

Mike Berman's

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

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STATE OF THE NATION

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FIRST IT WAS HUSH PUPPIES

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PRESIDENT OBAMA

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2012 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN HAS BEGUN

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THE CONGRESS

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RESTAURANTS

Washington, DC

San Francisco

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Americans continue to believe that the country is on the wrong track. At the end of February the NBC/WSJ survey found 60% saying the country is on the wrong track. 31% said we were going in the right direction. In early March, the

Bloomberg/FD survey also found 60% saying the country is on the wrong track, but only 26% who thought it was heading in the right direction.

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27% of Americans think the economy will get better in the next 12 months. A similar number think it will get worse. In January 2003, 35% of Americans thought the economy would be getting better over the next 12 months; by May of that year 49% were positive about the economy. [NBC/WSJ 2/11]

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It's no surprise the number one issue folks worry about is the economy. That is how 71% responded in a recent Gallup survey. Second on the list, at 64%, was federal spending and the deficit; followed by 58% saying they worried a great deal about the availability of affordable healthcare. 57% worry a great deal about unemployment.

Looking back at the worry factor on these issues 10 years ago, there has been a dramatic change in concern about the economy. Only 35% worried about the economy a great deal in 2001. Unemployment was a great worry of only 30% , but 60% were concerned even then about affordability and availability of healthcare. The federal spending question was asked for the first time that year. [Gallup 3/11]

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54% of Americans rate the current economy as poor. An additional 37% say it is fair. 37% think the economy will get worse during the next year. This is an increase in pessimism of 16 points since December 2008, when only 31% thought it would get worse.

87% of Americans think that the cost of living will rise in the next 12 months. 28% believe that increase will exceed 10%. 59% say that a drop in the unemployment rate is either a good or the best indicator of whether things are getting better.

48% of Americans know someone who is facing the threat of foreclosure, has been foreclosed upon, or both. [CNBC 3/11]

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53% of Americans think the economy has not yet begun to recover.
[WP/ABC 3/11]

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Of the 46% of Americans who think the economy has begun to improve, 39% credit President Obama and 6 % credit the Republicans in Congress . 27% say that both are responsible, and a similar number say that neither of them is responsible.
[WP/ABC 3/11]

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The official Labor Department unemployment rate in March 2011 was 8.8%. However, there are millions of Americans who have stopped looking for work, even though they are willing to work. These individuals are not included in the Labor Department figure. Estimates are that, if they were included, the unemployment rate would be 10.5%. And even that number would not count those who are working part-time, but would rather be working full-time. If those Americans were also included, the unemployed/underemployed number would be 16%. [ABC 4/1/11 & WP 3/16/11]

Gallup surveys put the unemployment rate at 10.1% and the unemployed/underemployed number at 19.4%. [Gallup 3/11]

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23.1% of all mortgages, representing 11.1 million households, were “under water” in the last quarter of 2010. That is, the owners owed more on their mortgages than their homes were worth in the market. [USAToday]

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63% of American families incurred a drop in net worth from 2007-2009.
[WP 3/25]

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51% of Americans think the government should do more to meet the needs of people. 46% think the government is already doing too much. This is the largest number of those who think the government should be doing more since February 2009. [NBC/WSJ 2/11]

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After the 2010 election, Republicans in Congress were thought to have a better approach to deficit reduction than the President by 35% to 24%. Now, each draws 20% support, while 52% say there is no difference between them.

When given several options with which to approach deficit reduction, 61% favor “lowering domestic spending,” and 49% favor “lowering military spending.” That is, however, only a slight increase over the 47% who are not in favor of reduced military spending.

65% oppose changes to Social Security/Medicare, and 67% oppose raising taxes. [PEW 3/11]

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Asked about ways in which State governments might balance their budgets, 62% favor reducing the number of workers on State payrolls, while 65% express an interest in eliminating certain (unnamed) State programs.

Conversely, 66% oppose borrowing money by issuing bonds, and the same number oppose raising State income or sales taxes. [Gallup 3/11]

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When thinking about the current budget debate, 63% think the Democrats in Congress will not go far enough, and 62% think that President Obama will not go far enough in making cuts. On the other hand, 52% think the Republicans and the Tea Party supporters in Congress will go too far. [NBC/WSJ 2/11]

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52% think the President has not been willing enough to compromise with the Republicans on the budget deficit. But 71% say the leadership of the Republican Party has not been willing enough to compromise with Obama. [WP/ABC 3/11]

As discussion rages over the next several months about the budget, the following may be a useful reference point.

The Federal Budget

40.7 % - Insurance (Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security)

23.8 % - Military

16.8 % - Other (education, infrastructure, environmental protection,
farm subsidies, unemployment, food stamps)

12.3 % - Domestic discretionary (e.g. ,Teach for America, food safety,
infrastructure)

6.5% - Interest on debt

[Ezra Klein, WP 2/16/11]

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If a deal is to be made to avert a Federal government shutdown, it must happen by April 5th. (While the last continuing resolution does not run out until April 8th, new procedural rules in the House require that bills be available at least 72 hours before action is taken on the floor.)

Only 36% of Americans think it would be a good thing for the government to shut down for a few days because of a stalemate in Congress. 24% think it would be a good thing for the government to shut down for a few weeks. 73% think the latter would be a bad thing. [CNN/OR 3/11]

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From 1985 through sometime in 2008, Americans consistently said that environmental protection was more important than economic development. As late as 2000, the spread of environmental protection over economic development was 40 points. Among Independents that spread was 45 points.

Now, by 54% to 36%, economic development is chosen over environmental protection. Among Independents, economic development is chosen over the environment by 50% to 41%.

In 2001, protecting the environment was chosen as a priority over development of U.S. energy supplies. By 2007, the spread had grown to 24 points, 58% favoring the environment over energy supplies.

By early 2009 the spread had disappeared, and 47% favored each position. Now, 50% choose development of energy supplies as more important than do the 41% who still put environmental protection first. [Gallup 3/11]

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A year after the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (healthcare reform) was passed and signed by the President, those who have worked to undercut support for the legislation seem to be winning the day.

- 46% to 44% think it is a good thing rather than a bad thing
- 44% to 39% think it will worsen medical care in the U.S.
- 39% to 25% think it will worsen their own medical care

27.8% of adults living in Texas do not have health insurance. This is the highest rate of any State. Next is Mississippi with 24.9% uninsured. At the other end of the spectrum is Massachusetts, the State that enacted its own comprehensive healthcare plan, with 4.7%; followed by Connecticut with 9.9% uninsured. [Gallup 3/11]

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Hispanics now represent 16% of the 308 million people in the United States at the time of the last census – 50 million people. This is an increase of 15 million since the 2000 census, and a growth from 12.5% to 16% of the total population. 23% of all those in the U.S. who are seventeen years of age and younger are Hispanic. [Bureau of the Census]

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Support for the Tea Party Movement has not grown since support was first measured in September 2010. 29% say they support the party now. 28% said that in 2010. [NBC/WSJ 2/11]

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There was a substantial change in the number of solidly Democratic States from 2008 to 2010.

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
Solid D	30	24	14
Lean D	6	10	9
Competitive	10	12	18
Lean R	1	1	5
Solid Republican	4	4	5

There are more folks in every State of the Union who self -identify as conservatives than there are those who identify as liberals. Only in the District of Columbia is there a larger percentage of self-identified liberals than conservatives.

There are more self-identified moderates than conservatives in 16 States and D.C., and more moderates than liberals in every State. [Gallup 2/11]

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HUSH PUPPIES

The year was 1994. Hush Puppies, (the shoes) were all but dead. “Sales were down to 30,000 pairs a year....” “The company that made the shoes was thinking of phasing out the shoes....”

Then around late 1994 or early 1995 something happened. A relatively small number of young people began wearing the shoes because “no one else would wear them.” The shoes became “hip in the clubs and bars of downtown Manhattan.” Among the people wearing the shoes was Isaac Mizrahi, the clothing designer.

A couple of prominent designers used the shoes in their collections. Another designer featured them in his store. Word of mouth took over.

The company sold 430,000 pairs of classic Hush Puppies in 1995. The next year it sold 4 times that number and that pattern continued. “In 1996, Hush Puppies won the prize for best accessory at the Council of Fashion Designers awards dinner at Lincoln Center....”

Someplace along the way the “popularity” of the shoes reached a “Tipping Point” and the shoe was reborn. [Source: The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell]

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General acknowledgement of the broad economic problems faced by the States is not new. Between 1979 and 2007 State spending across the country grew at an average rate of 6.5% a year, as they took on responsibility for various services. By 2009 spending was down 3.4%, and dropped an additional 5.4% last year. But the drop was not nearly enough. [Source Washington Post]

The Federal debt is slightly north of \$14.2 trillion.

This year, for the first time since it was created in 1935, Social Security will pay out \$45 billion more in benefits than it will take in from current payroll taxes paid in by individuals and employers. And this trend will only get worse.

Public approval of labor unions in 2009 (48%) and 2010 (52%) is the lowest recorded by Gallup since they began asking the question in 1936. In that year 72% approved of the union movement.

Then came the 2010 election. Republicans picked up 6 U.S. Senate seats, 63 U.S. House seats, 5 Governorships, 695 State legislators, 13 State assemblies, 6 State Senates, 11 additional States in which they control both legislative bodies, and 10 additional States in which they control the Governorship and both legislative bodies.

In Wisconsin, as the whole nation watched and as Democratic members of the State Senate fled the State to try and stop a vote, the governor and legislature cut the compensation of State employees and severely limited their collective bargaining rights.

In Ohio, the new Governor and legislature are on their way to making major changes in collective bargaining with public employees, and cutting funds for all agencies, including those responsible for all forms of education. The Governor is pushing to lower taxes on corporations and high-income individuals.

Gallup reports that, by 48% to 49%, the public backs the unions over the Governors in the disputes over collective bargaining rights.

In Idaho, teachers have been stripped of their collective bargaining rights.

In Michigan, a State with one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, the Governor and legislature are reducing the number of weeks in which people can collect unemployment benefits. Previously, they enacted legislation that allowed the Governor to appoint financial managers who can effectively take over local governments by firing people, tearing up employment contracts, etc. Some legislators are considering a bill that would force local school systems to put support systems out for bid.

In Florida, the new Governor and legislature are considering legislation that will reduce unemployment benefits to 12 weeks, even though the State has an 11.9% unemployment rate.

In New York, the Governor has succeeded in negotiating a budget that will cut \$2 billion from education and healthcare as part of efforts to cut overall spending , and begin an overhaul of the State's Medicaid programs.

In California, the Governor and legislature have already cut \$11 billion from the budget. The Governor's efforts to get a tax extension proposal on the ballot has cratered. The legislature has refused to go along with him. There is no doubt that there will be a need for further cuts.

In Pennsylvania, the new Governor has proposed a budget that cuts higher education funding in half.

Public discussion of the current budget fight between the Administration and the Congress has included the unthinkable, changing eligibility for receiving Social Security.

Where it all will end, no one knows. But what is clear is that the Tipping Point has been reached.

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On December 17, 2010, in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, a street fruit vendor, named Mohamed Bouazizi, was apparently set upon by local authorities, including a female officer who humiliated him in a variety of ways, including by striking him. He tried to appeal to other local authorities, but got no relief.

He then told his friends that he would demonstrate to the world how unfairly they were treated by setting himself on fire. And that is exactly what he did, standing in front of the municipal building.

And so it began. His public act was followed by a massive response from Tunisians against their government. On January 4, 2011 Bouazizi died from his burns.

He died not knowing what he had wrought.

The President of Tunisia who had ruled with an iron fist, fled the country on January 14, 2011. But that was only the beginning.

First there were, and continue to be, public protests in Algeria and Oman. Then came protests in Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Bahrain, Iran, Libya, Morocco, Lebanon, and Syria.

Subsequently, the government of Egypt has fallen. The Saudis have moved armed forces into Bahrain to try and stabilize that government. The President of Yemen is negotiating his date of departure. Libya is in a state of revolt, with intervention by NATO on behalf of the rebels, with at least the tacit support of the Arab League. Where this all ends is anyone's guess, but what seems to be clear is that the Persian Gulf area will never be the same.

Mohamed Bouazizi was the Tipping Point.

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PRESIDENT OBAMA

President Obama is in the range in which Presidents Nixon, Clinton, Carter, and Reagan found themselves at this point in their tenure. Three of the four were re-elected.

President Obama is ranked 7th 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)	82%	11%
GW Bush (II)	70	27
Eisenhower	66	21
Kennedy	66	21
Nixon	49	37
Clinton	47	45
Obama	<u>45</u>	<u>48</u> (3/25-27)
Carter	42	44
Reagan	41	49

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The President's most recent rating by Gallup (3/25- 27) is slightly more negative than those found in a series of other surveys over the last 3 months.

	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>
March 2011	xxx	49/41% (CBS)	51/45%
February 2011	48/46%	48/41% (CBS)	xxx
January 2011	53/41%	49/39%	54/43%

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Only on the issue of his handling of foreign policy does the President's approval rating exceed his overall approval rating.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
Foreign affairs	54%	43%
<u>Job of being President</u>	<u>51%</u>	<u>47%</u>
Energy	47%	46%
Healthcare	41%	58%
Economy	39%	60%
Federal budget deficit	36%	62%

[CNN/OR 3/11]

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The President's approval rating exceeds 50% in 13 States, all of which he won in 2008. His approval rating is below 40% in 10 States, all of which he lost. The District of Columbia and Hawaii lead the list of those in the top 13. The highest mainland State is Maryland, with a 57.6% approval rating. The State giving him the lowest approval rating is Wyoming at 27.6%. [Gallup]

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The President's personal favorability continues to exceed approval of the job that he is doing. 58% have a favorable opinion, while 39% view him unfavorably. [PEW 3/11]

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52% believe that Obama is a "strong and decisive leader, while 47% say that does not describe him. In May 2009, 73% characterized him as "strong and decisive," while only 25% expressed the contrary view.

61% believe the President is "honest and trustworthy." However, only 36% think he "has a clear plan for solving the country's problems." [Gallup 3/11]

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It is too early to judge the long term impact that the President's actions in Libya will have on his job approval or favorability ratings.

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Nearly 43 million people watched the President's State of the Union speech in January. This is about 5 million fewer than viewed the same speech in 2010. The

audience for both speeches was substantially less than his address to a Joint Session of Congress a month after his inauguration in 2009, when 52 million tuned in.
[Nielsen]

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2012 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

While there is some talk about someone running against him from the left, Obama's re-nomination by the Democratic Party is not even a little bit in doubt.

This past February, by a margin of 45% to 40%, registered voters said they will probably vote for President Obama in 2012. This compares with April 2003, when 52% said that they would probably vote to re-elect President Bush.
[NBC/WSJ 2/11]

Then in March, Obama's re-election in November 2012 was preferred by 47%. 37% prefer the Republican candidate, whomever that may be. Independents favor Obama's re-election by a smaller margin of 40% to 34%. [PEW 3/11]

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WW will periodically print the results of another "Cook Political Report" chart.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE 2012

	<u>1/13/11</u>
Solid Dem	186
Likely Dem	0
Lean Dem	35
Toss Ups	98
Lean GOP	23
Likely GOP	37
Solid GOP	159
Solid/Likely Dem	186
Solid/Likely GOP	196

Solid/Likely/Lean Dem	221
Solid/Likely/Lean GOP	219

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President Obama blew up the general election Presidential campaign finance system in 2008. The primary financing system was breached years earlier.

If a candidate does opt-in to the primary system, it is fair to assume that he or she is not a serious candidate. Rather it is likely that they are using the contest to enhance their political profile and viability generally.

It is possible to opt-out of the primary system and opt-in to the general election system, as John McCain did in 2008. The size of the general election Federal grant will not be known until early in 2012.

However, even with the relatively short, two-month, general election period, the amount that will be available is likely to be dwarfed by the amounts that the Obama campaign plans to raise. The task for the Republican challenger on the money front is made even more difficult because Obama will not have to spend any money on a primary contest.

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The Republican Nomination

Among Republicans and Republican-leaning Independents, those who are regular Fox News viewers have slightly different preferences than Republicans/Republican-leaning Independents generally. Name recognition of those with double digit support is high.

	<u>GOP</u>	<u>GOP/Fox News</u>	<u>Name Recognition</u>
Mike Huckabee	19	18	89%
Mitt Romney	15	17	83%
Sarah Palin	12	13	97%
Newt Gingrich	10	13	86%

Ron Paul	6	4	76%
Michele Bachmann	5	4	52%
Mitch Daniels	4	3	33%
Tim Pawlenty	3	3	41%
Haley Barbour	2	4	42%
Jon Huntsman	2	1	21%
Rick Santorum	2	3	42%
Gary Johnson	2	1	11%
Donald Trump	1 (vol)	x	xx

[Gallup 3/11]

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The Republican nomination season was to begin in earnest on May 2nd with a debate at the Ronald Reagan Library. That event has now been moved to mid-September, apparently because of a lack of announced top-tier candidates.

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Keep an eye on Tim Pawlenty. He seems to be everyone's second choice. He has opened an exploratory committee and is being warmly received. He is a *bona fide* Midwestern conservative. His 8-year tenure as Minnesota Governor showed him to be cut from the mold of the current cost-cutting Republican Governors.

Newt Gingrich will likely run, and will likely implode with one line or another.

When prominent campaign strategists sign on with particular candidates it is an indicator of how insiders view the current GOP contest for the Presidential nomination. On that basis, at least for now, Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour has to be seen as a favorite in that race. Barbour has signed up GOP strategists with expertise in Florida, New Hampshire, communications generally, and online activity. [Politico Morning Score 3/21/11]

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Sarah Palin's star seems to be fading even among Republicans. In October 2010, Republicans gave Palin a 70%-24% favorable rating. By last month her favorable rating had dropped 12 points, to 58%, and her unfavorable rating has grown by 13 points to 37%. [WP/ABC 10/10, 3/11]

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A new form of research has emerged with which to assess the pre-nomination: pre-election support for particular candidates. This new research, referred to as the applause poll, was used by Republican pollster, Frank Luntz, to assess support for potential GOP Presidential candidates at a meeting of the California Republican Party. [Politico Morning Score 3/21/11]

THE CONGRESS

The job approval rating of Congress in March was 18%. Independents are most down on Congress, recording a 15% approval rating.

In December the overall job approval rating was 13%, but in February it had risen to 23%. That jump has now been half eliminated. [Gallup]

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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 (10)</u>	<u>Democrat (6)</u>	<u>Toss-Up (8)</u>	<u>Republican (3)</u>	<u>Republican (6)</u>
California	<u>Connecticut</u>	Massachusetts	Maine	<u>Arizona</u>
Delaware	Florida	Missouri	<u>North Dakota</u>	Indiana
<u>Hawaii</u>	Michigan	Montana	<u>Texas</u>	Mississippi
Maryland	Ohio	Nebraska		Tennessee
Minnesota	Pennsylvania	<u>Nevada</u>		Utah
New Jersey	Washington	<u>New Mexico</u>		Wyoming
New York		<u>Virginia</u>		
Rhode Island		W. Virginia		
Vermont				
Wisconsin				

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2012	30	37
Safe in 2012	10	6
Leaning in 2012	6	3
Total	46	46
Toss-ups 8 (2R/6D)		

Of the 8 Toss-up States, Obama won 4 of them (Massachusetts, Nevada, New Mexico and Virginia). McCain won the other 4 (Missouri, Montana, Nebraska and West Virginia).

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THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Republicans 242
Democrats 193

	<u>1/20/11</u>	<u>3/28/11</u>
TOTAL Dem	193	193
Solid Dem	150	151
Likely Dem	27	24
Lean Dem	12	10
 Toss-up	 10	 16
D	4	8
R	6	8
 Lean GOP	 15	 18
Likely GOP	38	38
Solid GOP	183	178
TOTAL GOP	242	242

[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

Mr. Henry’s Restaurant
601 Pennsylvania Ave SE
Washington, DC
202-546-8412

I went to Mr. Henry’s with Hilary and Debbie on a Friday night, at Hilary’s suggestion. There were more patrons fitted into the main floor dining room than in any restaurant at which I have ever eaten. The second floor is also available, and there is a sidewalk dining area when weather permits.

When we entered the restaurant no one made any pretense about directing us to a table. You are on your own. Hilary, who knew the drill, spotted what must

have been the last three chairs in the room. We literally stuffed ourselves into the space.

Friday is Fried Chicken night at Mr. Henry's -- ½ Fried Chicken with French Fries (or other potatoes) and cole slaw. All three of us ordered the fried chicken. It was the best fried chicken I have ever eaten. I ate all of my order and part of Debbie's.

Every night at Mr. Henry's delivers some kind of special. For example, on Wednesdays, it is Marta's Meatloaf. In addition to the specials, the menu is extensive. There are nine beef burgers, as well as a vegetable burger, a turkey burger, and a mushroom burger.

There are a passel of starters and sides that will meet any taste. They ranged from an Artichoke Dip to a Fried Clam Basket.

I counted eleven "platters" on the menu. An example is the Dog Dinner, a quarter-pound Kosher dog with sauerkraut & French fries. The variety of sandwiches would meet any taste. Consider the Grilled Vegetarian on Rye with Cheddar cheese, tomato, onion, fresh spinach, and mushrooms.

The servers were busier than any I have seen in any restaurant, but totally accommodating.

The men's room was serviceable, but not a place in which you would want to hang out.

Parking is catch-as-catch can and not easy. Consider taking the Metro: Blue Line to the Eastern Market station.

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Anchor & Hope
83 Minna Street (Btwn 1st & 2nd Sts)
San Francisco, California
415-501-9100

Anchor & Hope was recommended to Debbie and me, by the concierge at the Four Seasons Hotel, as a good restaurant within easy walking distance. It turned out to be an excellent choice.

The exterior of the restaurant is non-descript. The interior of the restaurant looks like an old barn with painted plywood floors. The 100-year old building has had a variety of uses, including as a mechanics' warehouse, a fire station, and an artists' studio. The restaurant has been there for about 3 years.

As you enter, there are tables to right and left, and a long bar to the far left with 13 high chairs. There is a continuous wooden bench along the opposite wall with tables that seat various numbers. The tables can be moved to accommodate anything from parties of 2 to an almost endless number. We were flanked on each side by two groups of four. In total, the restaurant seats about 85 people. The tables are quite close and the whole scene is very loud.

The pre-dinner bread course is an Epinard served in a brown paper bag.

Debbie started with Crispy Eggplant Rock Shrimp Squid, Bienville Stuffing and Tomatillo Sauce. For her main course she chose Lobster Dungeness Crab and Potato Gnocchi with Lobster Foam.

I opted to begin with Seared Scallops with Mustard Greens and Kohlrabi in Apple Miso Broth. My second course was a Chicken Pot Pie with Bacon, Root Vegetables and Mushrooms. When I placed my order the waiter warned me that our dinners would be slow in coming because the chicken pot pies are cooked from raw. Often, chicken pot pies are partially cooked in advance and then heated up when they are ordered. These were not pre-cooked.

The serving plates for the hot food were piping hot and the chicken pot pie was so hot that I had to let it cool for a bit. When I first cut through the top crust,

steam rushed out.

Both of us enjoyed our meals.

There is a separate, extended, menu of 92 bottle and draft beers. I had a draft called “Damnation Ale” from the Russian River Brewing Company.

We had a reservation, but it is clearly a place where people come for dinner and/or drinks after work. As the evening wore on, the line of folks waiting to come in and be seated wound out the front door and down the street. We were the oldest people in the restaurant by 25-35 years.

The men’s room floor is covered with large grey tiles. The walls are covered by small grey tiles. There are two washbasins and a single urinal with a partial metal wall, open at the top and bottom, separating them. There is a large commode area, also enclosed with partial metal walls. There are, in that area, a number of well-placed wall bars for those who might need special assistance. In the open area of the restaurant there are a number of red and white circular life preservers hanging on the walls at about shoulder height.

Anchor & Hope is clearly worth trying.

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Spruce

3640 Sacramento Street
San Francisco, California 94118
415-931-5100
www.sprucesf.com
info@sprucesf.com

Peggy, Debbie and I went to Spruce for lunch, at Peggy’s suggestion.

The restaurant is quite bright, even though it seems that every possible surface is done in black. The ceilings are very high, and there is a center island that is both a bar with about a dozen seats and a visible wine cellar. The chairs are extraordinarily comfortable. The main restaurant seats about 85, and there are a

couple of private rooms that seat up to 20 and up to 40 respectively.

The restaurant prides itself on its always fresh ingredients from local farms and ranches. As an interesting benefit to its customers, from 3:30-5:30 p.m. on Thursdays Spruce operates a farmers' market. This is done in partnership with County Line Harvest, a provider operated by a number of farmers. Subject to availability, the farmers' market sells a box of selected fresh fruits and vegetables at a cost of \$25. If you want to be certain of availability, it is recommended that you pre-order.

Peggy ordered a French Omelet with Parmesan Broth, Spigarello and Brie De Nangis. Debbie selected Fisherman's Mussels and Garlic Crostone. I ordered a Beef Tongue appetizer and Saffron Fazzoletti, Braised Rabbit, Lentils and Carrots. For dessert we shared an order of Beignets and Chocolate Ice Cream.

The service was a little odd. Everyone was very friendly and welcoming. The whole place has a cheery tone. One of our party mentioned to our serving person that whatever she ate had to be gluten free. A few moments later, a person other than our server brought us an amuse bouche and specifically mentioned that it was gluten free indicating that our server had passed on that information.

On the other hand, as noted, I ordered an appetizer of beef tongue. I was the only one who ordered a starter. It did not come and it did not come. I decided that I would not remind the server. And then our entrees arrived and it still had not come. I mentioned it to the server, who was very apologetic, and then it still took a particularly long time for several excellent slices of beef tongue to show up at our table. I am sure it tasted as good after my entrée as it would have tasted before.

You enter the men's room through a heavy black wood door with a large, waist high, opaque window. The floor is covered with large grey/white tiles. There are two wash basins in a heavy grey/white marble with a very large mirror over the wash basins. The walls are covered, floor to ceiling, by large white tinged marble tiles. There is a large, fully-enclosed commode room with one strategically placed wall bar. In the open part of the room there is a large, comfortable chair similar to those in the dining room.

They provide valet parking after 5:00 p.m.

Mike

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