

*Mike Berman's*

# **WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH**

No. 80

August 15, 2008

## **ABOUT AMERICA**

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## **PRESIDENT BUSH - LITTLE LEFT TO SAY**

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## **OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES**

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## **2008 DEMOCRATIC & REPUBLICAN PARTY CONVENTIONS** **An Anachronism's Last Stand**

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## **2008 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN** **Static until September 26th?**

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## **2008 CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGNS**

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## **THIS AND THAT**

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## **RESTAURANTS**

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## STATE OF THE NATION

In the most recent NBC/WSJ survey 74% of Americans said the country is on the wrong track. This is the "highest" wrong track number in the poll's history. A poll taken by NYTimes/CBS about a week earlier found 81% claiming the country was on the wrong track. This was the worst number in the poll's history, with the exception of April of this year when the number was the same.

In the same NBC/WSJ survey a plurality (43%) believe the economy will get worse during the next 12 months. 25% see the economy getting better. When asked about their personal financial situation, 18% say they are in good shape, 47% say they are doing okay, and 23% say that they are barely getting by.

Respondents to the NYT/CBS survey say that the economy is fairly (45%) or very (35%) bad. [NBC/WSJ 7/08, NYT/CBS 7/08]

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80% of Americans are dissatisfied with the way things are going in the country at the present time. [Gallup 8/08]

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When it comes to enunciating what is the most important problem facing the country today (all volunteered), the economy has a place all of its own.

- |   |                        |     |
|---|------------------------|-----|
| - | Economy                | 38% |
| - | Heating oil/gas crisis | 14  |
| - | War                    | 10  |
- [NYT/CBS 7/08]

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3.7 million Americans who had full-time jobs now find themselves working only part-time. This is the largest number of such job shifts since the government began tracking this information more than 50 years ago. [NYTimes 7/31/08]

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53% think the government should do more "to solve problems and help meet the needs of people." 43% say the government is doing "too many things better left to businesses and individuals." [NBC/WSJ 7/08]

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Sometimes you have to wonder whether the government and the governing class are generally focused on the wrong things.

Consider the following:

Nearly 1/4th of U.S. adults work at least 30 hours per week and earn no more than \$27,000 per year.

- 52% feel insecure; 50% feel less financially secure than they did a few years ago
- 90% rate the economy negatively; 44% say it is "not so good," and a slightly larger number(46%) rate it as "poor"
- 82% find it difficult to afford transportation or gasoline costs; a similar number cannot afford to save for retirement
- 75% say it has become increasingly difficult to find good jobs
- To make ends meet during the past year many have resorted to the following
  - 70% minimized the use of electricity
  - 62% have taken an extra job or worked extra hours
  - 51% postponed medical or dental care
  - 50% have taken money out of savings or retirement funds
  - 41% borrowed money from friends or relatives
  - 27% changed their housing situation
  - 26% increased credit card debt

Yet, despite all of the above

- 69% describe their feelings about their personal financial as hopeful
- 59% say that when their children are their age their standard of living will be better

[Washington Post/Henry J. Kaiser Foundation/Harvard University, June-July 2008]

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What a difference the price of a barrel of oil makes. In mid-July, 52% thought that the price of a gallon of gas in their local area would "increase a lot" by the end of the year. One month later, only 16% have that point of view. Conversely, while in July only 5% thought gas prices would go down, now 37% express that opinion. [Gallup 7/08,8/08]

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The Democratic Party is viewed more positively, at 43%, than the Republican Party at 31%. On the flip side, while 37% rate the Democratic Party negatively, 48% rate the Republican Party in that way. [NBC/WSJ 7/08]

When it comes to the economy, the Democratic Party is seen as more likely than the Republican Party to ensure a strong economy by 51% to 31%. [NYT/CBS 7/08]

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49% of Americans report experiencing "a lot of happiness and enjoyment with a lot of stress and worry" on the average day. 10% say they experience "daily worry and stress" that overcomes any potential happiness and enjoyment. [Gallup 6/08]

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Recent food safety warnings have not seemed to have much of an impact on the average American's confidence that the food supply is generally safe. This is the view of 82% of those surveyed. [Gallup 7/08]

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40% view a person more negatively if they smoke, including 7% of smokers. 29% have a negative response to someone who is significantly overweight, including 25% of those who describe themselves as being overweight. [Gallup 7/08]

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Over the last 12 years the spread between those who are pro-choice (56%) and those who are pro-life (33%) has dropped 23 points. Today 50% say they are pro-choice, while 44% describe themselves as pro-life, a 6 point spread. The largest part of that change occurred between 1996 and 1998. Since 1998 the spread has ranged from 0 to 10 points. [Gallup 5/08]

The number of folks who disapprove of the job being done by the U.S. Supreme Court has fallen from 62% to 43% in just over a year. 40% of voters think the Court is moving in the wrong direction. [Quinnipiac 7/08]

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78% of Americans believe in God, compared to the 8% that expressed that view in 2000. The change has been a relatively straight line during that period. But a greater number believe in a universal spirit (15%) than did so 8 years ago (8%).

86% of those in the South, 83% of those in the Midwest, 80% of those in the East, and 59% of those in the West profess a belief in God. However, the number of westerners who believe in a universal spirit hits 29%, more than double that in any area region. [Gallup 7/08]

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## **BUSH**

There is little to say about President Bush as he enters the last 5 months of his 8-year tenure in the Office of President.

His 64% disapproval rating on his overall job performance is at a near record high in the latest NBC/WSJ survey. This is consistent with 7 other national surveys taken 7/21-8/4 that showed the President with an average approval rating of 29% and a disapproval rating of 66%.

As compared to other modern two-term Presidents at the same time in their tenure, Bush is at the bottom of the pack.

	<u>Approval</u>	<u>Disapproval</u>
Dwight Eisenhower	63%	24%
Bill Clinton	59%	38%
Ronald Reagan	53%	37%
Lyndon Johnson	35%	52%
George Bush	30%	64%

In addition, the President has a 72% disapproval rating on the handling of the economy, the #1 issue in the minds of Americans.

58% have negative feelings about the President, near his low point of 60%.  
[NBC/WSJ 7/08]

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82% of us believe that America's image in the rest of the world has gotten worse under President Bush. [WP/ABC 7/08]

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## **OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES\***

After Barack Obama sewed up the nomination, Michelle Obama flew home to be with their daughters when they woke up the next morning. She proceeded to explain to them what had happened the night before. "They basically said, 'Oh, good. Daddy won.' Michelle tried again, "This is a really big deal. There's never been an African-American nominee for President. Do you guys realize the significance of this?"

Malia (age 10) nodded. "Well, African-Americans used to be slaves and we couldn't vote and we didn't have many rights, so of course this is a big deal." Then she added, "Just like it would also be a really big deal if Hillary Clinton had won, because there has never been a woman nominee for President and women used to not be able to vote and didn't have many rights either."

\* Interview of Michelle Obama by Connie Schultz of the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

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## **2008 REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC CONVENTIONS**

The Democratic and Republican conventions are anachronisms at best. At worst they are the biggest waste of money in modern Presidential campaigns.

The best argument for watching the conventions this year is that nothing like them is likely to be seen again.

Neither Party has had a multi-ballot convention since 1952. The last Republican convention to go beyond the 1st ballot was in 1948, when it took 3 ballots for Tom Dewey to secure the nomination. The last Democratic convention that required more than one ballot was in 1952, when Adlai Stevenson needed 3 ballots to secure his place in history.

What's more, since 1956 there have only been 3 conventions in which the ultimate nominee got less than 62% of the vote on the first ballot. The exceptions were

- the Democratic convention in 1960 when John Kennedy received 53% of the vote on the 1st ballot
- the Democratic convention in 1984 when Walter Mondale received 56% of the vote
- the Republican convention in 1976 when Gerry Ford got 53% of the vote

The delegates and alternates have been reduced to the status of extras in a carefully staged theatrical production.

In 1960, the three TV networks that carried the conventions received an average rating of 28.5. (i.e., 28.5% of potential viewers watched all or part of them). By 2004, with 7 TV and cable networks providing coverage, the average rating was 16.

In 2004 WW estimated that the Democratic convention in Boston cost something between \$150-200 million dollars before the first delegate booked a

flight, rented a room or purchased a meal. This does not take into account the tens of millions that various networks spend covering these events.

Given that the current delegate apportionment rules of the two Parties make it unlikely that there will be a need for a multi-ballot convention anytime soon, why do the Parties continue to produce these extravaganzas?

One reason is inertia. Neither Party wants to be the first to change the format, although it is hard to understand the argument for continuing.

Another argument is that the conventions provide an opportunity for the Party's leadership to come together every four years.

Perhaps the best argument for these conventions is that they provide the largest audience which a Party's nominee will enjoy until his or her inaugural, and a venue in which they have absolute control over the message. It is also the largest "solo" audience that the Party's Vice Presidential nominee will enjoy, unless he or she runs for President.

These two worthwhile goals could easily be achieved without resorting to the machinations of the current conventions.

Most of the Party-building activity at these conventions actually occurs outside of the hall.

And what is the likelihood that TV and cable would not cover the acceptance speeches of the Party's nominees if the events were held in the kind of setting that most large national conventions enjoy?

And if the day comes when there is again a multi-ballot convention, conducting that contest certainly does not require the constructive modification of a basketball/hockey arena.

But perhaps the biggest driver of a change in the nature of these conventions will be the fact that few if any cities will bid to host these gatherings in the future, unless there is substantial modification of the requirements.

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The Democratic convention will be held from August 25-28, 2008, in Denver Colorado.

The Republicans will follow almost immediately, holding their convention September 1-4, 2008, in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota.

This year's Democratic convention is taking the first steps to modify the structure of its convention. Before its nominee was selected the director of the convention had decided to shorten each day's plenary session from 7 to 5 hours.

The Obama campaign has made further modifications since he became the presumptive nominee. There will only be full-scale plenary sessions on Monday through Wednesday. Tentatively, on Monday and Wednesday the sessions will be 5 hours long and on Tuesday it will be in session for 6 hours.

This means each session will start at either 3:00 or 4:00 o'clock p.m. and conclude by 9:00 p.m. MDT.

But of greatest significance is the 4th day's session. This session will meet in the evening and has been moved from the Pepsi Center to Invesco Field at Mile High Stadium, the home of the Denver Broncos football team. It has a seating capacity of 76,000. In addition to regular delegates, alternates and guests will meet there, rather than at the Pepsi Center. Some 60,000 tickets will be issued to the general public to help form the audience for Barack Obama's acceptance speech.

Requests for all 60,000 seats available to the public were received within 18 hours after the announcement of their availability.

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The Republicans have always had shorter plenary sessions compared to Democrats sessions. This year will be similar in length to those in the past.

The 4 days of the Republican convention will be held at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The schedule as announced by the convention committee follows (all times are CDT):

Monday, 2:30 - 10:00 p.m.  
(30 minute break at 6:30 p.m.)  
Tuesday, 6:20 - 10:05 p.m.  
Wednesday, 6:20 - 11:20 p.m.  
Thursday, 6:20 - 10:15 p.m.

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The major TV networks, ABC, NBC, CBS, are expected to provide live coverage of both conventions for an hour each day, 10:00 - 11:00 p.m. EST. PBS and various cable networks will provide more expanded coverage. For those who are eager not to miss a word, CSPAN will, as usual, provide gavel-to-gavel coverage of both conventions.



As of now, what appears to be known about the schedule of speakers at the two conventions are:

- Republicans:
  - Monday - President Bush and Vice President Cheney
  - Tuesday - ?
  - Wednesday - Vice Presidential nominee
  - Thursday - Senator John McCain
- Democrats:
  - Monday - Michelle Obama  
Senator Kennedy Tribute  
Speaker Nancy Pelosi
  - Tuesday - Senator Hillary Clinton  
Mark Warner, Keynoter
  - Wednesday - Vice Presidential nominee  
- President Bill Clinton
  - Thursday - Senator Barack Obama

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This is the first Democratic convention in the memory of WW in which the spouse of a non-incumbent nominee is a headline speaker on the first night of the convention.

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A convention history prepared by WW is attached at the end of this newsletter.

[Note: Your editor has participated in some fashion in every Democratic national convention from 1968 through 2004. In 1976, 1980, 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004 I scheduled the plenary sessions. And I certainly did participate in extending the plenary sessions of the Democratic party. In fact, it was likely my idea.]

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### **OBAMA VS McCain**

Think about the Presidential race as a play in 5 acts.

- Act I - Post-"nomination" to the conventions
- ACT II - The Conventions 8/25-9/4/08
- ACT III - Post-conventions to the 1st Debate
- ACT IV - The Debates 9/26-10/15
- Final Act - October 16 - November 4, 2008

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## ACT I

This opening act covers the period from June 4th to August 24th.

While there have been flaps about commercials, and arguments whether racism has been injected into the campaign, the reality is that the campaign has been flat during most of this period.

There is periodic criticism of Gallup's daily tracking polls, but if you look at them as snapshots over time, they can tell a story. In the current case, here is the snapshot which they present.

6/6-9	Obama +7
6/30-7/2	Obama +4
7/13-15	Obama +3
8/10-12	Obama +6

The RealClearPolitics average has Obama leading McCain +4.6. However, Obama has never gone over 50%.

If you look at specific polls outside the average, e.g., NBC/WSJ, CBS, Pew, the range is a 5-6 point spread for Obama.

The potential of a convention bounce for Obama, given that the Republican convention starts 3 days later, is unlikely.

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A cautionary note. In general, polls this far ahead of the general election should be considered with a grain of salt as the public is not intensely focused or interested. In particular, no attention should be paid to polls that claim to be able to identify likely voters as opposed to registered voters this far ahead of the election.

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This race is static and will not really be joined until ACT IV, the debates. Potential voters will start paying real attention to the election at that time and it will be the first real opportunity for them to judge the two candidates side by side.

1st Presidential debate - 9/26 - U of Mississippi  
Singular V.P. debate - 10/2 - Washington U in St.Louis  
2nd Presidential debate - 10/7 - Belmont U in Nashville  
3rd Presidential debate - 10/15 - Hofstra U.

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McCain is viewed favorably (31%) and unfavorably (32%) by roughly the same number of people. Obama is thought of more favorably (39%) than unfavorably (31%). However, neither Obama or McCain has been able to bust through the top of the charts. [NYT/CBS 7/08]

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Respondents to an NBC/WSJ survey asked whether Obama or McCain was better at a number of specific characteristics.

Obama scored above 50% on "being easy going and likeable" and "offering hope and optimism for the future." McCain scored under 20% on those two items.

McCain scored above 50% on "being a good commander-in-chief" and "being knowledgeable and experienced enough to handle the Presidency." Obama scored under 25% on each of those items.

	Barack Obama <u>Better</u>	John McCain <u>Better</u>
Being easygoing and likable	<u>59</u>	15
Offering hope and optimism for the future	<u>54</u>	19
Being compassionate enough to understand avg. people	<u>46</u>	22
Improving America's standing in the world	<u>44</u>	30
Having the strong leadership qualities needed to be Pres.	31	<u>42</u>
Being consistent and standing up for his beliefs	30	<u>38</u>
Being honest and straightforward	29	<u>33</u>
Being a good commander-in-chief	25	<u>53</u>
Being knowledgeable and experienced enough to handle the Presidency	19	<u>53</u>

[NBC/WSJ 7/08]

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The public has created an interesting picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the two candidates for President painted in the most recent NBC/WSJ survey. (Respondents could provide up to two answer to each question.)

Asked what concerns them about McCain's candidacy, the largest number, 41% say "he would continue George W, Bush's policies." 22% were concerned that he was too committed to keeping troops in Iraq, and a similar number thought his economic policies would favor the wealthy.

When asked what qualities McCain should look for in his Vice Presidential pick, 60% said "an expert on the economy."

When asked their concerns about Obama's candidacy, the #1 answer by 33% of those asked was "inexperienced and not ready to be President." 20% thought he "would not be forceful enough with America's enemies."

In Obama's Vice Presidential pick, 50% said he should choose an expert in military or foreign affairs.

[NBC/WSJ 7/08]

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The group of low-wage Americans described in State of the Nation above have made a decision about where their interests lie in the Presidential race. They strongly support Barack Obama over John McCain by 58% to 28%. This includes whites 47% to 37%, blacks 96% to 2%, and Hispanics by 61% to 22%.

59% of this group think that Obama is more concerned with needs of people like themselves. Only 21% have that view of McCain. 56% say Obama better represents their personal values than does McCain. 23% say that about McCain.

[Washington Post/Henry J. Kaiser Foundation/Harvard University, June-July 2008]

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Various news organizations maintain electoral vote counts that are periodically reassessed and updated. Each organization has its own formula for deciding which candidate will receive a state's electoral votes. The chart below summarizes a number of those reports as of August 12, 2008: (WW has taken the liberty of lumping together firm and leaning counts to the extent those categories are used by a given organization.)

	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Toss-UP</u>	<u>McCain</u>
CNN	221	128	189
MSNBC	217	132	189
NYTimes	268	39	231
Pollster.Com	284	100	154
RCP	238	137	163
USAToday	248	155	135
WSJ	120	244	174

A future Washington Watch "Snapshot" will take a more detailed look at electoral votes. For now, consider the following - the last 4 Presidential elections, two of which were won by Bill Clinton and two of which were won by George Bush

- States won by Democrat in all 4 elections - 248 votes
- States won by Democrat 3 of last 4 elections - 16 votes
- States split by Democrats and GOP - 75 votes
- States won by GOP in 3 of last 4 elections - 64 votes
- States won by GOP in all 4 elections - 135 votes

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Will Obama's foreign trip make a difference in this election? Early indicators are that it did not hurt and it actually helped slightly. Gallup surveys taken before and after the trip found that the response was 35% positive, 26% negative, and 39% no opinion. There was little change in Americans' views as to whether Obama can handle the responsibilities of commander in chief. In fact, over half of respondents believe he can handle that part of the job.

However, in the Final Act and beyond, if he is elected, the trip is likely to have been a positive undertaking for Obama.

You'll recall that Obama and John McCain disagree on whether the President should meet with the leaders of foreign countries considered to be enemies of the U.S. The public seems to side with Obama. 67%, including, 79% of Democrats, 70% of Independents, and 48% of Republicans, think it is a good idea. [Gallup 5/08]

Obama has shown he can play on the international stage.

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56% of all adults, 78% of African Americans, 59% of Hispanics, and 51% of non-Hispanic whites, think racism is widespread in the U.S. [Gallup 8/04]

Will racism in one form or another affect this race? Yes, it will. The question is how great the impact?

The August 2-3 issue of the Wall Street Journal reports that Peter Hart, who is part of the bipartisan team that conducts the NBC/WSJ survey, estimates that 10% of current Democrats and Independents who say they support presumed Democratic Party nominee Barack Obama may not be giving fully honest answers, based on their response to broader questions about race. He said "This election is exceptionally tricky."

Even if the candidates themselves appear to avoid the issue of race, their supporters directly or indirectly will engage it. And you can count on the media doing everything it can to keep the issue live.

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### Shades of 2000

Al Gore may well have lost the 2000 election because mid-way through the election he started working at being someone he was not. If John McCain loses in 2008, it may well be that it was because he tried to be someone other than the maverick that so many people had come to know and respect.

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"George Bush beat John McCain in 2000, and if McCain loses in 2008, George Bush will have beaten him again." (Ken Duberstein)

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To date, the two best known 3rd Party or Independent candidates, Bob Barr and Ralph Nader, are polling less than 2% together in Gallup surveys.

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### THE CONGRESS

American voters continue to prefer the election of a Democratic Congress in November. However, that choice is slightly softer than it was several months ago.

	<u>DEM</u>	<u>GOP</u>	<u>NET</u>	
NBC/WSJ	49	36	13	7/18-21
Democracy Corps	50	42	8	7/21-24

However, the job performance rating of both Democrat- controlled Houses continues to be problematic.

In four surveys taken between 7/16 and 8/04 the average approval rating of 19% points ranged from 15% (NBC/WSJ) to 22% (CNN). The disapproval ratings ranged from 68% (Fox) to 77% (CNN)

The only time in which the NBC/WSJ survey has reflected a higher or equivalent disapproval rating was in June '08 (79%) and October '08 (75%). In October '94, when the Democrats lost control of the House after an "endless" period of control, the disapproval rating reflected in this survey was 67%.

Fortunately, for the Democrats the disapproval rating of the Republicans in Congress is higher (69%) than the Democrats (57%) and the Democrats have a 10-point margin on the approval side. [WP/ABC 7/13/08]

Incumbents who have some basis for vulnerability should be nervous. 47% of voters believe that a new person should be given a chance to represent them, as opposed to 40% who think the incumbent should be re-elected. [NBC/WSJ 7/08]

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#### **THE U.S. SENATE**

Democrats	49
Republicans	49
Independents	2 (caucus Dem)

There is considerable euphoria on behalf of Democrats as to their prospects for a filibuster proof control of the Senate. The magic number would appear to be a 60-vote Democratic caucus (including Independents who caucus with the Democrats). However, this does not tell the whole story.

The chance of losing a "Democratic caucus" member or two on particular matters is certainly within the realm of possibility. On the other hand, there may be as many as 4 members of the Republican caucus, who, on a variety of matters, would join with the Democrats to stop a filibuster by their Republican colleagues. These Republican members include Arlan Specter, Susan Collins, Olympia Snowe, and Gordon Smith. If Norm Coleman is re-elected, he is also a possibility to play this role occasionally.

All of which is to say that the Democratic leader Harry Reid (D-NV) will have increasing numbers of options as the size of the Democratic majority increases.

New Mexico and Alaska are two Republican-controlled seats that now appear to be heading toward a Democratic takeover.

Mark Udall (D) in New Mexico, seems to have this race under control. In this open seat race, Udall has crossed the 50% threshold and runs well ahead of his Republican opponents.

Alaska provides a more complicated scenario. Senator Ted Stevens, who was facing a potentially difficult election, has been indicted by the Federal Government for violating Senate reporting rules. He has requested an expedited trial, which has tentatively been set for September 24th.

Assuming the trial goes forward at that time, this will not be helpful to Republican candidates at large.

There is another possible scenario. Stevens has 6 opponents in the state's August 26th primary. If Stevens were to lose, that ends the electoral story. If he wins, some have suggested that he might leave the race anyway, and let the Republican Party, which has a state convention on September 17th, pick a replacement candidate.

Oregon moves from Lean Republican to Toss-Up. Gordon Smith (R) is being challenged by Jeff Merkley (D), the current Speaker of the Oregon House. In the most recent publicly available poll, [May 2008] Smith leads Merkley by 4 points 38% to 34%.

Minnesota moves from Toss-Up to Lean Republican. Al Franken (D), the Democrats great hope to take back the second Minnesota Senate seat and return to the glory days of Humphrey, McCarthy and Mondale, is not cutting the mustard. He has encountered a series of problems relating to his own history. Norm Coleman (R), the incumbent, is not doing as well as expected, but appears to be holding his own against Franken.

Finally, Kentucky moves from Safe Republican to Leaning Republican. Mitch McConnell (R), the Republican Leader in the Senate, leads his opponent by roughly 10 points. However, he is not breaking 50%.

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Among the 4 Toss-Up Races, one of them (Colorado), could well end up in Democratic hands in the person of Tom Udall (D) (cousin of Mark).

In Mississippi (B), Governor Barber (R) appointed incumbent Rodger Wicker. He currently leads Ronnie Musgrove (D), the former governor, by 4 points, 46%-42%, in a May survey.

Finally, in New Hampshire, Jean Shaheen (D), the former governor, who earlier led incumbent Republican John Sununu by substantial margins, is currently not breaking 50%, and is now ahead by only a small handful of points.

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If the two Independent Senators (a big if) continue to caucus with the Democrats, then it is easy to see a Democratic caucus of 55 members.

And within the mix of Mississippi, New Hampshire, and Oregon it is likely that the Democrats will pick up another seat, bringing the number to 56. From there on, it is not so easy.

Much may depend on where the Obama campaign actually plays. Full-scale, Presidential-level, voter turnout campaigns can make the difference in several races. More about that in the next WW.



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Here is how the 35 Senate elections (12 Democratic incumbents, 23 Republican incumbents) look to me at this time (underlining reflects retirement). (D=Dem incumbent in office, R=GOP incumbent in office, I=Ind. incumbent in office)

Safe	Leaning		Leaning	Safe
<u>Democratic(11)</u>	<u>Democratic(4)</u>	<u>Toss-Up(4)</u>	<u>Republican(5)</u>	<u>Republican(11)</u>
Arkansas	Alaska	<u>Colorado</u>	Kentucky	Alabama
Delaware	Louisiana	Mississippi(B)	Maine	Georgia
Illinois	New Mexico	New Hampshire	Minnesota	Idaho
Iowa	South Dakota	Oregon	<u>Nebraska</u>	Kansas
Massachusetts			North Carolina	Mississippi(A)
Michigan				Oklahoma
Montana				South Carolina
New Jersey				Tennessee
Rhode Island				Texas
<u>Virginia</u>				Wyoming(A)
West Virginia				Wyoming(B)

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Ind</u>
Seats not up in 2008	37	26	2
Safe in 2008	11	11	0
Leaning in 2008	4	5	0
Total	52	42	2
Toss-ups	4 (4R) (Leaning 1D,3Tossups)		

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### THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Democrats 236  
Republicans 199

Euphoria also seems to be gripping House Democrats. The estimates of additional Democratic seats range from 10 to 25.

Of the 8 Toss-Up seats that are currently controlled by Democrats, all have Republican PVI's\* ranging from 0 to 15. Of the 19 Toss-Up seats that are currently held by Republicans, 13 have Republican PVI's ranging from 1 to 14. (Note: The R+14 is Republican Don Young's seat in Alaska. Given all that is going on there, Young could have a problem.)

It appears that on the Democratic side, the caucus will be somewhat more conservative than the current caucus. Most of the newcomers are likely to be Blue Dogs, with a few New Dems thrown in for good measure.

Whether the number of additions is 10 or 25 makes a big difference in Speaker Nancy Pelosi's ability to work her will in the new Congress. At 246 seats, Pelosi can lose 28 of her colleagues and still control the vote on given issues. At 261 seats, she can lose 40 of her members on a given vote and still have a few to spare.

At the end of the day, under any circumstance, if you have an issue on which the 60th Speaker is on the other side, you have a big problem. Whether you like her or not, Pelosi is undoubtedly a Speaker of great strength.

WW's best guess at the moment - 13 to 20 Democratic pickups.

	<u>6/19/08</u>	<u>8/15/08</u>
Total Dem	238	241
Solid Dem	203	203
Likely Dem	14	15
Lean Dem	14	15
TossUp	26	25
D	7	8
R	19	17
Lean GOP	8	11
Likely GOP	18	33
Solid GOP	152	133
Total GOP	197	194

[\* The Partisan Voting Index is a feature of the Cook Political Report. Using the 2000 and 2004 Presidential race it ranks each Congressional District by how well it performs in terms of the national performance for each Party's Presidential candidate. For example, a PVI of R+2 means the District performed 2 points better than Republican Presidential performance nationally.]

[And those of you who are familiar with it, will notice that all the numbers above are based on Cook.]

\* \* \* \* \*

### **THIS AND THAT**

One has to wonder, what person or persons were so disloyal to Senator Hillary Clinton as to arrange, start or participate in the deluge of inside campaign documents that were released to Atlantic Monthly?

\* \* \* \* \*

WW is happy to announce that its favorite tennis team, the Vineyard Marlins, a 3.5 USTA women's tennis team, finished its season in second place in the 6-team Cape and Island League. Congratulations!

\* \* \* \* \*

"After age 60, if you get up in the morning and nothing hurts, you know you are dead." (Vernon Jordan)

\* \* \* \* \*

Between 1998 and 2004, 43% of all retiring members of Congress - 283 retired members - opted to become professional lobbyists, according to a study done by Public Citizen.

\* \* \* \* \*

Consider the following:

Growing old is mandatory; growing up is optional.

Forget the health foods. I need all the preservatives I can get.

It's frustrating when you know all the answers, but nobody bothers to ask you the questions.

Wisdom comes with age, but sometimes age comes alone.

A billion seconds ago it was 1959.

A billion days ago, no-one walked on the earth on two feet.

A billion dollars ago was only 8 hours and 20 minutes at the rate our government is spending it.

[Editorial Board of the Thought for the Day]

\* \* \* \* \*

## **RESTAURANTS**

For a variety of reasons there are no restaurant reviews in this edition of WW. However, your editor is inclined to comment about a restaurant in a way that has not previously be done in the WW.

BLT Steak B  
Bistro Laurant Tourondel  
1625 Eye Street  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
202-689-8999

In the last few weeks, your editor has eaten at BLT Steak twice. Once for dinner and once for lunch.

On both occasions I totally enjoyed the food, the taste, the way it was prepared, and the way it was presented.

In both cases, the folks at the front desk were totally accommodating and professional.

Unfortunately, I cannot same the same about the table service.

At dinner there were four of us. The server's actions ranged from inattentive to down right rude.

At lunch there were two of us. I was accompanied by a woman friend. The best way to describe the server's attitude was "indifferent." But the most telling moment of service was at the end of the meal.

The server laid the bill in a traditional folder on the table. My companion, who was paying the bill, took out her credit card, put it in the folder, and placed the folder at a location that was clearly closer to her than to me.

When the server returned with the credit card slip to be signed, he placed the folder with the credit card directly in front of me and left.

My companion and I exchanged knowing looks, she signed the credit card slip, and we left.

By the way, my friend's full name is on her card, including her first name, which is clearly a woman's name.

*Mike*

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## WASHINGTON WATCH'S HISTORY OF MAJOR PARTY CONVENTIONS

### Milestones

- \* 1831 - The first Presidential nominating convention was conducted by the Anti-Masonic Party.
- \* 1832 - The Democratic Party conducted its 1st national convention.
- \* 1856 - The Republican Party conducted its 1st national convention.
- \* 1912 - Longest Republican convention, which ran 5 days. Conventions of similar length were conducted by the Republicans in 1920, 1940, 1948 and 1952.
- \* 1924 - Longest Democratic convention, which ran 16 days. 5-day conventions were the next longest, in 1952, 1956 and 1960.
- \* 1932 - FDR was the first Democratic nominee to accept the nomination in person.
- \* 1944 - Tom Dewey was the first Republican nominee to accept the nomination in person.
- \* 1944 - Democrats and Republicans held their shortest conventions, 3 days in length. The Democrats also held a 3-day convention in 1948.
- \* 1956 - Republicans adopted the current 4-day convention schedule.
- \* 1964 - Democrats adopted the 4-day schedule.
- \* Number of delegates
  - The two parties had roughly the same number of delegates until 1956

	<u>DEM</u>	<u>GOP</u>
1956	1372	1323

- Democrats begin steady upward growth in delegate numbers

1960	1521	1331
1972	3016	1348

- Republicans begin upward growth in delegate numbers

1976	3008	2259
2004	4353	2509

- Notably, the real growth in numbers of delegates at either Party convention has come up since the last time there was a multi-ballot nomination battle in either Party.

\* 1948 - The last time the Republican Party held a multi-ballot nominating convention. Tom Dewey required 3 ballots. The previous multi-ballot Republican nominating battle was in 1940, when Wendall Wilkie needed 6 ballots to secure the nomination.

\* 1952 - The last time the Democratic Party held a multi-ballot nomination convention. Adlai Stevenson required 3 ballots. The previous multi-ballot convention was Franklin D. Roosevelt's nomination in 1932 that required 4 ballots.

\* Since 1960, there have been only three nominating conventions in either Party in which the nominee received less than 62% of the votes on the 1st ballot.

- Democrats
  - John Kennedy in 1960 - 53%
  - Walter Mondale in 1984 - 56%
- Republicans
  - Gerry Ford in 1976 - 53%

### Timing

\* By historical practice, the Party controlling the White House has the 2nd convention.

\* The shortest period of time between the two conventions was 2 days in 1956. The second shortest period is the 3 days spread between the conventions in 2008.

\* Over the years the timing of the conventions has played a game of "cat and mouse" with the Olympics. In 2000 the Olympics fell after the two conventions were complete. In 2004 it came between the two conventions. And this year it precedes both conventions.

### The Olympics and the National Party Conventions 1980 - 2008

1980	GOP 7/14-17	Olympics 7/19-8/3	DEM 8/11-14
1984	DEM 7/16-19	Olympics 7/29-8/12	GOP 8/20-23
1988	DEM 7/18-21	GOP 8/15-18	Olym 9/7-10/2
1992	DEM 7/13-16	Olympics 7/28-8/9	GOP 8/17-20

1996	Olympics 7/19-8/4	GOP 8/12-15	DEM 8/26-29
2000	GOP 7/31-8/3	DEM 8/14-17	Olym 9/15-10/1
2004	DEM 7/26-29	Olympics 8/13-28	GOP 8/30-9/2
2008	Olympics 8/8-24*	DEM 8/25-28	GOP 9/1-4

\* The length of convention plenary sessions has remained relatively static - until this year.

- Republicans 16 - 23 hours
- Democrats 28 hours
- [The 2008 will be substantially shorter]

### Electronic communication

\* 1844 - News of convention proceedings was sent out by telegraph for the first time.

\* 1880 - The telephone was first used to transmit convention information.

\* 1924 - The first convention was broadcast on radio, the Republican convention in Cleveland, Ohio.

\* 1940 - The first transmission of reports by a television station came from the Republican convention in Philadelphia.

\* 1948 - The first live convention reports were broadcast from the Republican convention.

\* The quantity of TV coverage of conventions and the ratings received by that coverage has been dropping steadily.

\* The total aggregate number of hours of coverage of each of the conventions by ABC, CBS and NBC (as a group) has dropped steadily over the last 4 conventions from an average of

- 19.5 hours in 1992
- 14.5 hours in 1996
- 11.0 hours in 2000
- 9.1 hours in 2004

\* Beginning with the 1960 conventions, the highest rated Democratic convention occurred in 1960 - 29.2. The highest rated Republican convention was 1976 - 31.5.

\* The aggregate ratings have dropped steadily since 1960, even though the number of networks broadcasting important parts of the conventions has grown from 3 in 1960 to 7 in 2004.

Comparison of Combined Convention ratings 1968-2004  
(Based on Nielsen combined ratings with PBS added)

	<u>Democratic</u>	<u>Republican</u>
2004 (ABC,CBS,NBC (CNN,MSNBC,FOXNC,PBS)	15.2	16.7
2000 (ABC,CBS,NBC (CNN,MSNBC,FOXNC,PBS)	16.8	15.3
1996 (ABC,CBS,NBC,CNN,PBS)	17.2	16.5
1992 (ABC,CBS,NBC,CNN,PBS)	22.0	20.5
1988 (ABC,CBS,NBC)	19.8	18.3
1984 (ABC,CBS,NBC)	23.4	19.2
1980 (ABC,CBS,NBC)	27.0	21.6
1976 (ABC,CBS,NBC)	25.2	31.5
1972 (ABC,CBS,NBC)	18.3	23.4
1968 (ABC,CBS,NBC)	28.5	26.4
1964 (ABC,CBS,NBC)	28.8	21.8
1960 (ABC,CBS,NBC)	29.2	28.0

The Convention Bounce

\* Is there really a so-called convention bounce? WW has looked at the pre/post convention Gallup surveys for each Presidential year going back to 1968.

In six of the ten conventions since 1968 one or both conventions moved the numbers for the nominee of the Party in convention: 1968, 1976, 1980, 1992, 1996, and 2000.

Movement after the 1992 Democratic convention was the most dramatic. In the two way race - Bush/Clinton - without Perot, Clinton jumped 16 points and Bush dropped 14 points.

A chart of the relevant data follows with blank spaces in which you can add the numbers for 2008.

[MS WORD CHARTS HERE]



Gallup Survey's -- Conventions and The General Election Race  
(Data does not include 3<sup>rd</sup> party candidates unless noted\*)

2008	2004	2000	1996	1992	1992*
	7/16-7/21 Bush -49 Kerry - 47	7/25-7/26 Gore 40 Bush 54	8/5-8/7 Clinton 58 Dole 35	7/6-7/8 Bush 48 Clinton 40	7/6-7/8 Bush 35 Clinton 28 Perot 30
8/25-8/28 Dem Convention	7/26-7/29 Dem Convention	7/31-8/3 GOP Convention	8/12-8/15 GOP Convention	7/13-7/19 Dem Convention	7/13-7/19 Dem Convention
	7/30-8/1 Bush -51 Kerry - 47	8/4-8/5 Gore 40 Bush 56	8/14-8/15 Clinton 52 Dole 42	8/17-7/18 Bush 34 Clinton 56	n/a
	8/9-8/11 Bush - 50 Kerry - 47	8/11-8/12 Gore 40 Bush 56	8/16-8/15 Clinton 54 Dole 41	7/24-7/26 Bush 37 Clinton 56	n/a
	8/23-8/25 Bush - 50 Kerry - 47	n/a	8/23-8/25 Clinton 54 Dole 41	8/10-8/12 Bush 37 Clinton 56	n/a
9/1-9/4 GOP Convention	8/30-9/2 GOP Convention	8/14-8/17 Dem Convention	8/26-2/29 Dem Convention	8/17-8/21 GOP Convention	8/17-8/21 GOP Convention
	9/3-9/5 Bush - 52 Kerry 45	8/18-8/19 Gore 49 Bush 49	8/28-8/29 Clinton 57 Dole 40	8/19-8/20 Bush 39 Clinton 51	n/a
	Election Bush 50.7 Kerry 48.3	Election Gore 48.4 Bush 47.9	Election Clinton 49.2% Dole 40.7%	Election Bush 37% Clinton 43%	Election Bush 37% Clinton 43% Perot 19%

# 1988

7/8-7/10  
Bush 41 Dukakis  
47

**7/18-7/21 Dem  
Convention**

7/24-7/26  
Bush 37  
Dukakis 54

8/5-8/7  
Bush 42 Dukakis  
49

n/a

**8/15-8/18  
GOP Convention**

8/19-8/21  
Bush 48 Dukakis  
44

Election Bush  
53.4% Dukakis  
45.6%

# 1984

7/13-7/16 Reagan  
55 Mondale 39

**7/16 -7/19 Dem  
Convention**

7/27-7/30 Reagan  
53 Mondale 41

8/10-8/13 Reagan  
52 Mondale 41

n/a

**8/20-8/23  
GOP Convention**

9/7-9/9  
Reagan 55  
Mondale 40

Election Reagan 58.8%  
Mondale 40.6%

# 1980

7/11-7/14 Reagan  
46 Carter 43

**7/14-7/17  
GOP Convention**

8/1-8/4  
Reagan 53  
Carter 37

n/a

n/a

**8/11-8/14  
Dem  
Convention**

8/15-8/18  
Reagan 39  
Carter 45

Election Reagan 50.7%  
Carter 41%

# 1976

6/25-6/28  
Carter 53  
Ford 36

**7/12-7/15  
Dem  
Convention**

7/16-7/19  
Carter 62  
Ford 29

8/6-8/9  
Carter 57  
Ford 32

n/a

**8/16-8/19  
GOP  
Convention**

8/20-8/19  
Carter 50  
Ford 37

Election Carter 50.1% Ford  
48%

# 1972

6/16-6/19  
Nixon 53  
McGovern 37

**7/10-7/13  
Dem  
Convention**

7/14-7/17  
Nixon 56  
McGovern 37

8/4-8/7 Nixon  
57 McGovern 31

n/a

**8/21-8/23  
GOP  
Convention**

8/26-8/27  
Nixon 64  
McGovern 30

Election Nixon 60.7%  
McGovern 37.5%

# 1968

7/18-7/23  
Nixon 40  
Humphrey 38  
Wallace 16

**8/5-8/8  
GOP  
Convention**

8/7-8/12 Nixon  
45 Humphrey 29  
Wallace 18

n/a

n/a

**8/26-8/29  
Dem  
Convention**

9/3-9/7 Nixon  
43 Humphrey 31  
Wallace 19

Election Nixon 43.4%  
Humphrey 42.7%  
Wallace 13.5%