

Mike Berman's

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

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STATE OF THE NATION

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ODDS AND ENDS

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PRESIDENT OBAMA

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THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION

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THE MONEY Donor Anonymity

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2012 PRESIDENTIAL GENERAL ELECTION

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THE CONGRESS

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RESTAURANTS
Mintwood – Washington, DC

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STATE OF THE NATION

In the April NBC/WSJ survey, 59% say the country is on the wrong track. 33% say it is on the right track. The following are the Right Direction/Wrong Track findings from the NBC/WSJ and the CBS/NYT, dating back to the beginning of the Obama administration.

		<u>Right Direction</u>	<u>Wrong Track</u>
4/13-17/12	NBC/WSJ	33%	59%
4/13/17/12	CBS/NYT	31	61
4/8-12/12	WP/ABC	33	64
7/2011	NBC/WSJ	25	67
6/2011	CBS/NYT	28	63
6/2011	WP/ABC	32	66
1/2011	NBC/WSJ	35	56
1/2011	CBS/NYT	32	64
1/2011	WP/ABC	38	60
2/2010	CBS/NYT	33	62
1/2010	NBC/WSJ	34	54
1/2010	WP/ABC	37	62
2/2009	NBC/WSJ	41	44
2/2009	CBS	23	68
2/2009	WP/ABC	31	67

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Ask the broader question somewhat differently and you get a somewhat different answer.

43% think that “things are going well” in the country today, compared to 67% who think things are going badly. And 11.5 times as many people think that things are going “very badly” as think they are going “very good.”

The low point during the Obama administration came in February 2009 ,

when 21% thought things were going well and 79% thought they were going badly.

When President Bush stood for re-election in 2004, 55% thought things were going well.

	<u>Going well</u>	<u>Going badly</u>
April 15, 2012	43%	67%
Nov 2011	25%	74%
Aug 2011	24%	75%
Jan 2011	43%	56%
Jan 2010	32%	67%
Feb 2009	21%	79%
Oct 2004	55%	44%

[CNN/ORC]

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24% are satisfied with the way things are going in America. This is a slight drop from the satisfaction level in March, but higher than the 11% recorded last summer. Self-reported spending by Americans in March hit \$74 per day, up from \$63 per day in February. [Gallup]

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The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 8.2% for the month of March. A year ago the rate was 8.9%. The average unemployment for 2011 was 8.9%, for 2010 it was 9.6% and for 2009, 9.3%.

Recalling a bit of history, the unemployment rate started to move up in May 2008, when it jumped from 5% in April to 5.4% in May. The rate increased every month thereafter (exception was August/September when the rate did not change) until it reached 7.3% in December. It continued upward in 2009, reaching 10% in October 2009. By the end of 2010, the rate was 9.4% and by the end of 2011 it had fallen back to 8.5% .

Gallup reported a seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 8.5% for mid-April of this year. This is down from 8.6% in February. It also reported a drop to

an unadjusted 18.1 % in the number of people unemployed or who are working part-time, but want full-time employment.

[Note: Gallup reports both a seasonally adjusted and an unadjusted number in its report of unemployment. However, it only reports an unadjusted number of those working part-time, but wanting full-time work. So, when compiling the total of the two, Gallup uses the unadjusted numbers.]

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Jobs at 26%, and the economy at 22%, rank highest on a list of problems that Americans think the is facing the country today. Next highest are “politicians/government” at 9% and healthcare at 5%.

70% say the condition of the country is “bad,” while 27% say it is “good.” A year ago, 80% said the condition of the country was “bad.”

33% say the economy is getting better, while 28% say it is getting worse. 38% say the economy is staying about the same.

39% say they are falling behind, 43% say they are staying even, and 16% say they are getting ahead. This last number is the lowest number recorded since the question was first asked in 1995. [CBS/NYT 4/12]

60% of Americans say they have enough money to live comfortably. This is the smallest number of people to take this position in the last decade. A full ten years ago, 75% of Americans said they had enough money.

Conversely the number of people who say they do not have sufficient money to live comfortably has grown from 24% in 2002 to 39% in 2012. [Gallup]

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The average income for Hispanic families in America is about 2/3rds as high as it is for white families. The average income for African-American families is about three-fifths as high was white families. [U of Phoenix/NAm Poll]

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68% of Americans now say they know someone who has lost her or his job

in the last six months. This is the highest percentage registered by Gallup in the 20+ years it has asked this question. 77% think this is a bad time to be looking for a job. Last November, 90% of Americans had that view.

But, even given the above, 84% think it is at least “not too likely” that they will lose their current jobs. This includes 42% who say it is “not at all likely.” [Gallup 4/23/12]

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67% believe that the government “should be doing more to help improve the financial situation of middle class Americans.” Only 15% think the government should be doing less. [NYT/CBS 4/12]

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72% of us would favor changing Federal income tax rates so that people making more than \$1,000,000 a year pay at least 30% of their income in taxes. [CNN/ORC 4/12]

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46% think they are paying too much in Federal taxes, while 47% say they think their tax level is about right. When asked, 53% think their taxes will rise in the next 12 months, while 43% think there will be no change. [Gallup]

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Different Takes On the Same Story

On Friday, April 13th, two major banks, J.P. Morgan Chase & Co and Wells Fargo & Company, put out their first quarter results. The next day two major newspapers reported on those results, with distinctly different “takes” on those reports.

The Wall Street Journal, reported on the results with a first section, front page, far right column, story. The headline and first paragraph follow:

“Bank Earnings Dismay Investors”
“Two of the nation’s largest banks released first-quarter results on

Friday that disappointed investors, underlining the industry's struggles with a sluggish economic recovery and the long hangover from the financial crisis."

The New York Times put the story on the front page of the B section, far right hand column.

"Solid Results at 2 Banks Bode Well For Industry"

"Revenue is back.

"Hard hit by new regulations and a sluggish economy, banks have struggled to revive top-line performance since the financial crisis, even as profits improved. But two of the nation's largest lenders, JPMorgan Chase and Wells Fargo, reported strong revenue growth on Friday, a surprise that could bode well for the rest of the industry and the broader economy."

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It Makes A Difference How You Word The Question

55% of respondents, when asked about the Federal government's assistance to the U.S. automakers who were in financial trouble, think the companies should have been left alone to succeed or fail on their own. 36% have the opposite view. The "no help" point of view is expressed by 42% of Democrats, 58% of Independents, and 73% of Republicans. [UT/NJCCpoll 2/2011]

A Gallup survey at roughly the same time found 51% against "financial bailout," while 44% approved. But if the language used to describe the government assistance is changed, so is the survey result. A Pew survey found 56% thought "government loans" to the car companies were "mostly good," while 36% thought they were "mostly bad."

According to 42% of Americans, the "energy situation" is very serious. In mid-2001 the number hit 58%. [Gallup]

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84% of African Americans do not believe that blacks and other minorities receive treatment equal to whites in the criminal justice system. [WP/ABC 4/12]

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43% of us are supportive of intermarriage of different races. As one would expect the strength of support is age-based. The breakdown is as follows:

63% of those 18-29
45% of those 30-49
35% of those 40-64
28% of those 65+ [Pew]

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An increasing number of children are being born of biracial parents in the United States. Something over 7 percent of children born in 2009 had parents of two or more races. This compares with 5% ten years earlier. [WP 4/26]

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Mississippi is the most religious state in the Union, with 59% falling into the category of “very religious.” Coming right behind are Utah at 57% and Alabama at 56%. At the other end of the spectrum are Vermont and New Hampshire in which only 23% are classified as “very religious.” [Gallup]

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Here is some history of college freshmen who entered school in 2006: 33% of all students transfer; 25% transfer more than once; 37% transfer in their 2nd year; 22% transfer in their 4th or 5th years; 43% transfer into a public two-year college. [National Student Clearing House Republican Center]

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In the ordinary course, WW does not recommend particular articles. However, I recommend to your attention an article entitled “In Nothing We Trust,” by Ron Fournier and Sophie Quinton, in the April 21, 2012 National Journal. It is well worth the twenty minutes it will take you to read it.

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ODDS AND ENDS

At least for some, if not many, the ubiquity and ease of email has changed what we would have thought of as the practice of social graces. Before email, when a response or circumstance dictated a response, a visit, a phone call, and/or a handwritten or typed note, would be the order of the day. This is no longer the case. Increasingly, an email replaces other methods of communication. There are some arguments in favor of this new way of communicating in these circumstances. It is easier, less complicated, and, since you can do it right away, you are more likely not to forget. On the other hand, it dumbs-down human interaction.

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At the end of February there were an estimated 2,459,646,000 internet users in the world. Estimates of the number of Facebook users range from 850 to 900 million. The estimates of the Twitter universe range from 300 – 462 million.

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Americans engage with cable, satellite and broadcast TV about 147 hours per month. They also spend about 4.5 hours viewing online video per month. The group that only watches free broadcast TV continues to drop, hitting a low of 5.8 million households in the 3rd quarter of 2011. [WP 4/24]

It's no surprise that self-described over-use of cell phones , the internet and social media is age-driven. Adults were asked whether they personally spend too much time using particular devices or outlets. Here are the percentages of each age group that say they spend too much time on that device/outlet.

	<u>18-29</u>	<u>30-49</u>	<u>50-64</u>	<u>65+</u>
Using internet	59	27	15	5
Cell phones or smart phones	58	30	13	8
Using social media sites	48	17	8	1

[Gallup]

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PRESIDENT OBAMA

With 6 months to go before the general election, the public's grade for the job President Obama has done so far is lower than that of 6 of the previous Presidents at this point in their first term.

The President's current job approval rating (April 16-22) in Gallup is 48% approval and 46% disapproval. The following is the list of 8.

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
Eisenhower	69	19
Clinton	56	37
Reagan	54	36
Nixon	54	37
GBush (II)	52	45
Obama	50	44 (4/22-24)
G Bush (I)	42	48
Carter	39	50

The following are several additional cuts at the President's job approval rating over the last 16 months.

	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN/ORC</u>
Apr 2012	49/46%	48/42%	50/45%	49/48%
Mar 2012	50/45%	41/47%	46/50%	51/45%
Feb 2012	---	50/43%	50/46%	50/48%
Jan 2012	48/46%	45/47% (CBS)	48/48%	47/51%
Dec 2011	46/48 %	44/46 % (CBS)	49/47%	49/48%
Oct 2011	44/51%	46/46%	42/54%	45/52%
Aug 2011	44/51%	48/47%	44/46 WP	44/54%
Jan 2011	53/41%	49/49%	54/43%	53/45%

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And here is how Obama is rated on a number of other issues.

	<u>WP/ABC 4/12</u>		<u>CBS/NYT 4/12</u>	
	App	Disapp	App	Disapp
The economy	44%	54%	44%	48%
Gas Prices	26%	65%	24%	64%
Housing & Mortgage Situation	---		36%	40%
Situation in Afghanistan	48%	43%	43%	42%
Int'l Affairs/For Policy	---		46%	36%

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Currently, 48% of us have positive feelings toward the President and 39% have negative feelings. A year ago it was, 50% to 36%, and two years before that, 50% to 38%. [NBC/WSJ 4/12]

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2012 REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION

22 people have been tempted or have joined the race
19 people have announced they are not running, quit the race, or have written it off

3 people are still running (sort of)

Mitt Romney
Newt Gingrich
Ron Paul

1 is the number of real players remaining at the moment.

The Goal – 1,142 Committed Republican Convention Delegates
by the time of the Republican National Convention,
August 27-30, 2012

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The contest is over. It effectively ended late on the evening of April 3rd, when Romney won all three of the primaries held that day in Wisconsin (most important because Santorum competed there), Maryland and DC. By then he had finished 1st in 23 states and 2nd in 9. Santorum had finished 1st in 11 states and 2nd in 13 states. Gingrich had won 1st place in 2 states and 2nd in 6. Paul had not won

a single state.

Subsequently, on April 24th there were 5 more contests. The chart below includes those contests.

	<u>1st place</u>	<u>2nd place</u>	<u>3rd place</u>	<u>4th place</u>	<u>Zero</u>
Romney	28	9	4	-	-
Santorum	11	13	8	4	1
Gingrich	2	7	12	17	3
Paul	0	10	14	15	2

The next series of contests was scheduled for April 24th, five States in the Northeast, including Connecticut, Rhode Island, Delaware, New York, and Pennsylvania, Santorum's home State. While the contest was over, the open question was how long Santorum would hang in the race, making it awkward for Romney to really turn to the general election.

The only State in the group in which Santorum had any chance was his home State of Pennsylvania. If he failed to win in Pennsylvania, he would have no basis for continuing the race, except to make Romney's life miserable, something that is not in Santorum's long-term interest.

As of early March, Santorum was leading Romney in Pennsylvania by 14 – 18 points. By the end of March, the spread had dropped to 6 points. And, as of the first week of April, a survey that had Santorum up by 18 points in early March now had Romney leading by 5 points.

By April 10th, Romney had accumulated 660 delegates, while Santorum trailed badly with 281 delegates. Gingrich and Paul together had 186 delegates. 144 are needed to nominate. As of April 25th, Romney has 844 delegates. [WP tally]

Santorum, seeing the handwriting on the wall, announced on April 11th that he was suspending his campaign. (Suspending the campaign allows him to continue to raise funds through his campaign committee.)

Santorum made an interesting run. In mid-December 2011 Santorum, when matched in a national survey against Romney, Gingrich and Paul, came in at 3% against Romney's 30%. [CBS]

In early March, Santorum led Romney 34% to 30%. By April 3rd he trailed Romney by 19 points, 44% to 25%. [CBS/NYT][ABC/WP]

Among the reasons why Santorum failed is that, while Republicans trusted Santorum more than Romney to handle social issues 29% to 27%, they trusted Romney over Santorum to handle the economy, 48% to 12%. [WP/ABC 4/12]

From the first day to the last, Santorum's basic positions did not change.

Now, for reasons that are not clear, Santorum is playing a bit hard to get. He has yet to endorse Romney, even after Romney won all five primaries on April 24th. The two men are scheduled to meet on May 4th. Perhaps he has decided to keep the world waiting breathlessly for his decision.

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It was inexplicable why Newt Gingrich was staying in the race so long. Then he announced he was staking the future of his campaign on the Delaware primary. It is not clear why, but following Romney's win there, his folks are putting out the word that he is planning to suspend his campaign on May 1st. It is going to be interesting to see how he handles the substantial debt his campaign has incurred.

Ron Paul will stay in to the end because he can, and because he entered the race to make the case for his libertarian point of view, and he continues to be able to do that. He likely garners more attention this way than he would as an about-to-be-former Member of the House of Representatives.

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At one time or another five different candidates led the race nationally.

Up until 8/24/11	Mitt Romney
8/25-10/2/11	Rick Perry
10/5 – 10/19/11	Mitt Romney
10/21 – 11/10/11	Herman Cain
11/21/11 – 1/2/12	Newt Gingrich
1/5 – 2/2/12	Mitt Romney
1/24-2/1/12	New Gingrich
2/4 – 11/12	Mitt Romney

2/13-20/12
2/29 to present

Rick Santorum
Mitt Romney

[Real Clear Politics]

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The Vice Presidential Pick

And so begins the “search” for a Vice Presidential nominee to be recommended to the Republican convention delegates by the Presidential nominee. As the vetting process has changed and expanded over the years it has become one of the most intrusive experiences that a person might endure.

These changes are often a function of some issue that came up in a previous election which had not been considered during vetting and then became a distraction during the general election .

The endless speculation by media commentators as to whom Romney might pick is in full bloom. Is it Senator Portman (Ohio) or Senator Rubio (Florida-Hispanic) or Governor Christie (New Jersey)?

Meanwhile the CNN/ORC poll asked Republicans to name their top pick. Here is the list. Leading the queue is Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, named by 26%. She is followed by Rick Santorum at 21%; Marco Rubio and Chris Christie at 14% each; Paul Ryan at 8%; Bobby Jindal at 5%; Bob McDonnell at 1%; and Rob Portman at <1%.

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THE MONEY

The following is an attempt to summarize campaign fundraising and expenditures for selected Presidential campaigns, national Party organizations, and the larger Super PACs. The data does not include State political parties, 501c (4)s, or 527s. Some of the Super PACs will also spend money on other Federal or State races.

Information in this issue of the Watch is based on information from the Center for Responsive Politics, which, frankly, is an easier source of gross fundraising and spending information than Federal Election Commission reports.

All of which is to say that the picture painted is pretty accurate, but not perfect.

The Obama campaign has raised \$191 million through the end of March. This is roughly \$46 million less than the \$237 million the campaign raised through the 1st quarter of 2008. In the first quarter of 2008 the campaign raised \$133 million. This year it raised \$52.2 million.

The campaign has spent \$89.9 million and has a net \$103.8 million on-hand on April 1st.

While they are running behind in their fundraising, the demand timing of the money is different than it was in 2008. There is no primary campaign. All of the campaign's expenditures are directed to the general election.

In the 2007-08 cycle (through 11/24/08) the Obama campaign raised \$778 million and spent \$760 million. To reach that amount, the campaign has to raise \$586.3 million between now and the 2012 election. This amounts to just under \$84 million per month.

None of the above includes the amount that has been raised for the Democratic National Committee, most of the resources of which will be dedicated to the President's re-election. Recently, the campaign informed the House and Senate leadership that they should not expect to receive any help from the DNC during this cycle. To date, the DNC has raised \$175.7 million and has \$38.4 million on hand.

The Romney campaign raised \$86.6 million through the end of March, and has spent \$76.6 million leaving a net \$10.1 as April 1st. The Romney campaign spent \$11.5 more than the other three Republican candidates in the field at the end of March.

Now the money chase begins in earnest. The Romney campaign has connected up with the Republican National Committee in a joint fundraising effort. Overall, in 2008 the Obama campaign spent just over twice as much during the whole cycle than did John McCain. That will not happen this time around.

FUNDRAISING/SPENDING/AVAILABLE CASH

2011-12 cycle
(in millions of dollars)

	<u>Raised</u>	<u>Spent</u>	<u>4/1 Net Cash</u>
<u>Republican Candidates</u>			
Romney	86.4	76.6	10.1
Santorum	20.6	18.8	-0.18
Gingrich	22.4	21.2	-3.1
Paul	36.8	25.0	7.8
<u>President Obama</u>			
Obama	191.7	89.9	103.8
<u>National Political Parties</u>			
Republican Nat Comm	141.4	95.3	36.8
Democratic Nat Comm	175.7	144.9	38.4

Super PACs

There are 434 Super PACs. In aggregate, they have raised \$203 million and spent \$91million.

	<u>Republican</u>	
Restore our Future (Romney)	52.0	42.0
Winning our Future (Gingrich)	23.9	16.7
Endorse Liberty (Paul)	3.7	4.0
Red,White & Blue (Santorum)	8.3	7.5
American Crossroads	28.1	1.0
Freedom Works for America	3.7	1.4
Club for Growth	5.9	1.6

Democratic

Priorities USA Action (Obama)	9.0	1.7
American Bridge 21 Century	8.8	--

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While Super PACs will continue to raise and spend money, the real financiers of large parts of the non-Party, non-candidate campaign activity will be non-profit organizations, which do not have to reveal their donors to the public.

There is some evidence that the public will never know the identify of those who donate to groups not affiliated with the candidates or political Parties during the 2012 campaign.

To the extent that this activity involves advertising in various forms of media, there are organizations which regularly monitor this kind of activity and their findings will be disclosed periodically. For example, the April 26th edition of the Washington Post carries a story about this form of advertising/spending. One of the examples used is the Crossroads organization, which includes Crossroads GPS, a 501c(4), and American Crossroads, a Super PAC.

Crossroads GPS, the 501c(4), has spent an estimated \$12.6 million on anti-Obama advertising. American Crossroads, the Super PAC, has only spent about \$300,000.

Undoubtedly, there will be periodic disclosures of this media spending for the duration of the campaign.

However, should a non-profit decide to play in the campaign by hiring hundreds of grassroots organizers in targeted areas and avoiding so-called “express advocacy” language, those expenditures will never be disclosed.

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THE PRESIDENTIAL GENERAL ELECTION

As you can see in the charts below, early polling on the general election contest does not show a contest in which the ultimate winner is obvious at the present time. In surveys that were completed after Romney was the obvious nominee (Santorum suspended his campaign), there is a range of results showing Obama up by as much as 8 points and others that show the race to be dead even.

<u>2012 Presidential General Election</u>			
<u>Survey</u>	<u>Last Date</u>	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Romney</u>
Fox	4/24	46	46
Nat/Journal	4/22	<u>47</u>	39
NBC/WSJ	4/17	<u>49</u>	43
CBS/NYT	4/17	46	46
PEW	4/15	<u>49</u>	45
ABC/WP	4/8	<u>51</u>	44
CNN/ORC	3/25	<u>54</u>	43
CBS/NYT	3/11	<u>47</u>	44
ABC/WP	3/10	47	<u>49</u>
NBC/WSJ	3/3	<u>50</u>	44
PEW	2/12	<u>52</u>	44
CBS/NYT	2/12	<u>48</u>	42
NBC/WSJ	12/11	<u>47</u>	45

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Here are the results of a PEW Research Center survey conducted April 4-15, broken down into categories. [Note: Following a series of Republican primary contests on April 3rd, the media began treating Romney as the Republican nominee.]

	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Romney</u>
Total	<u>49</u>	45
Men	44	<u>50</u>
Women	<u>53</u>	40
18-29	<u>61</u>	33
30-44	<u>49</u>	45

45-64	<u>47</u>	46	
65+	44	<u>50</u>	
White	39	<u>54</u>	
Black	<u>95</u>	2	
Hispanic	<u>67</u>	27	
Independent	42	<u>48</u>	
Certain	29	37	
Swing		33	
		12	Lean Obama 3%
			Chance Romney 10%
Pure	10		
		11	Lean Romney (5%)
			Chance Obama (6%)

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No surprise, Romney's positive intensity score among Republicans has grown since he became the obvious Republican nominee, while his Democratic score has fallen. Obama's scores have been relatively consistent in recent months.

Here are their current scores as reported by Gallup.

	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Democrats</u>
Obama	-47	+36
Romney	+21	-30

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The Electoral College

Here are cuts at the electoral college that WW will regularly reprint as we head toward the Presidential election. 270 Electoral votes are needed to win.

	Cook	Rothenberg	AP*
	<u>4/24</u>	<u>4/6</u>	<u>4/14</u>
Solid/Likely Dem	182	186	186
Lean Dem	45	51	56
Total	227	237	242

Toss Up	101	95	104
Lean GOP	19	15	32
Solid/Likely GOP	191	191	156
Total	210	206	188

(* AP total is off by 4 electoral votes)

Most commentators include the following in the list of "Toss Up" States: Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Nevada, Ohio, Virginia, Wisconsin, New Hampshire. Two additional States which are often added to this list are North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

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InTrade Prediction Market

As of April 26th, here are the bids for shares in Obama's re-election prospects. (The higher the bid the more likely the buyer believes the prospects of victory.)

	<u>1/12</u>	<u>2/16</u>	<u>3/20</u>	<u>4/26</u>
Barack Obama	50.6	60.3	59.9	60.2
Romney	--	--	--	38.2

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The support of younger people was important to the election of President Obama in 2008. In 2008, 18-29 year olds were 18% of those who voted and Obama won the group by 66% to 32%. Conversely, those 65 years of age and older constituted 16% of the electorate, and Obama lost them 45% to 53% for McCain.

Currently, 60% of 18-29 year olds are registered to vote. Among those who are registered, 56% say they will definitely vote, and Obama leads by 64% to 35%. Conversely, 92% of those 65 and older are registered; 77% say they are certain to vote; and they currently support Romney over Obama by 52% to 40%. [Gallup]

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President Obama took 67% of the Hispanic vote in the 2008 election. Since then the Hispanic population has continued to grow in an increased number of States. In a recent Fox News survey of Latino voters, Obama leads Romney by 69% to 14%. Romney is rated unfavorably by this community by about 2 to 1.

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There is much conversation about the role that women will play in the 2012 Presidential election. At the moment, the support of Obama over Romney by women is a very important part of Obama's lead in those polls which have him ahead in the race.

Women have been "dominant" in the groups that have supported Democratic nominees over the years. The following is a chart of their role in the Democratic vote, courtesy of "Inside Politics with Bill Schneider," published by Third Way.

	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Women Different (%)</u>
2008	57%	50%	+6
2004	52%	44%	+7
2000	53%	45%	+8
1996	54%	45%	+9
1992	46%	41%	+5
1988	48%	44%	+4
1984	45%	36%	+9
1980	44%	36%	+8

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Asked what issues will be extremely/very important to them as they consider who to vote for in the Presidential election, potential voters rank healthcare (80%) and unemployment (79%) at the top of their list. Closely following those issues are the budget deficit and national debt (77%) and gas prices (73%). Further down the list we find government policies concerning birth control at 44%. Not surprisingly, women are significantly more interested than in men in policies relating to birth control. [Gallup]

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In the mid-April NBC/WSJ survey the following series of questions was asked relating to the #1 issue going into this election – the economy. The question

asked was whether the actions listed did or would help or hurt economic conditions.

	<u>Helped</u>	<u>Hurt</u>
Effect of Obama's policies	36%	33%
If Obama is re-elected	31%	30%
If Romney elected	32%	24%

* * * * *

Gallup classifies 41% of registered voters as “very religious,” 27% as “moderately religious,” and 32% as “nonreligious.” The more religious a person is, the more likely they are to support Romney over Obama.

	<u>Romney</u>	<u>Obama</u>
Very religious	54%	37%
Moderately Religious	40%	54%
Nonreligious	30%	61%

* * * * *

With the economy being the #1 issue going into the general election season, a recent Gallup survey has Americans expressing the view that they have more confidence in Obama “to do or recommend the right thing for the economy” by 50% to 42% over Romney.

* * * * *

The number of people who describe themselves as supporters of the Tea Party Movement in April is 25%. In the last year it has been as high as 28%. The number saying they do not support the movement is currently at 64%. Of Republicans who are also Tea Party supporters, 56% say that the term “Republican” better describes them, while 37% say “Tea Party supporter” better describes.

As of April, only 16% of adults and registered voters describe themselves as supporters of the Occupy Wall Street Movement. This number has fallen from its high of 29% in November 2011. [NBC/WSJ 4/12]

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THE CONGRESS

Approval of the job being done by Congress reached 17% in mid-April , up from 12% in March. This is the highest rating that Gallup has found since July 2011, when 18% approved.

The Congress seems to be unable to get anything of significance done. The level of polarization within the two bodies has reached a level that makes them all but irrelevant in solving the country's problems.

The National Journal regularly rates the voting records of members of Congress. (2/25/12)

“...no Senate Democrat compiled a voting record to the right of any Senate Republican, and no Republican came down on the left of any Senate Democrat.”

In the last 30 years this has happened only once before – 1999.

Only six Republican House Members compiled records that were slightly to the left of the most conservative Democrat.

The following is a chart of the number of House Members and the number of Senators whose voting records fall between the most conservative and most liberal members of their respective bodies.

Most liberal Republican

Most conservative Democrat

House

1982 -- 344 members
1994 -- 252 members
2002 -- 137 members
2011 -- 15 members

Senate

1982 -- 58 members
1994 -- 34 members
2002 -- 7 members
2011 -- 0 members

* * * * *

THE SENATE

THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats	51
Republicans	47
Independents	2 (caucus Dem)

Former Governor Angus King's entry into the Maine Senate race as an Independent makes it likely that the Republicans will lose the seat being vacated by Olympia Snowe. King was a popular governor, and early polling suggests he will be the eventual winner. While he has stated that he will not announce which caucus he will join unless and until he is elected, the working assumption is that he will caucus with the Democrats. In the chart below this race is treated as Leaning Democratic.

While the seat will not switch Parties if he loses, incumbent Republican Senator Orrin Hatch (UT) easily avoided the fate of incumbent Republican Senator Robert Bennett, who lost his seat by failing to pick up sufficient delegate votes at the Republican State convention, recently concluded. Hatch reportedly received 59.4% of the vote, .6% percentage points short of the 60% needed to avoid a primary. There will be a two-person primary on June 26. In early polling Hatch leads by a substantial margin.

A number of smart people believe that control of the Senate will ultimately come down to the races in Nevada, Ohio and Maine. If the Democrats win two of the three they will retain control.

Here is how the 33 Senate elections, made up of 23 Democratic incumbents (including 2 Independents) and 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(8)</u>	<u>Democrat(8)</u>	<u>TossUp(8)</u>	<u>Republican(4)</u>	<u>Republican(5)</u>
California	<u>Connecticut</u>	Florida	<u>Arizona</u>	Mississippi
Delaware	Hawaii	Mass.	Indiana	Tennessee
Maryland	Maine	Missouri	Nebraska	<u>Texas</u>
Minnesota	Michigan	Montana	<u>No. Dakota</u>	Utah
New Jersey	Ohio	Nevada		Wyoming
New York	Pennsylvania	<u>New Mexico</u>		
Rhode Island	Washington	<u>Virginia</u>		
Vermont	West Virginia	<u>Wisconsin</u>		

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2012	30	37
Safe in 2012	8	5
Leaning in 2012	8	4
Total	46	46

Toss-ups 8 (2R/6D)

* * * * *

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

While Democrats seem to be doing well in fundraising and many of the candidates they have recruited seem strong, a net gain of 5 – 15 seats by the Democrats seems likely. However, the return of the House to Democratic control is beyond the pale.

The question of whether general angst might result in a number of Members, who otherwise seem safe, losing their seats remains open. General public angst is not diminishing.

In general, potential voters prefer a Democratic-controlled Congress to a Republican-controlled Congress by 46% to 44%. The following are the preferences reflected in the NBC/WSJ survey going back to April 2009.

	<u>Dem Control</u>	<u>GOP Control</u>
4/2012	46%	44%
1/2012	47%	41%
6/2011	44%	44%
10/2010	46%	44%
(Democrats lost control of the House in the 2010 election)		
1/2010	41%	44%
4/2009	48%	39%

WW has regularly reprinted the “House Dashboard” published by the Cook Political Report. The data from January 20, 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 (other than 1/20/11) reflects the Cook’s current Competitive House Race Chart through April 19, 2012 . [As always, thanks to “The Cook Political Report.”]

THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

	Republicans	242	
	Democrats	191	
	Vacancies	2	
	<u>1/20/11</u>	<u>3/15/12</u>	<u>4/19/12</u>
TOTAL Dem	193	---	---
Solid Dem	150	---	---
Likely Dem	27	18	17
Lean Dem	12	14	14
Toss-up	10	21	22
D	4	8	8
R	6	13	14
Lean GOP	15	21	19
Likely GOP	38	29	27
Solid GOP	183	---	---
TOTAL GOP	242	---	---

“The Rothenberg Political Report” has posted a report that deals with the entire House. It reports the following:

	<u>1/12</u>	<u>2/12</u>	<u>3/12</u>	<u>4/6/12</u>
Safe Democrat	166	164	164	162
Competitive	78	78	79	80
Safe Republican	191	193	192	193

* * * * *

RESTAURANTS

Mintwood Place

1813 Columbia Road NW

Washington, DC 20009

202-234-6732

(Not available through Open Table)

Amy and Peter took Debbie and me to Mintwood. We will go again.

As you enter the restaurant there are two primary sections. To the left is the bar area, which has a long traditional bar and a series of tall bar tables. To the right, separated from the bar area by a partial wall, is the dining room. Overall, the restaurant seats roughly 130 people. The dining area is a combination of various sized tables and banquette seating on the far wall.

The kitchen is straight ahead as you enter and is open, in case you want to spend a bit of time watching food preparation.

The serving personnel were particularly well informed about the various dishes being offered on the then-current menu.

If there is any downside to this restaurant it is that it is quite loud. There is a bit of a din.

The French bread that was offered up was particularly good.

I was also taken by the speed in which the plates were removed after a particular dish was completed.

Amy started with Clams, ramp and spinach soup, followed by a main course of Skate wing, Provencal, socca and caponata.

Debbie began with Burrata, asparagus and Spring garlic, and chose as her main course Wood-grilled soft shell crab, spring Vidalia, quinoa, which is available either an appetizer or a main course.

Peter started with Crab imperial flammekueche, and then for his entrée the Whole boneless dorade, braised fennel, olive picholine olives.

I opened with an Iceberg salad with blue cheese dressing, and then had an excellent Cast-iron chicken.

For dessert, we all shared Rhubarb & strawberry crumble a la mode.

The men's room has fun, rather old-style, fixtures. The urinal is a white ceramic floor to mid-height model, separated from the rest of the room by a partial wall that goes to shoulder height. The washbasin is a white ceramic trough that is attached to the wall at waist height, and has two silver faucets with a round-necked water tube from which water comes forth. The commode is also white ceramic of similar style to the urinal and washbasin located in the corner. The wastebasket is a wooden cask next to the washbasin, under a corner- connected shelf on two legs.

The walls are white ceramic tiles up to about shoulder height, and the rest of the walls and ceiling are painted in a light, dull yellow-like color. The floor is white ceramic interlaced strips with tiny black intersections.

The opaque glass-centered door is edged with dark wood, as is the door frame.

Valet parking is available at the corner just before the restaurant, when you turn on to Columbia Road.

Mike

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

mberman@dubersteingroup.com