

*Mike Berman's*

# WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

No. 131

March 1, 2014

[Editor's Note: The Washington Watch has been on hiatus since the November 2013 issue.

Future issues of the Watch will be shorter and will include some other changes.

The restaurant reviews will continue, but it will be another issue or two before new reviews appear.]

## State of the Nation

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## President Obama

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## Congress

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## The Races

U.S. Senate, U.S House, President

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## An Evolution on Gay Rights

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## Wagshal's

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## State of the Nation

In the fourth week of January, the NBC/WSJ poll found that 63% of us think the country is on the wrong track. In the third week of February, the Econ/You Gov survey found the wrong track number to be 62%. The same survey found 60% claiming that view in January. In October 2013, the NBC/WSJ found the wrong track number to be 78%, and Econ/You Gov came up with 66%. The right direction number in both surveys sat in the high 20s.

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The official unemployment rate for January 2014 is 6.6%. However, the real unemployment rate is 12.7%. The latter number includes the so-called “marginally attached” plus those who are working part-time, but would like to be working full time. This is, of course, a substantial change from January 2010, when the unemployment rate was 9.8% and the real unemployment rate was 16.7%.

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In the CNN/ORG poll, 36% rate economic conditions in the country as good, while 64% describe them as poor. While these are not great numbers, they are substantially better than they were when Obama took office in March 2009, when 13% described conditions as good, while 89% described them as bad. [CNN/ORG 2/14]

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Americans were asked whether the current economy “works well” or “does not work” for them and their families and various other groupings. Of the five groupings tested, the economy is seen as working well for “the wealthy” and for “men.”

The most dramatic schism is the difference in how the economy is seen as working for women and how it is seen as working for men. Women are considered to be behind men

- by 20 points by Americans generally
- by 26 points by women
- by 12 points by men
- by 27 points by Hispanics

- by 12 points by African Americans
- by 20 points by white
- by 30 points by liberals
- by 9 points by conservatives

Americans generally say the economy

	<u>Works Well For</u>	<u>Does not work well</u>
The wealthy	81%	6%
The middle class	22%	40%
Those living in poverty	13%	72%
You and your family	37%	22%
Men	53%	11%
Women	33%	25%

Women say the economy

	<u>Works Well for</u>	<u>Does not work well</u>
The wealthy	83%	5%
The middle class	20%	41%
Those living in poverty	13%	71%
You and your family	36%	24%
Men	56%	10%
Women	30%	29%

Men say the economy

	<u>Works Well for</u>	<u>Does not work well</u>
The wealthy	78%	8%
The middle class	24%	40%
Those living in poverty	12%	71%
You and your family	39%	19%
Men	49%	13%
Women	37%	21%

Hispanics say the economy

	<u>Works Well for</u>	<u>Does not work well</u>
The wealthy	87%	7%
The middle class	24%	38%
Those living in poverty	13%	68%
You and your family	37%	20%
Men	63%	11%
Women	36%	26%

African Americans say the economy

	<u>Works Well for</u>	<u>Does not work well</u>
The wealthy	83%	3%
The middle class	26%	26%
Those living in poverty	10%	78%
You and your family	41%	21%
Men	47%	20%
Women	30%	26%

Whites say the economy

	<u>Works Well for</u>	<u>Does not work well</u>
The wealthy	80%	6%
The middle class	19%	44%
Those living in poverty	14%	71%
You and your family	37%	21%
Men	52%	10%
Women	32%	25%

Liberals say the economy

	<u>Works Well for</u>	<u>Does not work well</u>
The wealthy	85%	8%
The middle class	21%	42%
Those living in poverty	6%	85%
You and your family	39%	21%
Men	58%	8%
Women	28%	33%

## Conservatives say the economy

	<u>Works Well for</u>	<u>Does not work well</u>
The wealthy	73%	9%
The middle class	24%	37%
Those living in poverty	16%	61%
You and your family	37%	22%
Men	49%	14%
Women	40%	21%

[NBC/WSJ 1/14]

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From 1990 to 2012, there has been a rather dramatic increase in the percentage of Americans who say they have no religious affiliation.

	<u>1990</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>% Increase</u>
Total	7.7%	19.7%	260%
Conservatives	5.0	9.1	180%
Liberals	14.6	39.6	270%
75+	3.8	7.1	185%
45-54	5.9	16.0	270%
25-34	10.1	28.6	280%
18-24	9.7	32.0	330%

[NJ 2/1/14]

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Over the last six years there has been a dramatic shift in the political composition of the 50 U.S States from Democratic to Republican.

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>
Total Democratic	35	33	22	18	19	17
Total Republican	5	5	10	17	12	14
Competitive	10	12	18	15	19	19

[Gallup 1/14]

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65% of Americans are dissatisfied with our system of government and how it works. And, that dissatisfaction with government in general, the Congress, and

politicians is cited by 21% as the single most important problem facing the country today. [Gallup 1/14]

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Neither of the two major political parties has the same priorities for the country as do Americans generally.

	<u>Republican Party</u>	<u>Democratic Party</u>
Same priorities	35%	38%
Not same priorities	59%	57%

[NYT/CBS 2/14]

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### **President Obama**

The public's grade for the job President Obama is doing (as found by Gallup 2/19-21/14) is 44% approval/51% disapproval. Of the 5 most recent, two-term Presidents at this point in their second term, Obama's current approval rating is better than George Bush II and Richard Nixon. The list of 6 follows:

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
Reagan	63	26 (3/10/86)
Eisenhower	51	33 (3/11/58)
Clinton	63	31 (3/9/98)
<u>Obama</u>	44	53 (2/24/14)
G Bush (II)	38	60 (3/1/06)
Nixon	25	64 (3/4/74)

Approval of the job being done by Obama hit a new low in the most recent NYT/CBS survey (for that survey). Only 41% approve of the job he is doing and 51% disapprove. [NYT/CBS 2/14]

<u>Date</u>	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN/ORC</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>
Feb 2014	xx	xx	xx	41/51%
Jan 2014	43/51%	45/52%	45/51%	46/47% (CBS)
Dec 2013	43/54%	43/55%	41/56%	42/50%
Oct 2013	42/51%	48/49%	43/53%	46/49% (CBS)
Sept 2013	45/50%	47/47%	45/52%	46/46%
July 2013	45/50%	49/44%	xxx	48/45% (CBS)
Jan 2013	52/44%	55/41%	55/43%	51/41%

Obama's approval among Hispanics has dropped from 75% to 52% over the last year. [Gallup 12/13]

On not a single one of the following personal characteristics does Obama have a positive score: strong leader (48%); understands problems of people like you (47%); is honest and trustworthy (49%). His positive rating on the latter characteristic has only been lower in November 2013, when 47% had a positive view.

And, on specific policy areas his approval rating is well into negative territory.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
The economy	40	49 (Quinnipiac 1/14)
Foreign policy	43	56 (ABC/WP 1/14)
Implement new health care law	37	59 (ABC/WP 1/14)

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59% of Americans say they are disappointed with the Obama Presidency "so far." 40% are satisfied. [NYT/CBS 2/14]

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There is a considerable hue and cry in some quarters about Obama's announcement that, if the Congress is going to continue to do little or nothing, he intends to use his Executive Orders to get as much done as he can.

At least through the first five years of his tenure as President, Obama trails substantially the most recent two-term Presidents before him in the number of Executive Orders issued.

	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Five Years</u>	<u>Total tenure</u>
Obama	167	---
Bush GW	197	291
Clinton	238	364
Reagan	256	381
Carter	320 (thru 4 years)	---

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The President (as well as Democrats in the Congress) continues to be burdened by the reality that at no time since the Affordable Care Act (more generally known as Barack Obama’s health care plan or Obama Care) was passed have there been more Americans who thought it was a “totally good idea” than thought it was a “totally bad idea.”

In December 2013, the number who thought it was a “totally bad idea” hit a new high, when 50% expressed that view. At the same time 34% said it was a “totally good idea.” In January, “totally bad” topped “totally good” by 48% to 34%. [NBC/WSJ 1/14]

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## 2016

The following have talked or been talked about as potential candidates in 2016.

<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Democrats</u>
Jeb Bush	Joe Biden
Chris Christie	Hillary Clinton
Bobby Jindal	Andrew Cuomo
Rand Paul	Kristin Gillibrand
Marco Rubio	Amy Klobuchar
Paul Ryan	Martin O’Malley
Mike Pence	Elizabeth Warren
John Kasich	Howard Dean
Scott Walker	
Ted Cruz	



64% of the public at large would like to see Hillary Clinton run for President. 31% would like to see Joe Biden run for President. 82% of Democratic voters would like to see Hillary Clinton run.

Among Republicans, views about their potential candidate for President are more diverse. 33% would like to see Paul run; 31% would like to see Bush run; 29% say Chris Christie; 28% say Rubio; and 22% say Cruz. [NYT/CBS 2/14]

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During January 20-23, 2014, the ABC/WP survey found Clinton leading Christie 53% to 41%. (This survey came after the Bridge fiasco bit Christie. Christie's favorability rating had fallen from 52% in June 2013 to 35% in this survey.)

Among potential Republican primary voters

Ryan	18%
Bush	18%
Christie	14%
Cruz	12%
Paul	11%
Rubio	10%

In the national Democratic primary -- with 73% of the Democratic primary vote -- Clinton easily tops Biden and Warren, and everyone else who dreams about entering the race.

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At the same time, January 21-23, 2014, the Purple Poll (Purple Strategies) interviewed New Hampshire voters on their 2016 preferences.

		<u>Total</u>	<u>Dem. Pri</u> <u>Voters</u>	<u>GOP Pri</u> <u>Voters</u>	<u>2016 NH</u> <u>Primary</u>
Obama	Fav	40	88	12	
	Unfav	52	6	84	---
	NS	7	6	4	

Clinton	Fav	45	89	16	68
	Unfav	46	6	76	
	NS	9	5	7	
Warren	Fav	29	62	10	13
	Unfav	41	12	63	
	NS	31	25	27	
Biden	Fav	31	69	9	6
	Unfav	51	12	80	
	NS	18	19	11	
Christie	Fav	31	14	44	17
	Unfav	42	60	34	
	NS	27	27	22	
Bush	Fav	28	4	49	13
	Unfav	42	73	23	
	NS	30	23	28	
Jindal	Fav	19	4	32	5
	Unfav	29	52	17	
	NS	52	44	51	
Paul	Fav	33	4	53	18
	Unfav	38	74	19	
	NS	29	22	28	
Cruz	Fav	21	2	37	7
	Unfav	37	65	22	
	NS	41	33	40	
Romney	Fav	41	6	66	25
	Unfav	50	88	25	
	NS	9	6	9	

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## **The Congress**

12% of Americans approve of the way Congress is doing its work. This is slightly higher than the all-time Gallup low of 9% in October 2013. The high point of the last 16 months was 15% approval in late 2012. Approval by Republicans is at 23%, but among Democrats it is 7%.

Of perhaps greater import, the percentage of Americans who think their Member of Congress deserves re-election (46%) has fallen to a new low. The high point in the last 22 years was 69% in 1998. Furthermore, the percentage of Americans who think that most Members of Congress deserve re-election (17%) has also fallen to an all-time low.

42% say they will vote for the Republican candidate in their Congressional district, while 39% say they will vote for the Democratic candidate. [NYT/CBS]

Much is being made of late of the number of Members of the Senate and the House who so far this cycle have announced their retirement or are otherwise leaving one body or the other. The latest is John Dingell (D-MI), the longest serving member of either body, who announced his retirement earlier this week.

The reality is that there is nothing unusual about the number of departures, at least so far. The chart that follows shows why Members depart. For example, so far in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, 12 of the 45 House Members who have announced their retirement are doing so to run for other office – 12 for the Senate.

In fact, the number of departures in the 111<sup>th</sup> (128) and the number of departures in the 112<sup>th</sup> (106), well exceed the number that are likely to depart in the 113<sup>th</sup>.

# Congressional Departure List: 107<sup>th</sup>-113<sup>th</sup> Congresses

	113 <sup>th</sup> 2013- 2014		112 <sup>th</sup> 2011- 2012		111 <sup>th</sup> 2009- 2010		110 <sup>th</sup> 2007- 2008		109 <sup>th</sup> 2005- 2006		108 <sup>th</sup> 2003- 2004		107 <sup>th</sup> 2001- 2002	
	House	Senate	House	Senate	House	Senate	House	Senate	House	Senate	House	Senate	House	Senate
Appointed to Senate	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Appointed to Other Office	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	2	-
Elected to Other Office	1	-	7	-	6	1	4	1	6	1	5	-	8	1
Running for Senate	12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Running for Other Office	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Defeated in Primary	-	-	13	1	4	2	3	-	2	-	2	-	8	1
Defeated in Gen. Election	-	-	27	1	54	2	19	4	21	6	7	1	8	3
Defeated for Other Office	-	-	6	-	11	-	4	-	10	-	9	1	11	-
Retiring/Retired	20	6	25	10	19	8	25	5	11	4	16	7	18	5
Expelled	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Defeated in Runoff Election	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
Resigning/Resigned	6	4	11	2	9	8	5	1	5	1	4	-	4	-
Died	1	1	1	1	1	2	7	1	1	-	-	-	5	1
TOTAL- each house	45	11	91	15	105	23	68	12	60	12	44	9	65	11
TOTAL- Both houses	56		106		128		80		72		53		76	

Thanks to Nathan Gonzales, The Rothenberg Political Report

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Party control of the U.S. Senate is in play. Of the 55 current Democratic seats, including two independents, three seats will switch unless something extraordinary occurs, Montana, West Virginia, and South Dakota.

There are 7 Toss-Up seats, 5 of which are currently held by Democrats and 2 by Republicans. If the Republicans hold on to their 2 Toss-Up seats they need to pick up 3 of the Democratic seats to gain control or 2 to guarantee that V.P Biden will be spending a lot of time in the Senate.

Of the two Republican toss-up seats, a Republican observer, in whom I have great confidence, said he was confident that McConnell will pull it out, "he will bring a gun to a knife fight."

#### THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats	53
Republicans	45
Independents	2

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2014	34	30
Safe in 2014	11	13
Leaning in 2014	2	3
Begich (AK)		Walsh (MT)
Shaheen (NH)		West Virginia
		South Dakota
Total	47	46

#### Toss-ups

5 Democrats	2 Republicans
Iowa	McConnell (KY)
Landrieu (LA)	Georgia
Hagen (NC)	
Pryor (AR)	
Michigan	

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There is no chance that the Democrats will regain control of the House. In fact, an argument can be made that the Republicans will increase their margin of control.

### THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Democrats 201

Republicans 234

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Safe in 2014	161	197
Leaning	28 (1Dem seat)	34 (includes 2 Democrat seats)
	<u>Toss Ups</u>	
	11	4

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NOTE: As is probably evident to readers of the Watch, I have particularly high regard for Charlie Cook and his work . On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, Charlie published a column which was a bit different than those he usually writes. It is reprinted below – without his permission.

#### My Evolution on Gay Rights

By Charlie Cook, January 23, 2014 ([nationaljournal.com/the-cook-report](http://nationaljournal.com/the-cook-report))

As recently as a decade ago, the marriage-equality movement looked like a long, tough slog. Today, about 55 percent of Americans support same-sex marriage; it is now legal in 17 states, seven of those having acted in the past year alone. The civil-rights journey for African-Americans took more than a century. The women's suffrage movement began in colonial days and wasn't finished until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. But the equal-rights movement for gays gained momentum in what seems like the blink of an eye, beginning with the Massachusetts Supreme Court's 2003 decision allowing same-sex marriage. Indeed, it's hard to trace much public political advancement before the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City's Greenwich Village. This movement has snowballed at a dizzying pace.

As a straight, ideologically middle-of-the-road, white male, born in the South in the early 1950s, I had little predisposition to support same-sex marriage. For most of my life, until the 1990s, I didn't really think much about it. My feelings were characterized more by ambivalence than skepticism. The issue didn't seem terribly relevant to me, a feeling that was probably pretty commonplace at that time.

My personal odyssey on gay rights started in 1998 when I offered a job to a woman I had met a few months earlier. She was the political director for a major national advocacy group. The woman was smart, highly professional, and impressive. I didn't have any idea about her sexual orientation. It certainly wasn't an issue for me. I just never thought about it. Before she accepted the offer, she met with my two female coworkers and asked, "Would it matter to Charlie that I am gay?" They replied that it wouldn't be an issue.

She came to work with us and became not just a colleague but also a close friend. And, like many semi-clueless straight guys, I also came to learn a lot about the challenges facing gay people, even those who live in urban areas and have supportive bosses. In 1999, I went to a commitment ceremony, my first, for her and her partner on the Eastern Shore. At that time, not only were they unable to be legally united, but I couldn't put her partner on our company health care plan – even if I paid for it. This wasn't just an issue of fairness; it also put small businesses like *The Cook Political Report* at a competitive disadvantage. It was easy to understand why business got far ahead of politicians on this issue.

Last year, this couple had a long overdue – and legal – wedding in the District of Columbia. Political operatives in both parties and journalists from every major news organization in town attended. Everything was as normal as any other wedding. Her spouse is also now fully covered by our health care plan.

To me, one of the keys to this gigantic change in public attitudes is role models. As more and more straight Americans came to be aware of, and got to know, gay couples – homeowners, many in longtime, committed relationships, and parents living as “normal” a life as anyone else – it just began to seem not different. It was no longer so unusual, so “unnatural” or, for some, so threatening. And in every region; in conservative, moderate, and liberal families; among Democrats and Republicans; across all economic, social and racial lines, it just started to be more common. A national conservative activist recently told me of visiting campus chapters of an extremely conservative organization in a Southern state, and asking students about same-sex marriage. None seemed to have a problem with it. Recently, a very high-level GOP operative confided that he couldn't think of a national race where he would use the gay-marriage issue against a Democrat. That's an amazing departure from just 10 years ago, when the issue was used as a powerful political wedge.

My kids grew up with this coworker friend and her partner, who came to our house for cookouts, birthdays, and office parties, and I don't remember ever having

any conversation with them about it – or about the gay couple living next door (who are far better neighbors than their predecessors). Years later, when one of our sons told me of participating in a class debate on same-sex marriage, with some trepidation I asked him which side he took (you never know about teenage boys). He replied indignantly, “For it, of course,” offended that I would even think he might not be. I smiled to myself, thinking, *We raised him right*. To our children, having gay friends was no different than having African-American, Latino, Asian, left-handed, short, or tall friends. It just didn’t matter. I rather doubt that my late parents or grandparents would have had quite that same view.

In my opinion, what has happened is attitudinal change based on generations and personal life experiences. Almost every family has a son or daughter, niece, nephew, cousin, next-door neighbor, coworker, or classmate who is gay, and most likely quite a few at that. We’ve come to think it’s as normal as anything else. Because it is.

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**Wagshal’s**  
**Original Deli - 4855 Massachusetts Ave .NW**  
**Market – 4855 Massachusetts Ave. NW**  
**Wagshal’s On New Mexico – 3201 New Mexico Ave NW -**  
**Spring Valley Catering – 4330 –A Rear 48<sup>th</sup> St NW**  
**Washington, DC 20016**  
**202-363-5698 (New Mexico No. 202-3630893)**

First there was the Deli, then the Market, then Spring Valley Catering, and finally Wagshal’s on New Mexico.

The Deli is like a traditional deli, with cold meats, salads, and a very long list of sandwiches that are prepared to order. There is a fresh baked goods section, ranging from fancy cakes to bagels, rolls and breads. There are refrigerated prepared meals, and individual soups and other treats; a hot bar with soups and other items; a variety of cold drinks (including Dr. Brown’s Diet Cream Soda); and wine and beer. I recommend the stuffed baked potatoes, and if you have never tried a brisket sandwich, this is the place to try it.

You place an order for a sandwich or cut meats at a counter and get a number. Your number is called when it is ready.



It can get pretty crowded, especially around noon time, and there is not a lot of room to hang around.

If the weather is half-way decent, there are a few tables and chairs set up on the sidewalk.

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The Market offers a vast array of meats, fresh seafood, game, and sausages. There is a very good salad bar, and a variety of fresh vegetables and fruits. There are baked goods and pastries, some frozen prepared items, various bottled non-alcoholic drinks, and bouquets of fresh flowers.

Presiding over the market is Pam Ginzberg, the lead butcher. If you have some special cut that you want, if it is humanly possible, Pam will carve it. Watching her operate is worth a visit.

From 10:30 a.m. till 2:30 p.m. you can order good-sized hamburgers, turkey burgers, and ¼ pound hot dogs are prepared while you wait.

In decent weather there is an array of fresh vegetables, obviously on their first stop after coming out of the ground or being harvested.

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Wagshal's on New Mexico is a modern combination of the Deli and the Market. It is larger than the Deli and the Market combined. You can find anything from corned beef to prime steaks to lox to various salads. There are fresh bakery goods, pastries, fresh fruits, and vegetables. Large coolers contain a variety of prepared items, cheese, and smoked fish.

When you order a sandwich you get a number and one of the staff will find you with your order.

One of the things that makes the new Wagshal's particularly inviting is that a number of the long-time staff from the Deli are now a part of their staff, so if you were/are a regular at the Deli you are welcomed in a familiar way.

One of the advantages of the new Waghsal's is the large number of tables and chairs both inside and outdoors.

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I have not tried Spring Valley Catering, but have talked with others who have used their services and offerings, and who have been very pleased.

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All of these locations have parking lots available. During the daytime, the lot at Wagshal's on New Mexico is a pay lot, but they will stamp your parking ticket.

*Mike*

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