

*Mike Berman's*

# WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

No. 128

September 13, 2013

## State of the Nation

\* \* \* \* \*

### The Differences an Election Makes

\* \* \* \* \*

### President Obama

\* \* \* \* \*

### The Congress

\* \* \* \* \*

### Restaurants

1,000 dinners & A View from a Commode

Bethesda

Washington, DC

\* \* \* \* \*

## State of the Nation

62% say that the country is off on the wrong track, according to the most recent NBC/WSJ survey. This represents the highest number who feel the country is on the wrong track since 69% expressed that view in December 2011. 30% think the country is headed in the right direction. [NBC/WSJ 9/8/13]

\* \* \* \* \*

## Employment

Unemployment, which was at 7.8% when Obama was inaugurated, continued to rise until October 2009, when it hit 10%. For the month of August 2013 “unemployment” stands at 7.3%, down 2.7% from October 2009. It is down 0.1% from July. This number does not include people who are working part-time, but want full-time employment. Nor does it include those who have not looked for work in the last four weeks, but are available and have looked in the last 12 months. When those folks are added, we get an unemployed/underemployed number that is 13.7% for August 2013. [U.S. BLS] [All numbers seasonally adjusted]

Following is the August data for 2008-2013 (+Jan & Oct 2009):

	<u>Aug</u> <u>2008</u>	<u>Jan</u> <u>2009</u>	<u>Aug</u> <u>2009</u>	<u>Oct</u> <u>2009</u>	<u>Aug</u> <u>2010</u>	<u>Aug</u> <u>2011</u>	<u>Aug</u> <u>2012</u>	<u>Aug</u> <u>2013</u>
Unemployed	6.1	7.8	9.6	10.0	9.5	9.0	8.1	7.3
Unemployed +	10.8	14.2	16.7	17.1	16.5	16.1	14.7	13.7

Gallup also does a survey which is a running, 30-day, rolling average. Note the unemployment/underemployment number varies from that put out by the BLS. (BLS surveys those 16 years of age and older, while Gallup surveys those 18 years of age and older.) For August, Gallup has unemployment at 8.7% and unemployment/underemployment at 17.4%

\* \* \* \* \*

The data above, while accurate, does not tell the whole unemployment story. The calculations of unemployment by BLS are based on the percentage of Americans who were working or actively seeking work.

- In 2007, 66% of Americans were on the job or actively seeking work
- In September 2013, that number is 63.2%
- If the same percentage of adults were in the work force today as in 2007, the unemployment rate would be 10.8%
- There are 3 reasons for this drop in the work force
  - Older Americans are retiring
  - The participation rate for workers between 16-54 years of age fell sharply during the recession
  - Workers, especially women, are less likely to enter the workforce than they were in the early 2000s

- The number of workers on disability insurance has doubled since 1995, reaching 8.8 million Americans  
[The above is based on a story from the Washington Post 9/6/13]

\* \* \* \* \*

58% of those 65 years of age and older work full time. This is an increase of 6% since 2002. [WP 9/1/13]

\* \* \* \* \*

“21% of the married households in the United States in 2011 had at least one foreign-born spouse.” [U.S.Census Bureau/WP 9/6/13]

\* \* \* \* \*

35% of Americans have confidence in the American medical system. This is the lowest confidence rate since 2008-09, when a similar number expressed confidence in the system. The most recent low point occurred in 2007 when confidence drooped to 31%. Prior to that score, the last time it fell below 35% was in 1993, when 34% expressed confidence. This previous low coincides with the debate over the Clinton health care plan. The highest level of confidence expressed in the last 20 years was 44% in the 2003-04 period. [Gallup 6/13]

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Data from Pew Research Web Site

\* 54% of the publics in 29 countries says that global climate change is a threat; only 40% of Americans agree

\* 39% of U.S. adults are caring for an adult or child with significant health issues, up from 30% in 2010

\* 8% of U.S. households with minor children are headed by a single father, up from 1% in 1960

\* 65% of U.S. Hispanics, or 33.5 million, trace their family origins to Mexico

\* \* \* \* \*

## Kantar Media

Recently, Kantar Media organized a forum to discuss the future of the technology and methodology of polling. The event was organized by Elizabeth Wilner, Editor of Kantar US Insights, a new US-based insight website.

As part of the program, Kantar released parts of a recent survey called “Path to Public Opinion.” One thing that got my attention was the amount of detail provided about the methodology used in conducting what appears to be the beginning of a regular series.

Here are some of the findings and presentments.

- \* 67% say they pay “not much or no attention” to public opinion polls in deciding where they stand on important issues or which candidate they will support. Yet 59% say they do pay attention to surveys when considering what products and services to buy.
- \* 75% believe that most polls are biased toward a particular point of view.
- \* 64% trust polls taken by academic centers. Only 27% have that view about polls conducted by political parties or candidates. Polls conducted by news media organizations come up between the two, at 43%. At the bottom of the pile, only 16% trust polls taken by automated voice-recording firms.
- \* 46% consider news media the most accurate when representing current public opinion about a politician or policy. 6% have that view about Facebook and 3% say that about Twitter.
- \* 61% say they use social media sites to communicate with family and friends. Only 6% say they use it to communicate about issues and causes.
- \* 91% of Americans own cell phones. 36.5% of Americans have only a cell phone. [Center for Disease Control]

\* \* \* \* \*

## An Example of Polling

The, theoretical at this point (McConnell faces a primary), general election

race in Kentucky will match the incumbent Senator Mitch McConnell (R) against Secretary of State Alison Grimes (D).

The following are two general election surveys in that potential race. Both polls surveyed Likely Voters.

A Democrat-leaning pollster, using telephone interviews from July 20-24, 2013 had Grimes up by 2 pts, 44% to 42%. A Republican-leaning pollster, using robo calls from July 23-4, 2013, had McConnell up by 8 points, 48% to 40%

\* \* \* \* \*

In recent weeks a great deal of attention has been paid to telephone and internet privacy, or the lack thereof . 86% of internet users have taken various actions designed to increase control of their own privacy. 55% of internet users have taken actions to protect their privacy against specific people, organizations, or the government.

Among internet users:

- \* 26% have had an email or social networking account compromised in some fashion
- \* 12% have been “stalked or harassed online”
- \* 11% have experienced theft of important personal information
- \* 12% have been scammed, had their reputation damaged, or been led into physical danger [Pew Internet 9/5/13]

\* \* \* \* \*

If given the opportunity, 69% of Americans would vote against a proposed law that would limit the size of soft drinks to no more than 16 ounces. [Gallup 6/13]

\* \* \* \* \*

### **The Differences an Election Makes**

The section entitled “The Role of Washington is Changing” in the previous WW drew a question from one reader: What did this data look like before the 2010 election? In the following pages, the material in *italics* is the pre-2010 election data.

2012 Data

2010 Data in Italics

2010 Data in Italics			Total Population (estimated)	Electoral Votes	Political Division	
		U.S. House Rep/Dem			U.S. Senate Rep/Dem	
● -- Dem Governor, House, and Senate	(14)	91,437,994	145	35/96	1/26 + 1 Ind.	
2010-	(17)	89,102,869	160	31/99	6/28	
● -- Dem Governor and House, Rep Senate	(3)	25,075,351	41	11/24	3/3	
2010-	(5)	44,118,461	72	31/36	5/5	
● -- Dem Governor, Rep House and Senate	(3)	9,734,435	19	11/2	2/4	
2010-	(4)	13,192,051	27	12/7	8/0	
● -- Dem Governor, Rep Senate, Split House	--	-----	--	----	----	
(2010 ONLY)	(1)	967,440	3	1/0	0/2	
2012 Total		126,247,780	205	57/122	6/33 + 1 Ind.	
2010 Total		147,380,821	262	75/142	19/35	
● -- Rep Governor, House, and Senate	(23)	150,081,395	262	154/62	34/12	
2010-	(9)	69,026,953	119	52/39	14/4	
● -- Rep Governor and House, Dem Senate	(1)	3,002,555	6	2/2	1/1	
2010-	(1)	7,763,089	13	5/6	0/2	
● -- Rep Governor, Dem House and Senate	(4)	14,583,640	25	9/12	3/4 + 1 Ind.	
2010-	(10)	70,444,511	122	40/63	6/12 + 2 Ind.	
● -- Rep Governor and House, Split Senate	(1)	7,769,089	13	8/3	0/2	
2010-	(1)	686,293	3	1/0	1/1	
● -- Rep Governor and Senate, Dem House	--	-----	--	----	----	
(2010 ONLY)	(1)	6,376,792	11	4/5	1/1	
*Nebraska- Rep Governor, Nonpartisan legislature (2010 and 2012)		1,783,432	5	3/0	1/1	
2012 Total		175,436,679	306	173/79	38/19 + 1 Ind.	
2010 Total		156,081,070	273	105/113	23/21 + 2 Ind.	
*District of Columbia		632,323	3	0/1	NA	

## 2012 Presidential Election Results

*Italicized: How the election would have looked  
based on 2010 State Governments*

	OBAMA	ROMNEY
● -- Dem Governor, House, and Senate (14) <i>2010- (17)</i>	14 <i>14</i>	0 <i>3 (AR, NC, WV)</i>
● -- Dem Governor and House, Rep Senate (3) <i>2010- (5)</i>	2 (NH, NY) <i>3 (MI, OH, PA)</i>	1 (KY) <i>2 (KY, MO)</i>
● -- Dem Governor, Rep House and Senate (3) <i>2010- (4)</i>	0 <i>0</i>	3 (MO, MT, AR) <i>4 (KS, OK, TN, WY)</i>
● -- Dem Governor, Rep Senate, Split House -- <i>2010 ONLY (1)</i>	---- <i>0</i>	---- <i>1 (MT)</i>
2012 Total <i>2010 Total</i>	16 <i>17</i>	4 <i>10</i>
<hr/>		
● -- Rep Governor, House, and Senate (23) <i>2010- (9)</i>	5 (FL, OH, MI, PA, WI) <i>1 (FL)</i>	18 <i>8</i>
● -- Rep Governor and House, Dem Senate (1) <i>2010- (1)</i>	1 (IA) <i>1 (VA)</i>	0 <i>0</i>
● -- Rep Governor, Dem House and Senate (4) <i>2010- (10)</i>	4 (ME, NV, NJ, NM) <i>7 (CA, CT, MN, NV, NJ, RI, VT)</i>	0 <i>3 (AL, LA, MS)</i>
● -- Rep Governor and House, Split Senate (1) <i>2010- (1)</i>	1 (VA) <i>0</i>	0 <i>1 (AK)</i>
● -- Rep Governor and Senate, Dem House -- <i>2010 ONLY (1)</i>	---- <i>0</i>	---- <i>1 (IN)</i>
*Nebraska- Rep Governor, Nonpartisan legislature	0	1
2012 Total <i>2010 Total</i>	11 <i>9</i>	19 <i>14</i>

\* \* \* \* \*

## President Obama

The public's grade for the job President Obama is doing (as found by Gallup) is 43% approval/48% disapproval. Of the 5 previous two-term Presidents at this point in their second term this is better than only Richard Nixon. The list of 6 follows:

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
Reagan	60	30 (9/16/85)
Eisenhower	59	23 (9/4/57)
Clinton	61	28 (9/7/97)
G Bush (II)	45	52 (9/15/05)
<u>Obama</u>	43	48 (9/8/13)
Nixon	34	56 (9/10/73)

<u>Date</u>	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN/ORC</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>
Sept 2013	45/50%	xxx	45/52%	46/46%
Aug 2013 *	44/48% (NBC only)	xxx	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%
Aug 2012	44/54%	47/50%	50/47%	xxx

Obama's performance on the economy has been rated negatively since December 2009, with the exception of December 2012/January 2013. Currently, only 45% approve while 51% disapprove.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
Sept 2013	45%	51%
Aug 2013	44%	48% (NBC only)
July 2013	45%	51%
June 2013	46%	49%
Jan 2013	49%	48%
Jan 2009	56%	31%



In August, an NBC-only survey found Obama's performance on foreign policy rated more negatively than at any time in the past -- 41% approval/49% disapproval. [NBC 8/13]

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

The country specifically does not approve of the work being done by the President on the conflict in Syria. Multiple polling organizations raised this issue with Americans earlier this week. Here are the results of several of these surveys, all of which ended their surveys on September 8, 2013.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
CBS/NYT	33%	56%
CNN/ORC	31%	63%
NBC/WSJ	28%	57%
PEW/USA	29%	56%

\* \* \* \* \*

The public is quite evenly divided on the question of whether Obama is "honest and trustworthy." 51% say he is and 49% say he is not. [CNN/ORC 9/8/13]

\* \* \* \* \*

## 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 list has not expanded since the August 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
	Elizabeth Warren

\* \* \* \* \*

## **The Congress**

In the most recent CNN/ORC survey, 20% approve of the job being done by Congress, while 78% disapprove. This is the highest approval number recorded in the six times this survey question has been asked in this poll since January 2011. [CNN/ORC 9/8/13] . Roughly a month earlier, Gallup reported a 14% approval rating and 81% disapproval. [Gallup 8/11/13]

\* \* \* \* \*

### THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats	52
Republicans	46
Independents	2

Corey Booker (D) is the odds-on favorite to win the October special U.S. Senate election in New Jersey to replace Frank Lautenberg (D). This will result in there being 53 Democrats in the Senate.

A change from the August Washington Watch is that Michigan and New Hampshire move from Leaning Democrat to Safe Democrat. This increases the safe Democrat seats to 13.

Louisiana remains in the Toss Up column, but there is some evidence that the race is moving toward the incumbent Mary Landrieu (D), and an argument can be made that this race could move to the Leaning Democrat column.

There is much interest in the Georgia race. Recent Democratic polling shows Michelle Nunn (D) holding her own or leading potential Republican

candidates. The Democrats hope is pinned on the Nunn name (Michelle's father was a well regarded Democrat Senator from that State and is around to help her.)

However, until the Republican primary contest is over on May 20, 2014, there no way to get a hard assessment of the race. Republicans are concerned that their multi-candidate primary could result in a candidate too extreme for the general election electorate, e.g., Missouri and Indiana in 2012.

\* *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)

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

There has been little change in the structure of the House of Representatives races since the August issue of the Watch.

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>7/19/13</u>	<u>9/5/13</u>
Total Dem	201	201	201	201	201
Solid Dem	167	166	163	163	163
Likely Dem	17	18	18	15	14
Lean Dem	11	11	12	15	15
Toss-up	7	8	9	9	10
D	6	6	8	8	9
R	1	2	1	1	1
Lean GOP	7	10	10	11	11
Likely GOP	18	18	17	17	17
Solid GOP	208	204	206	205	205
Total GOP	234	234	234	234	234

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

	<u>3/12</u>	<u>4/19</u>	<u>6/14</u>	<u>7/19</u>	<u>8/23</u>
Total Democrat	201	200	194	202	202
Safe Democrat	176	176	177	175	175
D Favored	10	10	8	8	8
Lean D	6	6	9	10	11
Toss Up/Tilt D	6	6	5	5	5
Toss Up-D	3	2	3	3	3
Toss Up-R	2	3	1	1	1
Toss Up/Tilt R	5	5	5	5	5
Lean R	5	5	5	5	5
R Favored	13	13	10	10	11
Safe Republican	207	208	212	212	211
Total Republican	234	234	227	233	233

\* \* \* \* \*

## Restaurants

### 1,000 dinners and A View from the Commode

**Bethesda  
Newton's Table**

**Washington, DC  
Casa Luca  
Nopa  
Obelisk**

**A thousand plus dinners**

Have you ever said to someone with whom you are having dinner, “we must have had 100s of meals together?”

One night, a few weeks back, Rita Braver and Bob Barnett, Debbie and I were having dinner, and we started talking about the number of dinners we had shared over the years. When we got home that evening I decided to figure out the minimum number of meals we had shared in combination over the years.

I moved into the same condo building in which Bob and Rita lived at the beginning of 1977. That was 35 years and 36 weeks ago as of September 14<sup>th</sup>. We have gone to dinner at least, on average, once per week during that entire period. Thus we have had at least 1856 meals in some combination of two, three or four of us.

This does not take into account the times we shared a meal before January 1977. And, it does not take into account periods of time when we have shared 3 meals per day on various vacations. Nor does it take into account various other eating opportunities like lunch.

\* \* \* \* \*

**The View From a Commode**

Charlie and Lucy Cook were having lunch with Bill and Susan Sweeney at the Cribstone Grille on Bailey Island, Maine. Charlie asked directions to the restrooms. The waitress said “use the one on the left, it has the best view.” Charlie took the following pictures, first of the bathroom itself and then of the view through the bathroom screen window.



\* \* \* \* \*

NEWTON'S TABLE  
4917 Elm Street  
Bethesda, Maryland  
301-718-0550  
[www.newtonstable.com](http://www.newtonstable.com)

Debbie and I went to Newton's Table with Florence, Peter and Gail.

As you enter the restaurant, the greeting station is straight ahead. To the right there is a bar with an L-shaped bar and high stools.

The main dining room is to the left. It has an interesting combination of seat arrangements. At the far side of the dining room is a banquette with a number of tables, 2s and 4s, which could be moved together. Set up on the other side of the dining room are two wood tables, one of which handles up to ten people and the second which holds up to eight. There are a few rounds that can seat 4 or 5, and the rest are squares of 2 and 4. At a regular seating, the restaurant seats 78, but for special parties it has seated as many as 95.

One of the reasons that Florence and Peter suggested Newton's is that the noise level in the restaurant is quite muted. In so many restaurants, having a reasonably voiced conversation with the others in your party is a task, because the restaurant is so noisy overall. The ceiling and the floor at Newton's are covered in material designed to absorb sound.

Gail and Florence shared a green salad. Debbie did not order a starter, but she "snacked" on the Rosemary Parmesan Fries that Peter ordered and the Beet salad that I ordered.

Debbie and Florence had Softshell Crabs, sautéed, garlic-scallion fried rice, summer vegetables, soy vinaigrette. Gail ordered Pan-seared Rockfish, plantain puree, guajillo chile sauce, avocado salsa, crispy tortilla strips.

Peter and I ordered Fuzu, rice noodles, snow peas, carrots, onions, bean sprouts, eggs, chicken, shrimp, scallops, sweet and spicy soy sauce, black sesame seeds, crispy shallots, scallions.

For dessert, we shared an Apricot Crumble and Chocolate Crunch.

Jason, our server, was particularly good. He recited the specials of the day, of which there were a number, as well as the detail of some of the more complicated items on the menu. He did so with ease and without a note. His level of attention to us was just right.

Upon entering the men's room your eye is immediately caught by the colors; yellow/gold, bright blue, and yellow/tan. Immediately to the right is a large square, white wall-hanging washbasin with a mirror above. Directly opposite the washbasin, on the wall, is a large, brightly colored, cartoonish "painting." To the left of the wash basin is a partial bright blue metal wall, open at floor and ceiling, and then a wall-hanging white ceramic urinal. To the left of the urinal is a closed-in commode area. The bright blue wall and door are open at the bottom and top. . The walls are painted yellow gold and the floor is covered by large yellow/tan tiles.

There is valet parking.

\* \* \* \* \*

CASA LUCA  
1099 New York Ave NW  
(Entrance on 11<sup>th</sup>)  
Washington, DC 20001  
202-628-1099  
[www.casalucadc.com](http://www.casalucadc.com)

I have eaten at Casa Luca twice, once for dinner and once for lunch. Dinner was with Debbie, Rachel, Steve, Coby and Max. Lunch was with Liz.

As you enter the restaurant there is a greeting stand. Ahead and angled to the left is the bar, which seats 18. Directly to the left is a long dining area. To the right is a small dining room. There are two long, facing banquettes with a mix of 2 and 4 tops, and one circular table that seats six. At the far end of the restaurant are two rooms that can be closed off for private events or opened as part of the main dining room. The restaurant serves 130 inside and 20 outside.

The restaurant's menu uses descriptive words for various dishes that remind one of an "old style" Italian restaurant. The fact that wine is served in tumblers rather than more conventional wine glasses is also reminiscent of the old style. The pastas are made daily in-house. ( Note: The menu is not designed to provide choices for young people. However, the serving folks were very accommodating



in preparing special dishes for Max and Coby.)

To begin the meal we shared Chichi di Offida, Summer Peppers, spicy Nduja; Thin Grilled Crescia Montefeltro Style; Marche Classic cheese Bread, Buffalo Butter and Fennel Salami. During the rest of the meal we shared Sweet Corn, Prosciutto & Mint; Ascolana Style Stuffed Olives and Heirloom Tomato & Stracciatella of Mozzarella. And then, because our main courses were a little delayed (the hostess apologized), we were presented with plates of Melon & Prosciutto and Figs and Prosciutto.

Rachel ordered Yellow Heirloom Tomato Gazpacho (we all were served a small portion), Leafy Greens, Summer Vegetables, Stone Fruits & Hazelnuts; and Swiss Chard.

Debbie and Max “shared” Angus Beef Ribeye Cacciatora Cipolline Agrodolce, Mushrooms, Pancetta. Coby had an order of Pasta and Tomato sauce, and nibbled on a few of the other items that came to the table.

Steve and I shared a selection for two, Grigliata Mista di Pesci, Adriatic Style Mixed Grill of Fish & Shellfish. This turned out to be a particularly tasty selection with a sufficient amount of each seafood that it could be split.

For dessert we shared Affogato, Vanilla Gelato, Capri Chocolate Torte, Varnelli Moka Sauce, Hazelnut Croccante, and coppetta di Alice, Sorbetti.

There is a “glossary” at the bottom of the menu. At first I thought it was designed to help understand the language of the menu, but it turned out there is no real connection.

At lunch, Liz started with Heirloom Tomato Salad, Berilotto di Bufalo followed by a grilled Branzino. I had the Tomato Salad without the Bufalo, and then an order of spaghetti with tomato sauce, which was actually not on the menu. We also ordered Sorbetti to conclude the meal.

There are four restrooms, two designated for women and two for men. At least one of the men’s is a little different. When you enter the men’s room to the right, you find there is only a urinal and a washbasin. However, there is no obvious marking that there is only a urinal. The second men’s room has a standard commode and a washbasin, and thus is full service.

The décor of each restroom is the same. The wall hanging urinal and the commode are white ceramic. The washbasin in each room has a white ceramic top with a round stainless steel basin, resting on a dark wood appliance that is attached to the wall. The walls are covered with dark yellow horizontal tiles; the floors are covered with a dark material.

At dinner the restaurant was quite noisy; that was not the case at lunch time. There is valet parking after 5:30 p.m.

\* \* \* \* \*

NOPA  
Kitchen & Bar  
800 F Street NW  
Washington, DC 20004  
202-347-4667

Debbie and I went with Hilary and Campbell to NOPA. This is one of Ashok Bajaj's restaurants, which include 701, Aredeo, Bardeo, Bibiana, the Bombay Club, The Oval Room, Rasika, and now NOPA.

The restaurant is on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the building at 800 F Street. There are two flights of stairs, one outside and the other inside the restaurant. Dead ahead as you enter is the host station; to the left is a long bar with stools. To the right is the main dining room of the restaurant, which includes a variety of tables and banquettes in several areas marked off by partial walls. Toward the back of the restaurant are three, very well-appointed, private dining rooms seating up to 36 people, 24 people and 14 people. At capacity the restaurant seats 160 people.

It was Restaurant Week so the usually large menu was shortened, but still provided ample choices.

Hilary began with Tomato Gazpacho, Parmesan Croutons. Campbell picked Mixed Baby Lettuces, Champagne Vinaigrette. Debbie selected Baby Beet and Mandarin Orange Salad, Aged Goat Cheese, Black Truffle Vinaigrette. I opted for Nantucket Style Smoked Bluefish Pate, Red Onion, Black Rooster Baltic Rye. (This was a pate that I had not tried before and it is particularly good.)

For her entrée, Debbie picked Hanger Steak, Smoked Mustard Sauce, Nopa Steak Frites. Campbell, Hilary and I all selected the Chilean Seatbass, Japanese

Eggplant, Wasabi Sweet Pea Puree. (Chilean Sea Bass is my favorite fish.)

Orders of Crispy Brussels Sprouts, Pear and Sesame, and Creamed Corn with Rosemary and Chiles were ordered for sharing. We also shared the Frites which came with Debbie's steak.

And then came dessert. None of us was that hungry, so the obvious choice was to order one portion of each of the desserts for the table: Chocolate Bar, Dark Chocolate Custard, Dule de Leche, Toffee Corn... Milk and Cookies, Peppermint Ice Cream, Double Chocolate Chip Cookies, Chocolate Milk...Summer Fruit Macedoine, Blackberr y Violet, Sorbet and Lemon Verbena Panna Cotta. It was hard to choose between them.

When we entered I knew I recognized the manager at the front station. Turns out it was Jennifer, who I saw many times in the several years she worked at Equinox. Our server was excellent. He recognized Hilary from Rasika. It turns out that he works at different restaurants in the group as needed.

To the left as you enter the men's room is a white counter top with two round stainless steel washbasins. To the right of the door are two white ceramic wall hanging urinals with three-foot wide floor-to-ceiling walls on each side and between them. There is a commode room with the white ceramic commode also attached the wall. The walls are covered with shiny dark square tiles and the floor is covered with large yellowish tiles.

Debbie noted that the lights are so dim in the otherwise very nice ladies restroom that it is hard to fix one's makeup.

There is valet parking after 5:30 p.m.

\* \* \* \* \*

OBELISK  
2029 P Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-872-1180

Ron and Judy, David and Ethelmary, and Debbie and I had dinner at Obelisk during August. David had suggested the restaurant and made the reservation.

David, who is clearly a fan, said that if he had to choose one restaurant at which to eat every meal, it would be Obelisk. When I asked what he would do about breakfast and lunch, since Obelisk is only open for dinner, he suggested that he probably would not need the other meals.

The restaurant is located on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of a row house and is accessed by a steep set of cement steps. There is no sign until you get to the door. It is open Tuesday through Saturday from 6 p.m. – 10 p.m. There are a maximum of 32 seats, 8 of which are on a banquette that extends along the far wall. The tables are located on three sides of the relatively small space. There is a rather long table in the middle of the room that is used by the servers to organize the dishes to be served for particular tables.

There are two seatings per night at each table, but scattered throughout the evening. The tables are combinations of 2s and 4s that can be combined for larger groups, but it is not really a restaurant to which you would take a large group. There is a bar with 3 high stools, but it is not the kind of place at which you stop in for a drink.

If a restaurant can be described as unpretentious, this is it. There is nothing fancy about it (only the food). The tables are of wood. Rather than full table cloths, there are dark brown and patterned covers (almost like large napkins) placed on the table with an edge of wood showing all around. The chairs are not overly comfortable, and they could use some fuller back pillows for those sitting on the banquette.

The level of service could not be better. There are four people attending to those 32 seats. There is a person who can best be described as the hostess, but besides seating you, going through the menu, and taking your order, she also helps serve. There are two servers and one bus person.

This is not a restaurant to which you go for a quick dinner. We arrived on time for our 9 p.m. reservation, but it was a few minutes before we were seated. We left the restaurant a little before midnight.

The menu that is found online gives you a flavor of the kinds of foods that are served, but the actual menu on a given day is much more limited and depends on what the chef finds at his various providers that day.

On the evening we were there, in addition to the antipasti misti, which are selected by the chef for the evening and brought to the table in waves, there were three primi (appetizers), three second courses, a selection of three cheeses, and a choice of three desserts.

The restaurant is not inexpensive, but well worth the cost. The night we were there the complete meal was \$85 per person, and paired wines were an additional \$55 per person. Those costs do not include gratuity or taxes.

In our party of six people, we happened to order every item on the menu. The antipasti included a small dish of various olives, Buretta, smoked swordfish belly stuffed with greens, Bruchetta with goat cheese and fig, and slightly spicy grilled green peppers.

For the Primi, or appetizer course, Ron ordered the Artichoke ravioli with pancetta, Judy had Zucchini and squash blossom tagliatelle, and the rest of us ordered Lobster soup.

For the main course, Ethelmary and Judy selected the Snapper with filet beans, bottarga and green sauce. Debbie and Ron opted for the Culotte (top sirloin of wagyu beef) with spinach and cipolinis. David and I shared Roulaud of Rabbit surrounded by leeks and chard.

The Formaggi course was Robida Bosina, Sovrano, and Rascheta with green tomato jam.

For dessert Judy, Ron and I ordered the Chocolate Cherry cake with Stracciatella ice cream. Debbie went with the Cantaloupe tart with shipped cream. And Ethelmary and David selected the Poached peach with granita and bay leaf ice cream. At the very end of the meal a dish of small sweets was delivered to the table.

One thing about the restaurant drew my particular applause. When David suggested the restaurant and made the reservation, he asked whether there was anything either of us did not eat. Debbie told him that I did not eat beef or cheese. When we were seated the hostess double checked with me as to those limitations in my diet. As noted above, the first antipasti was Burrata cheese. As the others began to enjoy this course the hostess brought me a small order of Rissotto Croquettes and then later as others were dealing with various cheese-related dishes she delivered a small salad of haricot verts (green beans).

Dropping in and finding a table is not impossible (especially in August), but reservations are strongly recommended. There is no delivery, no take out, no TV, no Wi-fi, no catering, and it is not wheel chair accessible.

The men's room is relatively small and quite simple. There is a white ceramic washbasin in the far right corner with a mirror on one wall. A standard white ceramic commode is located next to the washbasin. The floor is covered in large green tiles, and the walls are a shade of gold. One of the people working in the restaurant, when asked for the location of the restrooms, said there were two around the corner and while they were designated for women and men, if your designated restroom was occupied and the other was open, it was okay to use it.

*Mike*

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

[mberman@dubersteingroup.com](mailto:mberman@dubersteingroup.com)