

Mike Berman's

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STATE OF THE NATION

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PRESIDENT OBAMA

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2012 ELECTION Republican Nomination General Election

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THE CONGRESS

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RESTAURANTS Al Tiramisu – Washington, DC Bartlett Pear Inn – Easton, MD

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STATE OF THE NATION

An ever increasing number of Americans think that the country is on the wrong track. In mid-August, 75% said the country was on the wrong track, while 21% thought it was going in the right direction. [AP/Gfk 8/11]

Only 11% are satisfied with the way things are going in the United States. Other than in late October 2008, when 7% had this view, the current rating is the lowest recorded. The high point was late 1999, when 71% were satisfied. [Gallup]

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78% are dissatisfied with the way the country's political system is working, and 71% think the government is mainly focused on the wrong things. Responsibility for the government being focused on the wrong things is directed evenly to Obama/Democrats and Republicans.

And, to make matters worse, 73% have little or no confidence that, when the government in Washington decides to solve economic problems, the problem will actually be solved.

92% believe the current financial situation is a crisis or serious problem. [WP/ABC 8/11]

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Over the last four months --

The University of Michigan Consumer Confidence Index has fallen 18.6 points, from 74.3 in March, to 63.7 in July, to 55.7 in August. This is the lowest level of consumer confidence seen since the spring of 1980. The Consumer Survey's chief economist stated, "The recent surge in pessimism was due to lost confidence in the ability of the government to enact policies that would counteract the growing threat of a renewed recession...." He went on to note that the presumed effectiveness of government has been lost. [Survey of Consumers release 8/26/11]

- the number of folks who think business conditions in the area in which they live will be worse grew from 30% to 38%; the number saying conditions will get better fell from 51% to 41%
- the number who think the country's economy has a ways to go before it hits bottom grew from 65% to 72% [Hart Research Quarterly Study for Citi]

But all is not doom and gloom among Americans. With all of the problems people see in the way the government is working, 77% still believe that the U.S. has the best system of government in the world. [WP/ABC 8/11]

78% of Americans say they are at least somewhat happy (30% very happy). 17% are unhappy (6% very unhappy). [AP-Gfk 8/11]

Again over the last four months --

- the number of people who think they are worse off now than they were a year ago remains even at 32%
- the number of people who are optimistic about their own financial situation over the next 12 months has only fallen from 63% to 60%
- the number of people who are comfortable with their current level of savings is 46% down one point from April
- the number of people who are comfortable with their level of debt remains steady at 61% [Hart Research Quarterly Study for Citi]

The bottom line – Americans are not feeling that uncomfortable about their personal circumstances, but they are worried about what will happen next. Based on what they see going on in Washington, on Wall Street, and in the business community, they have no confidence in the future. However, if given reasonable evidence that there is hope for the future, if they see that good things are starting to happen, they will respond in a positive way.

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About Unemployment

Looking at the first six months of 2011, 30% say that they or someone in their family has lost a job because of economic conditions, but 60% know of someone personally, other than a family member, who has lost a job because of those conditions. [AP-Gfk]

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Each month the Bureau of Labor Statistics issues a series of numbers that represent the number of people who are unemployed. For July that number is 9.1% . And that is the number that most media outlets, print and electronic, choose to promulgate. So, that must mean that of the 153.2 million people in the workforce, 13.9 million are unemployed. [That number includes 15.9% of blacks, 11.3% of Hispanics, 8.1% of whites, 9% of adult men, 7.9% of adult women.]

But that is not quite the whole story. There are other groups of people that generally don't make the cut of inclusion in news stories. One of those groups is the so called "marginally attached." These are folks who are unemployed and have looked for a job sometime in the last 12 months, but not within the last 4 weeks. They represent 1.8% of the workforce or 2.8 million people. That brings the total unemployed to 16.8 or 10.9% of the workforce.

But there is still more to the story. There is also a group of people who don't seem to be included in the BLS data. These are folks who want to work, but have not looked for work in the last 12 months. Estimates are that 4.5 million people fall into this category, another 3% of the potential workforce. That brings the total to 21.3 million or 13.9% of the workforce. And there are some who suggest that the number of people in this group is really at least 9 million people. That would bring the unemployed number to 25.8 million or 16.9% of the workforce.

Finally, there are those who are working part-time, but would like to be working full time. The BLS pegs this group at 8.4 million people or 5.5% of the workforce.

This brings the total number of people who are either unemployed or involuntarily working part-time to 29.4 million people or 19.4% of the potential workforce.

Gallup also surveys unemployment. In mid-August it found 9.0% unemployed and another 9.2% working part-time, but wanting full-time work, a total of 18.2% underemployed.

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25% of Americans consider themselves to be supporters of the Tea Party movement, while 28% consider themselves to be an opponent of this group. This level of support is the lowest that Gallup has found since April 2010.

A declining number of Americans, 22%, think that the "members of Congress who support the Tea Party had a mostly positive effect. This is down from 27% who had this view in January. Meanwhile, the number of Americans who think they have had a mostly negative effect has grown from 18% in January to 29% in August. [Gallup 8/11, PEW 8/11]

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Democrats and Republicans are negative about their respective Parties because of their Parties' lack of support for traditional positions. In the case of the Republicans, 59% rate their Party as "only fair/poor" for not being strong enough on issues such as cutting "the size of government, cutting taxes, and promoting conservative social values." 61% of Democrats give their party an "only fair/poor" rating for failing to protect "the interests of minorities, helping the poor and needy, and representing working people." [PEW 8/11]

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The budget/deficit/debt ceiling debate of July/August did not sit well with the left or the right. A recent PEW study provided respondents with the opportunity to describe the episode. Their responses included a variety of descriptive words – ridiculous, disgusting, stupid, frustrating, terrible, disappointing, childish, and a joke.

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69% believe it will be necessary for some taxes to be increased and 82% believe that some government services will have to be cut, in order for the Federal government to balance the budget. [AP-Gfk8/11]

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The computer industry is rated most positively by Americans -- 72% have that view -- while at the bottom of the list is the Federal government, with a 17% positive rating and a 63% negative rating. These are the lowest positive and highest negative ratings that Gallup has encountered since it began measuring the Federal government in 2003.

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Americans now use their cell phones more than their land lines. 37% use their cell phones "most of the time," while 28% say that about their land lines. 35% use both equally. [AP-Gfk 8/11] As of February 2011, only 2% of American households have no phone service at all. [WP 2/11]

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PRESIDENT OBAMA

The President's job approval rating has hit a new low of 38%. He now ranks 8th of 9, when matched against the previous 8 Presidents at this point of their 3rd year in office. [Based on Gallup surveys]

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
G Bush (I)	74%	18%
Eisenhower	71	16
Kennedy	62	26
GW Bush (II)	59	37
Nixon	49	38
Clinton	43	43
Reagan	43	46
Obama	38	55 (8/25-27)
Carter	32	54

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The following are several other cuts at the President's job approval rating. The August surveys below were completed very early in August. The Gallup survey was taken at the end of the month.

	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN/ORC</u>
Aug 2011	---	48/47%	---	44/54%
July 2011	47/48%	---	47/48%	45/54%
June 2011	62/29%	48/43%(CBS)	47/49%	48/48%

Pretty clearly, August was not a good month for the President.

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Here is how the President's handling of various issues is rated by the public.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
Budget deficit	35%	64%
Economy	36	<u>63</u>
Gas prices	36	61
Taxes	40	59
Unemployment	40	59
Immigration	43	53
Same-sex marriage	43	47

Abortion	44	44	
Health care	46	53	
Afghanistan	50	49	
Education	55	41	
Environment	57	39	
Terrorism	60	38	[AP-Gfk 8/11]

The public is much more positive about the President on a series of personal and leadership characteristics, than they are about how he is doing his job.

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>
Obama	54	45
Is a likeable person	78	21
Will keep America safe	60	40
Cares about people like you	55	45
Understands problems of ordinary Americans	53	47
Is a strong leader	51	49 [AP-Gfk]

In a late August survey, PEW measured the movement (or lack of movement) of public attitudes toward Obama on several indices of leadership between January and August 2011.

	<u>Jan.</u>	<u>Aug.</u>
Able to get things done	54%	44%
Strong leader	53%	49%
Well informed	64%	63%
Warm and friendly	70%	70%
Trustworthy	58%	59%
Cares about people like me	60%	63%
Good communicator	75%	75%

The ratings above suggest that, while folks still like and respect the President, many folks, wonder whether he is up to the job.

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When asked whether the President deserves to be re-elected, the public splits 47% yes/48% no. [AP-Gfk 8/11]

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Even though Obama is not currently at the top of the popularity chart, it does not follow that the Republicans are in good shape. In fact, quite the opposite is true. The Republicans are seen in a worse light than the President. One of the impacts of that reality is that 64% of registered voters describe the Republican candidates (including Perry) as only fair or poor. [PEW 8/11]

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Every now and then someone raises the specter of President Obama being challenged from the left in the Democratic primary. This is a non-starter. 63 % of Democrats, including 63% of liberals, do not want him to be challenged. [Pew 8/11]

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The President is faced with the reality that desperate times make for desperate choices.

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Facing re-election tends to focus the attention of public officials on that endeavor, driving them to make decisions based on what is in their best interest. Obama is no exception. After asking, in 2008, that an independent committee designed to support him in 2008 be shut down (it was closed), he seems to have no objection to the organization of such a committee supporting him in 2012. It is unlikely that the folks who have organized the effort, some of whom worked for him in the White House, would have done so without his at least tacit approval.

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As with First Ladies before her, Michelle Obama is seen very favorably in the eyes of the public. 70% view her favorably and only 24% unfavorably. [AP-Gfk]

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2012 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

The Republican Nomination

21 people have been tempted or have joined the race
8 people have announced they are not running or quit the race
11 people are running
2 people are toying with the idea of running or are quiet
3 is the number of real players at the moment

The chart below notes the status of each of these people.

Republican Nomination Score Card

<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Exploring</u>	<u>Running</u>	<u>Not Running</u>
		Bachmann	Barbour
		Cain	Daniels
			DeMint
		Gingrich	
Guiliani			Huckabee
		Huntsman	
		Johnson	
		McCotter	
Palin		Paul	
			Pataki
			Pawlenty
		Perry	
		Roemer	
		Romney	
			Ryan
		Santorum	
			Trump

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Peter Hart, the NBC-WSJ poll co-director, offered me a wager I could not resist. I gave him 10-to-1 odds that the GOP nominee was on the list above. He

says the GOP will nominate someone who has yet to get in the race. Lunching together on the weekend when Hurricane Irene had cut its path from the Carolinas to Maine, and in the same week a 5.8 earthquake also made its presence felt in Washington, he thinks this is a metaphysical sign for the Presidential year ahead. His theory: "It is a good year to bet on the unexpected." For the record, exactly four years ago, Peter got 7-to-1 odds in a bet with Frank Fahrenkopf that Barak Obama would be the Democratic nominee. Stay tuned.

Anyone who chooses to take one side or the other (without being part of the formal wager) can do so by sending an email. WW will keep track of your opinion and report the results when the nomination has been secured.

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Michelle Bachmann (R-MN) won the first test of the Republican contest by winning the Iowa Straw Poll, if only by 152 votes, over Ron Paul (R-TX). One special result for Bachmann was that she dispatched her Minnesota rival for the nomination, former Governor Tim Pawlenty. Pawlenty left the race after finishing third, 2,530 votes behind Bachmann. Pawlenty went all in for this effort and perhaps showed why many people find him attractive by getting out after his weak performance. His departure removed a competitor to Bachmann for the Tea Party and Christian conservative vote.

Perry and Romney did not "compete" in the straw poll. Romney's name was on the ballot, but Perry's was not. An "independent" group supporting Perry did play at least a little, and Perry finished 6th with 718 votes, besting Romney's 567 votes.

What is the impact of the 16,892 votes that were cast in the straw poll on which millions of dollars were spent by the various candidates?

Had Bachman lost, it is hard to see how she could have avoided following Pawlenty's path. She is from Iowa and lives now in a neighboring State. Ron Paul's 2nd place finish will help him raise more money and stay in the race. (He has announced that he will not be a candidate for re-election to the House.)

What has the Iowa Straw Poll's impact been in the past on the Republican nomination, subsequent caucuses and primaries, and the general election?

A review of the last 5 Republican nomination fights (1980, 1988, 1996, 2000, and 2008) reveals the following:

- Winner of the straw poll won the Iowa Caucuses 3 times
- Winner of the straw poll won the GOP nomination 2 times
- Winner of the straw poll won the general election 1 time

Here are a few factoids about the winners of the Iowa Caucuses and New Hampshire and South Carolina contests in those same election years:

The best predictor of the winner of the Republican nomination contest is the South Carolina primary.

- Winner of the Iowa Caucuses won the NH primary 0 times
- Winner of the Iowa Caucuses won the SC primary 2 times
- Winner of the Iowa Caucuses won the GOP nomination 2 times
- Winner of the Iowa Caucuses won the general election 1 time
- Winner of the NH primary won SC Primary 3 times
- Winner of the NH primary won the GOP nomination 3 times
- Winner of the NH primary won the general election 3 times
- Winner of the SC primary won the GOP nomination 5 times
- Winner of the SC primary won the general election 3 times

	1980	1988	1996	2000	2008
Winner of straw poll won Caucus	<u>Y</u>	N	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	N
Winner of straw poll won GOP nom.	N	N	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	N
Winner of straw poll won gen. election	N	N	N	<u>Y</u>	N
Winner Iowa Caucus won NH primary	N	N	N	N	N
Winner of Iowa Caucus won SC primary	N	N	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	N
Winner of Iowa Caucus won GOP nomination	N	N	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	N
Winner of Iowa Caucus won gen. election	N	N	N	<u>Y</u>	N
Winner of NH primary won SC primary	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	N	N	<u>Y</u>
Winner of NH primary won GOP nomination	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	N	N	<u>Y</u>
Winner of NH primary won gen. election	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	N	N	<u>Y</u>
Winner of SC primary won GOP nomination	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>
Winner of SC primary won gen. election	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	N	<u>Y</u>	N

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And then there were three or two?

It may well be that, well before the first delegate-awarding contest, the GOP nomination fight is down to three realistic competitors, Michelle Bachmann, Rick Perry, and Mitt Romney. Ron Paul does well, but it is hard to see him as the nominee.

Michelle Bachman's best day may be behind her if Perry turns out to be a viable candidate. He does far better than she does with one of her most important constituencies.

What follows are the nomination preferences of those who support the Tea Party and for whom the noted issues are important.

	<u>Prefer Perry</u>	<u>Prefer Bachman</u>
Support Tea Party Movement	35%	14%
Business and economy	25%	8%
Government spending and power	31%	12%
Social issues and moral values	38%	10% [Gallup 8/11]

And Perry brings to the game a level of governing experience with which Bachmann cannot compete.

To be the viable alternative to Bachmann or Perry, Mitt Romney needs to avoid being totally dissed by the Tea Party movement and Christian conservatives, while laying claim to those elements of the Party who are concerned that Bachman and Perry bring a harshness to the campaign that will be problematic in the general election.

It is hard to see how Herman Cain, Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum, or Jon Huntsman can move from their current levels of support to a level at which they will be seen as competitive.

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Some argue that because Palin is so well known she can still enter the race with a potential for success. It is obviously true that she is well known. It is also true that to know her is not necessarily to feel favorably toward her. 59% have an unfavorable impression of Palin. The only other Republican candidate who breaks 50% on the unfavorable scale is Newt Gingrich at 57%. Bachmann's unfavorable score is 43%, Romney 41%, Perry 36%, Paul 36%. [AP/Gfk 8/11]

There are others in the race that are equally, if not more, acceptable to Palin's primary constituencies.

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Rick Perry (Ronald Reagan circa 1979?)
Will he be able to keep it up?

It is said about Perry that he is too good looking, a cowboy, overly religious, very conservative on social issues, gaffe prone, and is the long-serving Governor of one of the largest States in the Union. Sound familiar? These same things were also said about Ronald Reagan when he, as Governor of California, was "brash" enough to seek the Presidency.

Perry is talking jobs. He's making the case that Texas, during the last couple of years of his 10-year incumbency in the Governor's office, created 37% of all net new jobs in the country. [WSJ 8/19/11] At 8.2% Texas's unemployment rate is less than the national average, but higher than 24 other States.

On the other hand, there are a number of areas in which the Texas record does not give Perry bragging rights.

When compared to other States, it ranks

- 50th in the share of residents with health insurance
- 50th in the share of children with health insurance
- 50th in terms of its high school graduation rate
- 44th in children above the poverty line
- 42nd in per pupil education spending
- 30th in its college graduation rate
- 26th in median household income [NatJour 8/6/11]

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At least initially, with his entry into the race, Perry has vaulted to the top of the leader board among Republicans and GOP-leaning Independents. (Based on Gallup surveys unless otherwise noted.)

In May and June, Perry was not included in the Gallup surveys, and Romney led both tests with 19% in May (Paul 2nd with 12%, Bachmann 5th with 7%) and 27% in June (Cain 2nd with 10%, Bachman 4th with 7%).

The NBC/WSJ survey in June also showed Romney with a strong lead among Republican voters, with 30 %. (Palin 2nd with 14%, Cain 3rd with 12%, Perry 4th with 8%. No other candidate received more than 7%.)

In July, Romney continued to lead with 23% (Perry 2nd with 18%, Bachmann 3rd with 13%).

Then came August, with the Iowa Straw poll (won by Bachmann, Paul a close 2nd), and Perry started to move out. [Gallup]

Perry 29%

Romney 17%

Paul 13%

Bachman 10%

(No other candidate received more than 4%)

This result is mirrored by a CNN/ORG survey (8/24-25):

Perry 32%

Romney 18%

Bachmann 12%

(No other candidate received more than 7%)

Perry is the strongest with those 50 years of age and older; those living in the South and West; conservatives; and weekly church attendees. He leads among those 30-49 years of age, but loses 18-29 year olds to Ron Paul. Perry, Romney and Paul run about even in the East; and Romney and Paul trail Perry by a small margin in the Midwest. Bachman trails significantly in every category to Perry and Romney; and to Paul in every category, except among those 50 years of age and above. She runs even with Paul in the West; among women; among conservatives; those who attend church weekly; and those who seldom attend church.

Perry's entry into the race has increased satisfaction with the field among Republicans. In June, 52% of GOPers were satisfied with the field. Now, 64% express satisfaction with their choices. Those dissatisfied fell from 42% to 30%. [AP/Gfk 8/11]

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General Election

History tells us that match races in August of the year before a Presidential election vary dramatically from the final results.

- 1979 – Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan were dead even; Reagan won by 10 points
- 1983 – Reagan led Walter Mondale by 1%; Reagan won by 16 points
- 1995 – Bob Dole led Bill Clinton by 2%; Clinton won by 10 points
- 1999 – George Bush led Al Gore by 14%; Bush won, with Gore winning slightly more of the popular vote than Bush

But anyway....

In February 2011, when asked to choose between Obama and whomever the Republicans might nominate, registered voters split 45% to 45%, with the rest undecided. [Gallup]

In March, PEW found Obama to be in much better shape in the contest, leading the generic Republican candidate 47% to 37%.

In May, Gallup found Obama edging ahead 43% to 40% over the Republican.

Since then it has been downhill.

In July, 39% selected Obama, while 47% went with the generic Republican in the Gallup survey. PEW found the race to be even, with Obama leading by 41% to 40%.

In August, when Gallup matched Obama, one-on-one, against several Republican candidates, the generic contest took on a more specific reality.

	<u>Registered voters</u>	<u>Registered Inds</u>
Obama	46	44
Romney	48	47
Obama	47	44
Perry	47	46
Obama	48	48
Bachman	44	42

Obama	<u>47</u>	43
Paul	45	<u>46</u>

There is no significant deviation among the share of the Republican or Democratic votes that Obama or any of the Republican candidates get from their respective Party partisans, except that Perry and Romney do slightly better among Republicans against Obama than do Bachman or Paul. [Gallup]

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Voter Suppression

In the name of alleviating voter fraud, a variety of States are adopting legislation that requires voter identification cards at the polls; limits the time of early voting; ends same-day registration; and makes it harder for groups to register new voters.

Since there is little evidence that voter fraud is a significant problem, the efforts that are underway can only be assumed to be an effort to suppress the vote.

States which have enacted or are enacting these laws include Texas, Kansas, Wisconsin, South Carolina, Tennessee, Indiana, Georgia, and Maine.

Judicial intervention is not likely. [WP 6/20/11]

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For practical purposes, the campaign finance laws are all but dead as they relate to the Presidential election campaign. There are still limits on the amount that an individual can contribute directly to a candidate or to a formal political Party organization. However, if an individual is inclined to spend unlimited funds in support of a particular candidate he or she can essentially do it.

This change is the result of a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2010. There are a series of Super PACs cropping that can take in unlimited sums from individuals and corporations, as long as they are disclosed to the Federal Election Commission.

There have been, and continue to be, independent committees that can take in and spend money without disclosing to anyone. Theoretically, these committees must operate without coordination with particular candidates, but what passes for

“without coordination” under current rules makes that distinction meaningless.

A candidate is able to attend and address a fundraising event for a Super PAC, although he/she is prohibited from “raising money” for the Super PAC. However, there is nothing to stop a person who has a known reputation for being close to the candidate, i.e., a former staffer, a relative, a favored fundraiser, from organizing and operating either a Super PAC or an independent committee.

In a campaign world in which formal political Party organizations do little of value but raise money and run nomination contests, the Super PACs are really a kind of national political committee that can operate without limits.

In today’s world of ubiquitous communication, it does not take the equivalent of a rocket scientist to figure out what kind of activity will be useful to a candidate it is supporting.

Several of the candidates for the Republican nomination already have such organizations working on their behalf. There was one such group that was promoting Perry in the Iowa Straw Poll, even though he was not on the formal ballot.

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Howard Schultz, the founder of Starbucks, has started a movement of sorts. As a way of speaking out against the irresponsibility of elected officials he has decided to stop making campaign contributions until the elected officials begin to behave responsibly.

He has also reached out to other executives and individuals suggesting that they do the same. At least 100 have stepped up to agree with him.

It is an interesting idea, contributors “going on strike” until the needs of the country are placed ahead of the needs of political parties. It would also be interesting to know just how much Schultz and those who are joining him each gave in the way of political contributions in the 2008 and 2010 elections.

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THE CONGRESS

84% of Americans now disapprove of the job being done by Congress. This is the highest disapproval rating ever recorded by Gallup. 86% of Independents have that view, as do 84% of Republicans, and 83% of Democrats. Fox News has found only 10% approving of the job Congress is doing. The AP-Gfk survey in August found a similar result, with 87% disapproving the job being done by Congress.

It is a “pox on both of their houses.” 68% disapprove of the way Democrats in Congress are handling their jobs, and 75% disapprove of the way Republicans in Congress are handling their jobs. [AP-Gfk 8/11]

70% think that most members of Congress should not be re-elected, the highest number Gallup has recorded in the last 20 years. Yet 54% think their Member of Congress should be re-elected. The lowest re-elect numbers for individual members of Congress was 48% in 1992 and 49% in 2010.

In early August, when registered voters were asked whether they would vote for the Democratic Congressional candidate or the Republican Congressional candidate if the election were held then, the Democratic candidate enjoyed a 7-point advantage, 51% to 44%. At the same time in 2009, leading up to the Republican takeover of the House in 2010, the spread on this measurement ranged from a slight Democratic lead to even to a slight Republican lead.

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THE SENATE

Not much has changed in the basic structure of the Senate contest in the last couple of months. 23 Democratic seats and 10 Republican seats are up. One current Democratic seat, North Dakota, is gone. If the Republicans can put together four additional wins, they will own the Senate. This assumes that none of their incumbents up this year will be surprised. Of course, there is always the possibility that a Republican will be elected President. In that event, the Republicans can control the Senate by winning 3 additional seats.

Of the 9 current Toss Up seats, the two Republican seats are Massachusetts and Nevada. The Democratic candidate has not emerged in Massachusetts, where Elizabeth Warren is contemplating a run. It is not clear how good a candidate she will be, given the fact that she has never run for public office. In Nevada, incumbent House member Shelley Berkley will be the Democratic standard bearer.

This will be a competitive race.

Two other Democratic races that could well end up in the Toss Up column are Florida and Ohio.

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THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats	51
Republicans	47
Independents	2 (caucus Dem)

Here is how the 33 Senate elections -- 23 Democratic incumbents (includes 2 Independents), 10 Republican incumbents -- look to me at this time . (D=Dem incumbent in office, R=GOP incumbent in office, I=Ind. Incumbent in office) Underlining reflects retirement.

Safe	Leaning		Leaning	Safe
<u>Democrat (9)</u>	<u>Democrat (6)</u>	<u>Toss-Up (9)</u>	<u>Republican (4)</u>	<u>Republican (5)</u>
California	<u>Connecticut</u>	Massachusetts	<u>Arizona</u>	Indiana
Delaware	Florida	Missouri	Maine	Mississippi
<u>Hawaii</u>	Michigan	Montana	<u>North Dakota</u>	Tennessee
Maryland	Ohio	Nebraska	<u>Texas</u>	Utah
Minnesota	Pennsylvania	Nevada		Wyoming
New Jersey	Washington	<u>New Mexico</u>		
New York		<u>Virginia</u>		
Rhode Island		W. Virginia		
Vermont		<u>Wisconsin</u>		

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2012	30	37
Safe in 2012	9	5
Leaning in 2012	6	4
Total	45	46

Toss-ups 9 (2R/7D)

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THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WW has regularly reprinted the “House Dashboard” published by the Cook Political Report. The data below, through May 16, 2011, is from the Dashboard. However, the Dashboard is not being published at this time because of the uncertainties caused by re-districting. Therefore the chart below reflects the Cook’s current Competitive House Race Chart through August 12, 2011.

THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Republicans 241
Democrats 194

	<u>1/20/11</u>	<u>3/28/11</u>	<u>5/16/11</u>	<u>6/21/11</u>	<u>8/12/11</u>
TOTAL Dem	193	193	191	---	---
Solid Dem	150	151	153	---	---
Likely Dem	27	24	21	22	22
Lean Dem	12	10	11	13	17
Toss-up	10	16	16	17	15
D	4	8	6	6	6
R	6	8	10	11	9
Lean GOP	15	18	16	18	20
Likely GOP	38	38	41	42	40
Solid GOP	183	178	177	---	---
TOTAL GOP	242	242	244	---	---

[As always, thanks to “The Cook Political Report.” It is the best when it comes to analysis of Congressional races (as well as other electoral matters)].

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RESTAURANTS

AL TIRAMISU

2014 P Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-467-4466

I ate dinner at Al Tiramisu three times over a couple of weeks, first with Lee, Whitney and Debbie; then with Linda, John and Tom; and finally with Melissa and Melinda. I enjoyed each visit.

As you enter, the reception stand is to your right and to your left there is a bar with a half dozen stools.

While you can find lamb chops, rib eye steak, beef tenderloin, and chicken on the menu, this is primarily a fish and pasta restaurant.

As you browse the menu a server shows up with a large platter of various fish and, at this season, soft shell crabs. The server explains the various ways in which the fish can be prepared. In addition, there are usually special pasta dishes available.

Among the appetizers that were selected were grilled baby octopus with fingerling potato salad; grilled Portobello mushrooms with herbed goat cheese; sautéed sea scallops with mushrooms and field greens; breaded grilled calamari served on a bed of arugula; buffalo mozzarella with tomatoes and basil and mixed field greens.

On two occasions I selected whole grilled fish, which is one of my favorite preparation styles. On one visit I selected the grilled chicken breast with rosemary sauce. Others had a variety of fishes, from on and off the menu, and chicken breast.

Pasta dishes that I ate or sampled include Fettuccine with veal ragout; Linguine with clams, garlic and olive oil; and wide pasta with mushroom ragout. But my favorite was a special on one of my visits, the Risotto with lobster.

The only dessert that I tried was the Poached pear in red wine with vanilla ice cream, which was very much up to standard.

The restaurant serves 65 people at one seating, and tables may turn 3 times on a busy night. There are twos, fours and rounds up to six, so various seating combinations are possible. And, while the tables are relatively close together, the conversation from one table does not seem to intrude on the next table.

The servers are all men and obviously seasoned. They know their craft and they help to make the dining comfortable and easy.

The men's room is relatively small, but certainly adequate. The floor and the wall behind the white ceramic commode is covered in large black tiles. There is a square white ceramic wash basin. The walls are multi-colored. The most interesting feature of the room is the shelves, which hold dozens and dozens of rolls of toilet paper, a guarantee that you will never run out.

Valet parking from 6-10 p.m. is available nightly, and there is good subway access.

This restaurant could easily become part of my rotation.

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BARTLETT PEAR INN
28 South Harrison Street
Easton, MD 21601
410-770-3300
www.Bartlettpearinn.com
reservations@bartlettpearin.com

Gail suggested that Debbie and I have dinner at the Bartlett Pear Inn in Easton, while we were staying in St. Michaels. It turned out to be a great suggestion.

Entry into the Inn requires climbing a set of stairs leading to the front porch . As you enter, to the left is a small, very well appointed, open room containing a bar, with a half dozen tall chairs and a couple of tall tables with chairs. The reception stand is straight ahead.

The dining room is to the right. It seats 24 people at twos and fours, but there could be other combinations. Just off the dining room is a closed-in patio that seats an additional six people. There is an outdoor patio that can seat an additional 20 people. There is also a private dining room that can be used for a special small event or a larger meeting.

As we sat looking over the menu a person walked up to our table and said, “hello.” I recognized him, but was not sure from where. He said, “I saw your name on the reservation list and was wondering if you were the same Berman that I used to serve at the Four Seasons.” Then I recognized him, Jordan Lloyd.

Jordan and his wife, Alice, acquired the Inn a couple of years ago. They changed the name and did some upgrading of the seven sleeping rooms, each of which carries the name of a different variety of pears. You can view each room and its unique appointments on the Inn website.

Debbie started with “East Coast Cerviche”, Tobiko Caviar, Floridian Snapper, Atlantic Cockles, Wild Rhode Island Scallops, Citrus Mirin Maceration, and Cottingham Farm Radish. For her entrée she selected a Roasted Lobster Special in which both halves are taken out of the shell, roasted and then returned to the shell.

I opened with Councell Farms Local Corn Chowder, Pan Seared Chanterelle Mushrooms, Garlic Chips, Espelette Spice, Burgundy Summer Truffle Shavings. For my second course I chose the Pan Seared Ling Cod, Maryland Crab Dumplings, spicy Lemongrass, Haines Farm Kaffir, and Lime Broth.

We shared a side of Mashed Potato Aligot, Chapel Farms Chapelle Cheddar. These are mashed potatoes with a consistency and taste better and different than anything we have previously eaten.

There is a separate bar menu of smaller proportions and, of course, breakfast is served for those who stay overnight.

And worth special note, they did have the primary ingredient for my new drink of choice, pineapple juice and soda. You might be surprised at the number of restaurants that do not stock pineapple juice.

The servers are very friendly and helpful. We overheard Valerie, one of the servers, welcoming one couple with a reminder that she had served them on their

last visit, and even recalled the table at which they had been seated. In a small dining room it is easy to overhear various conversations of the folks they are serving. All the servers were friendly and well informed about the menu.

The unisex restroom is located in the hallway between the bar area and the dining room. It is small, but well appointed. The white ceramic square washbasin and commode are side by side. The fold faucets and other fixtures include two well placed grab bars located between the washbasin and commode and next to the commode. White cloth towels are carefully rolled and placed in a large bowl atop a woven basket. The walls are painted a moderate green, and the floors are covered with mid-size reddish dark tiles.

The restaurant is open from 5:30 – 10:30 p.m., except on Tuesdays, when it is closed. There is a special Sunday Brunch from 10 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. The Inn is open all of the time. Reservations are generally required, although the night we were there, a Thursday, there was at least one table open through the 2 hours we spent there.

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