

Real *Mike Berman's*

# WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

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## 6 days until the Election Day

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## State of the Nation

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of October the NBC/WSJ poll found that 65% of us think the country is on the wrong track, while 25% of Americans think the country is on the right track.

Not since June 2013 have more than 30% of Americans thought the country was on the right track. During that same 16 month period the percentage of Americans who think the country is on the wrong track has ranged from a high of 78% in October 2013 to a low of 61% in July 2013.

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“The lower half of U.S. households, ranked by wealth, held just 1% of total wealth last year (2013) down from 3% in 1989.” [WSJ 10/18 – Janet Yellen]

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The official BLS unemployment rate for September 2014 is 5.9 %, down a point from the previous month and down 1.3% points from a year ago. If one takes into account the total unemployed + those marginally attached to the labor force + those working part-time who want full-time work, the rate is 11.3 %. This is down from 13.1% a year ago. 2.7% of the work force has been unemployed for 15 weeks or more, down from 3.7% a year ago.

In the third week of October Gallup found an unemployment rate of 6.3%. It also found an underemployment rate (unemployed +those working part-time, but wanting full time) of 15.0%, down a touch from mid-September.

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When asked what they think are the most important issues facing working women in this country today, Americans state that the top four issues are equal pay/fair pay (39%), equal opportunity for promotion (20%), availability of jobs (8%), and more respect in the workplace (8%). On these issues, women, men, and working women all have the same point of view, with the exception that working women rate “equal pay” at 42%, while men rate it at 37%.

However, on three issues which rank further down the list there are real differences.

<u>Issue</u>	<u>All</u>	<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>	<u>Working women</u>
Access to/better childcare	7%	10%	3%	12%
Balancing work/home life	6	9	3	10
Healthcare	5	7	3	9

On one issue in the same category there is agreement.

Maternity/Family leave	3	3	3	2
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76% of Americans are dissatisfied with the way this country's political system is working – or not working – as the case may be. 22% are satisfied. Of those who are dissatisfied, 65% say the two Parties are equally guilty. 17% place most of the blame on Republicans in Congress, and 16% blame Obama and the Democrats in Congress. [WP/ABC 10/14]

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Support for the Tea Party remains at 24%, down from its high of 32% leading up to the 2010 election. Support fell as low as 21% leading up to the 2012 election. Opposition to the Tea Party has risen to 31%, slightly higher than the previous high. [Gallup 10/14]

But the reality is that the Tea Party has already won its fight by moving the Republican Party in an ever more conservative direction.

And, 73% of Tea Party Republicans are extremely/highly motivated to vote in November. This is a higher level than Republicans generally and of all other Americans. [Gallup 10/14]

60% of Tea Party members would rather have a candidate who sticks to his/her positions, while 32% prefer someone who compromises. The “no compromises” position is shared by 54% of Republicans and 32% of Democrats. [NBC/WSJ 10/14]

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58% of Americans believe that the two major political Parties do not do an adequate job of “representing the American people,” and therefore, there is a need for a 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. political party. Of this group, 46% identify as Republicans, 47% identify as Democrats, and 71% identify as Independents.

35% of us say that the two major Parties do an adequate job. [Gallup 9/14]

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50% of Americans have negative feelings about the Republican Party, while 43% have negative feelings about the Democratic Party. [NBC/WSJ 10/14]

The two major political Parties in the U.S. are trusted equally, 39% to 39%, to cope with the main problems the nation faces over the next few years.

The Republican Party, rather than the Democratic Party is seen as  
\* Having the right ideas about the size and role of the Federal government –  
by 40% to 33%

The Republican Party is more trusted to handle  
\* The economy – by 42% to 37%  
\* Immigration issues – by 40% to 37%  
\* The federal budget deficit – by 43% to 34%  
\* The conflict with ISIS – by 42% to 28%

The Democratic Party, rather than the Republican Party is seen as  
\* Better representing your own personal values – by 44% to 36%  
\* More concerned with the needs of people like you – by 47% to 33%  
\* Better understanding the economic problems the people in this country are  
having – by 42% to 34%

The Democratic party is more trusted to handle  
\* Health care – by 45% to 37%  
\* Helping the middle class – by 48% to 33%  
\* Issues that are especially important to women – by 52% to 25%

The Democratic party is closer to the public's own opinions on  
\* Abortion - by 48% to 33%  
\* Gay marriage – 48% to 31%

[WP/ABC 10/14]

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28% of us believe it is better when separate political parties control the White House and the Congress. 30% think is better when the same party controls both ends of the mall. The rest of us don't think it makes any difference. [Gallup 10/14]

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71.4% of Americans 18 years of age and older own/use so-called smart phones. At the other end of the spectrum, less than half of those 65 years of age and older own smartphones. The highest usage is among those 25-34 years of age. Here is the usage scorecard.

25-34 years	86.2%
18-24 years	85%
35-44 years	80.7%
45-54 years	70.8%
55-64 years	61.1%
65+ years	46.3%

[Nielsen 9/14]

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Only 40% of us have confidence in the mass media to “accurately, and fairly” report the news. [Gallup 9/14]

Pew Research has surveyed Americans as to whether they trust various news sources about government and politics. The respondents are broken down by their own description of whether they are “consistently liberal, mostly liberal, ideologically mixed, mostly conservative or consistently conservative.”

The chart below reflects the percentage of those who are “consistently liberal,” “consistently conservative,” and “ideologically mixed” who trust the referenced media.

For example, in the case of NPR, 72% of those who are “consistently liberal,” 3% of those who are “consistently conservative,” and 19% of those who are “ideologically mixed” trust NPR.

<u>Publication</u>	<u>Consistently Liberal</u>	<u>Consistently Conservative</u>	<u>Ideologically Mixed</u>
NPR	72%	3%	19
BBC	69	12	28
PBS	71	8	31
NYTimes	62	3	29
NBC News	56	16	54

CNN	56	14	61
ABC	52	18	56
MSNBC	52	7	39
CBS	51	16	50
Wash Post	48	33	23
FOX News	6	<u>88</u>	47
Sean Hannity program	0	62	6
Russ Limbaugh prog	0	58	6
Glen Beck program	0	51	4

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### President Obama

The public's grade on President Obama's job approval (as found by Gallup 10/26) is 42% approval/52% disapproval. During the 23<sup>rd</sup> quarter of Obama's Administration his job approval averaged 41.5%, the lowest quarterly average of his tenure other than the 11<sup>th</sup> quarter and the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2011, when he averaged 41%.

The WP/ABC survey found the President's job approval at 43% up from 40% earlier in the month.

In assessing specific elements of his job performance, it recorded the lowest job approval of his tenure on immigration (29%), international affairs (37%), and the threat of terrorism (42%). His approval scores on implementation of the new health care law (35%) and the economy (44%) have been somewhat lower.  
[ABC/WP 10/14]

<u>Date</u>	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN/ORC</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>
Oct 2014	xxx	43/51% ALL	xxx	xxx
Oct 2014	42/52% RV	39/57% LV	xxx	42/50% (CBS) ALL
Sept 2014	40/54%	42/51%	44/52	40/50%
August 2014	40/54%	xxx	xxx	41/50% (CBS)
June 2014	42/53%	xxx	43/55%	40/54%
Jan 2014	43/51%	45/52%	45/51%	46/47% (CBS)
July 2013	45/50%	49/44%	xxx	48/45% (CBS)
Jan 2013	52/44%	55/41%	55/43%	51/41%

Among the last five Presidents to serve two full terms, Obama's approval rating at this time ranks 4<sup>th</sup>.

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
Clinton	65	32 (10/25/98)
<b>Reagan</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>29 (10//27/86)</b>
Eisenhower	57	27 (10/20/58)
<u>Obama</u>	42	52 (10/26/14)
G W Bush	37	58 (10/22/06)

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In many ways, President Obama is the “victim” of a confluence of events: in no particular order, they include Israel vs. Hamas; revolution in Syria; the failures of the Iraqi government; ISIS; the Ukraine; the immigration debate/the Border Patrol; the 2014 Congressional and gubernatorial campaigns in which his performance in office has become an issue; Congressional inaction; sequester; continuing revelation of the inadequacy of government contractors; the alleged politicizing of the IRS; the beginning enrollment under the Affordable Care Act; corporate inversions; problems in the Department of Homeland Security; issues with the Secret Service; problems at the Veterans Administration; and finally the Ebola scare and the realization that the CDC is not as prepared as it thought it was; and the intensity of partisanship on both sides.

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The question on which everyone has an opinion is whether or not Obama's lack of popularity will be the cause of anticipated Democratic losses in the Senate and in the House.

The current WP/ABC survey (10/26/14) paints the following picture. The question asked is: “Will/was one reason for your vote for Congress (be) to express (support for) Obama, to express (opposition to) Obama, or is/was Obama not a factor in your choice?”

	<u>Support</u>	<u>Opposition</u>	<u>Not a factor</u>
2014 (Obama)	16%	26%	56%
2006 (Bush)	17	31	50
1998 (Clinton)	13	9	77

In 2006, the Democrats gained 6 Senate seats and 31 House seats.

In 1998, there was no change in the Senate, and the Democrats picked up 5 House seats.

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When it comes to how Americans “feel” about Obama, 46% say they have negative feelings and 43% have positive feelings. A year ago, 47% had positive feelings and 41% had negative feelings. [NBC/WSJ10/14]

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### The Congress

Box Score  
2014- 2000

#### Congressional Elections

	Senate*		House	
2014				
2012	D +2	D-55/R-45	D +8	D-201/R-234
2010	R +6	D-53/R-47	R +63	D-193/R-242
2008	D +8	D-59/R-41	D+21	D-257/R-178
2006	D +5	D-51/R-49	D +31	D-233/R-202
2004	R +4	D-44/R-55	R +3	D-202/R-232
2002	R +2	D-49/R-51	R +8	D-204/R-229
2000	D +4	D-50/R-50	D +1	D-212/R-221
1998	No change	D-45/R-55	D + 5	D-211/R223

\*Independents are included with Democrats in the Senate tallies.

14% approve of the way Congress is doing its job. This has been the average approval rating for all of 2014. This is somewhat higher than the 9% approval recorded earlier this year. Democrats tend to be more positive than Republicans. [Gallup]

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There is a rather dramatic difference between registered voters and likely voters when it comes to Americans' preference for the outcome of the 2014 Congressional elections.

In the WP/ABC survey (10/20), 46% of registered voters favor the Democratic candidate, while 44% favor the Republican candidate. However, when it comes to likely voters, 50% favor the Republican candidate and 44% favor the Democratic candidate.

A similar dramatic turn is found in the NBC/WSJ Annenberg survey (10/14) taken at essentially the same time. Registered voters, by 45% to 43%, express a preference for a Republican-controlled Congress. Among likely voters, the preference is for a Republican-controlled Congress by 49% to 44%. And, among an additional category of "high interest" voters, these voters prefer a Republican-controlled Congress by 51% to 41%.

57% of Americans think that in this coming election, rather than re-elect their current representative, it is time to give a new person a chance. 55% would choose a person who is running for the first time over a candidate who had served for at least 10 years. And 55% would vote to replace the entire Congress if such an option was part of the ballot in November. [NBC/WSJ 10/14]. Yet, it is most likely that upwards of 90% of those members seeking re-election will be re-elected.

81% of us believe that most members of Congress are out of touch, but only 47% believe that about their own representative. 54% believe that most members of Congress are corrupt, and about half that number believe that about their own member. [Gallup 10/14]

Among registered voters, 42% are generally negative about the prospect of Republicans controlling the majority in both Houses of the Congress, and 38% are generally positive. However, when it comes to likely voters, "their" position is reversed. 47% of likely voters are positive about the Republicans controlling Congress and 42% are negative. [NBC/WSJ Annenberg 10/14]

The Week 6, NBC/WSJ Annenberg survey reveals that Republicans appear to be "charged up and care," while Democrats are "fearful and indifferent." For example, 29% of Republicans see the election as "vital," 24% see it as "optimistic," and 44% see it as "important." Conversely, among Democrats only 20% see it as "vital," 18% see it as "optimistic," and 35% see it as important.

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At roughly this time before the

- 2006 election, 80% of registered voters said they were following the election very closely;
- 2010 election, 76% of registered voters said they were following the election very closely;
- 2014 election, 68% of registered voters say they are following the election very closely. [WP/ABC 10/26]

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## **The Senate**

All signs point to November 4<sup>th</sup> not being a good day for Senate Democrats. [Keep in mind that two States require 50% +1 to win, Louisiana and Georgia. Those races might not be decided until runoff elections in December and January respectively.]

There are 9 States designated as toss-ups in the chart below.

If the two toss-ups that are leaning Democrat and the four toss-ups that are leaning Republican end up in the direction they are leaning, the Senate count will be

Democrats 47 – Republicans 50

That leaves three toss-ups that are hard to classify as leaning one way or the other. If the seats simply end up with the Party that currently holds them, the final result will be

Democrats 48 – Republicans 52

If the Democrats hold the seat they are currently hold and pickup Georgia or Kansas the result will be

Democrats 49 – Republicans 51

Or, if the Republicans have as big a day as some are predicting, and all of the Toss-ups go Republican the final result could be

Democrats 47 – Republicans 53

# 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	7	15
Leaning in 2014	4	1
Michigan		Pryor (AR)
Franken (MN)		
Merkley (OR)		
Warner (VA)		
Total	45	46

	<u>Toss-ups</u>
<u>Toss-ups/Lean Dem - 2</u>	<u>Toss-ups/Lean GOP - 4</u>
Hagen (NC)	Iowa
Shaheen (NH)	Landrieu (LA)
	Begich (AK)
	McConnell (KY)

# Pure Toss-ups

1 Democrat seat	2 Republican seats
Udall (CO)	Georgia
	Roberts (KS)

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Three Democratic Senators, Jeff Merkley (OR), Mark Begich (AK), and Al Franken (MN) were first elected in 2008, defeating Republican incumbents. Each of them won with less than 50% of the vote. Now two of them, Merkley and Franken, seem headed for re-election. Begich is running 2 to 3 points behind in every recent survey. [Trivia provided by Ron Faucheux]

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The general consensus is that the Republicans will pick up seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. Cook currently suggests that the Republicans will gain between 4 and 10 seats. Larry Sabato's Crystal Ball suggests the GOP pickup will range from 6 to 9 seats. (Cook Political Report is my bible for the data below.)

#### THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Democrats 199

Republicans 234

Vacant 2 (2D)

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Safe in 2014	161	210
Leaning	24 (1 GOP seat)	21 (includes 3 Democrat seats)
	<u>Toss Ups</u>	
	13	5

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#### The Governors

Democrats – 21

Republicans - 29

The Watch has not generally covered gubernatorial races and will not do so in any detail, but here is the current state of play based on the Cook Political Report.

There are 36 seats on the ballot this fall. 14 of those seats are held by Democrats and 22 seats are held by Republicans.

#### U.S.GOVERNORS

Democrats 21

Republicans 29

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2014	7	7
Safe in 2014	3	9
Likely/Leaning	6	7

Maryland  
Dayton MN  
Hassan NH  
Kitzhaber OR  
Rhode Island  
Corbett PA

Arizona  
Parnell AK  
Branstad IA  
Martinez NM  
Haley SC  
Texas  
Arkansas

Total            16                            23

Toss-ups

5 Democrats

Hickenlooper CO  
Malloy CT  
Hawaii  
Quinn IL  
Massachusetts

6 Republicans

Scott FL  
Deal GA  
Brownback KS  
LePage ME  
Snyder MI  
Walker WI

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