on, there is seating for four people at the bar.

The chef directs the kitchen from a position that is in the restaurant proper, in front of the bar.

In the balance of the restaurant there are tables on both sides of a narrow aisle that runs the length of the restaurant. There are a series of banquettes on each side of the restaurant as well as at the far end. There are also areas where there are no banquettes. There are table tops of 2s, 4s and a couple of 6 and 8 seat tables. A number of the 2s and 4s can easily be converted into larger tables.

We were seated at a table for 4 at the far end of the restaurant. On each side of our table there were 2 tops. At our end of the restaurant along the back wall and extending overhead is a kind of padding that may well be decorative but it keeps the area quiet. For a fairly crowded restaurant the sounds are quite muted. This is aided by cloth panels on the columns and sections of fabric overhead.

Our server was Kristina. She was very attentive and able to describe each dish on the menu. She was helpful throughout our dinner and we had several opportunities to chat.

She asked whether we wanted sparkling or flat water. When we selected sparkling she proceeded to replace the clear water glasses on the table with blue glasses. When I asked why the change of glasses she told us it was so the servers would know that we preferred sparkling rather than flat water. That was something I had never seen before.

The other thing of note was the silverware. Each place setting had a fork, a knife and a very large spoon to be used in twirling the pasta. Our individual plates, changed on a regular basis, were mid-sized and used throughout the meal.

The menu is broken down into the following categories: Nibbles, Small Plates, Soup, Classic Pastas, Seasonal Pastas, Not Pasta, Sides, and Desserts. Of course there are a variety of wines. (While the menu changes daily you can get an idea by looking at the menu online.)

We were given the option of ordering our Nibbles and Small Plates and enjoying them before we ordered our primary courses. We chose to order them all at once. Even though the place was crowded, service was very quick and the main courses arrived just as we were finishing the first course items. Next time we will probably take the option of ordering and enjoying the first course before ordering the second.

We decided to share all of the dishes we ordered. So here they are: From Nibbles we ordered Grilled Wild Calamari with Romesco Sauce. From Small Plates we ordered Arugula Salad with Blood Orange, Pomegranate, LaTur, Cheese; 20-Month Aged Prosciutto, Manodori Balsamico, Persimmon; and Spicy Charred Octopus, Italian Heirloom Radicchio.

For our main courses we chose Rigatoni Amatriciana, Roasted Tomatoes, Pancetta, Pecorino; Ligurian Corzetti, with foraged mushrooms, Olive oil, parsley; Squid Ink Casarecce with lobster, octopus, Amalfi Style; Spaghetti Chitarra with Guanciale and Pecorino, Carbonara Style. We did not try any of the Not Pasta dishes but I have heard that the Beef Short Ribs are particularly tasty. We did not order any sides.

For dessert we ordered Carmelized White Chocolate Custard with Warm Chocolate Sauce and Tahitian Vanilla & Chocolate Soft Serve with Chocolate Pearls. The only dish I would not likely order again is the Custard. The Soft Serve was eaten to the last little swirl but more than half the Custard was left.

I ordered a double espresso from a person who was not our regular server . It came and then our server having heard from one of her colleagues that I wanted espresso also brought me a single espresso, both with caffeine and I slept just fine.

As usual I cannot comment on the wine selections although I did drink a half glass for the first time in many years. Whitney finished it for me.

And now for the restrooms which are gender neutral. Near the front door, around a corner there is a door marked “Toilette”. When you go through that door there is a small area with two additional doors each marked “Toilette.” This small area is decorated somewhat differently than the individual “Toilettes”.

I am assuming the “toilette” that I did not use is identical to the one I did use. There is a single white ceramic commode that is so new that it is hard to raise the seat. (Gentlemen, remember to put the seat down.) Appropriately placed near the commode are two metal bars, one horizontal and the other vertical to provide assistance for those who may need a little help. There is also an interesting stand-alone black metal gizmo for holding toilet paper.

There is a thin black marble counter with metal legs on which stands a fancy white ceramic wash basin with an unusual black metal faucet and handle. There is a wall hanging mirror above it. There is also room on the counter for a fancy soap dish and appropriate paper towels.

There is an appropriately placed metal waste receptacle and a bunch of large artificial flowers in a bowl on the floor. The floor is covered with mid-size grey tiles. The walls are split at about waste height. The lower half is a series of white diamond shape designs. The upper half is also white but includes a series of different size red and white diamond shaped designs.

The hours of the restaurant are Mon/3:00 -10pm; Tue-Thurs/11:30 am-10 pm; Fri/11:30 am – 10:30 pm; Sat/10:30 am – 11:30 pm (Brunch served ‘till 2:30 pm); Sun/10:30 am – 9 pm (Brunch served till 2:30 pm).

We will dine here again in the future.

This is the fourth restaurant in the ever growing Washington-based chain of restaurants created by Fabio and Maria Trabocchi which include Fiola, Fiola Mare and Casa Luca. (All of which we have enjoyed.)

There is no valet parking but after 7 p.m. when the rush hour parking ban is over there seems to be ample street parking.

Mike