

Mike Berman's

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

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State of the Nation – page 2
Unemployment
The rules are not all the rules
Death with Dignity

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Governors - page 5

* * * * *

President Obama – page 6

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2016 Election – page 7
U.S House of Representatives – page 8
U.S. Senate – page 9

The Contest for President – page 10

General Election Debates – page 16

* * * * *

Women Will Get It Done – page 18

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Restaurants

Boston

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State of the Nation

29% of Americans say the country is headed in the right direction while 65% say it is on the wrong track. (NBC/WSJ, 10/13)

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The official BLS seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for September 2016 is 5.0%

If one takes into account the total number of unemployed + those marginally attached to the labor force + those working part-time who want full-time work, the current rate is 9.7%. [BLS data is based on those 16 years of age and older.]

In the fourth week of October, Gallup found an unadjusted unemployment rate of 5.1%. It also found an under-employment rate of 12.9% (unemployed + those working part-time but wanting full-time). [This is based on those 18 years of age and older.]

Employment is rising faster in occupations requiring higher levels of preparation. [Pew Research, 10/6]

Alan Krueger, a Princeton professor and former chairman of Obama's Council of Economic Advisers, has looked at data prepared by Nicholas Eberstadt, a demographer at the American Enterprise Institute, and arrived at the conclusion that large numbers of people in the prime of life are out of the work force because they are having health problems. Some are literally in considerable physical pain.

Fully 6 percent of American men between the ages of 25-54 and 5.8 percent of prime-age women say they can't work because of health issues. This is a substantial increase since 1968. In the case of women it's an increase from 1.8% and in the case of men, an increase from 1.6%. [WP, 10/13]

Here is data provided by Krueger about men who are not in the labor force as compared to unemployed men and working men.

	<u>Men not in workforce</u>	<u>Unemployed men</u>	<u>Working men</u>
Difficulty in making decisions	16%	2%	1%
Difficulty walking or climbing stairs	20%	2%	1%
Have any kind of disability	34%	6%	19%
Took pain medication the previous day	44%	3%	20%

[NYTimes, 10/23]

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60% of Americans now think that marijuana should be made legal. This is up from 31% in 2000. Not surprisingly, 77% of those 18-34 years of age support legalization while only 45% of those over the age of 65 share that view. 70% of Independents, 67% of Democrats and 42% of Republicans support legalization. [Gallup, 10/19]

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The four-year high school graduation rate in the United States in the 2014-15 school year was 83.2%, up from 79% in the 2010-11 year. [The Huffington Post]

The expected value of the bottled water market by the year 2020 is \$280 billion, bringing a new meaning to the phrase “money for nothing”. [The Guardian]

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74% of likely voters believe that a system should be set up to allow illegal immigrants who are currently working in the United States, to become legal. [Fox, 10/17]

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Republicans and Democrats have differing views about various major institutions and whether they have a positive or negative impact on how things are going in this country.

A majority of Republicans and Democrats who stated opinions on this question agree that churches and religious organizations have a positive impact and majorities of each political group say that large corporations, banks and financial institutions and the national news media have a negative impact on the way things are going.

	<u>Positive</u>		<u>Negative</u>	
	Dem	GOP	Dem	GOP
Churches/religious organizations	49%	73%	35%	15%
Large corporations	26	34	61	47
Banks/Financial institutions	32	39	55	44
National news media	33	9	<u>59</u>	<u>85</u>
Colleges and Universities	72	43	18	45
Labor Unions	58	27	23	55

[Pew Research, 9/26]

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49 percent of new parents in a recent survey said they had taken a job for less money because their new employer offered better benefits for families.
[Quartz] [Fivethirtyeight]

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Who uses dating apps? No surprise, younger voters are the largest users of online dating apps like Tinder. Broken down by age:

27% of users are age 18-24
22% of users are 25-34
21% of users are 35-44
13% of users are 45-54
12% of users are 55-64
3% of users are 65 or older

[Pew Research Center/WSJ, 10/13]

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“The Rules” are not “All the Rules”

We live in a world in which most everything we do is controlled by “formal” rules of one kind or another. Whatever our endeavor, significant or insignificant, large or small, complicated or easy, we know or learn the “formal” rules and we proceed. If we follow the “formal” rules we can have a reasonable expectation that what we do is permissible.

But now, knowing the “formal” rules and following them may not be good enough.

There is a new rule. It is called “perception”.

Given the nature of communication today, in which anyone who has a beef can tell the “world”, in addition to whether something is legal and ethical, we must now consider how the activity looks.

For example, if a person is about to be selected to become part of the board of a charitable organization he or she must meet certain criteria, i.e. willingness to attend X number of meetings a year, raise a certain amount of money each year,

etc. But if the person's other activities are controversial, the charitable organization may decide that it does not want to take on the possible impact of the person's reputation on their organization.

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Death with Dignity

The following are excerpts from an Op-Ed by Bishop Desmond Tutu published in the Washington Post.

“Throughout my life, I have been fortunate to have spent my time working for dignity for the living. I have campaigned passionately for people in my country and the world over to have their God-given rights.

“Now, as I turn 85 Friday, with my life closer to its end than its beginning, I wish to help give people dignity in dying. Just as I have argued firmly for compassion and fairness in life, I believe that terminally ill people should be treated with the same compassion and fairness when it comes to their deaths...

“...In refusing dying people the right to die with dignity, we fail to demonstrate the compassion that lies at the heart of Christian values. I pray that politicians, lawmakers and religious leaders have the courage to support the choices terminally ill citizens make in departing Mother Earth. The time to act is now.”

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The Governors

Ordinarily the WW does not track governor races. However, for this last issue before the election, the following is a brief report on governors. There is not much action here.

Republicans are dominant among the governors. That is not likely to change in this election. Only 2 of the 31 Republican controlled seats are at risk.

Republicans – 31
Democrat – 18
Independents – 1

	Democrats	Republicans
Not up in 2016	10	27
Safe in 2016	3	2
Likely	0	0
Lean	1	0
Total	14	29
<u>Toss Ups</u>		
	4	2
Missouri		Indiana
New Hampshire		McCrary (NC)
Vermont		
West Virginia		

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President Obama

The public's grading of President Obama's job approval, as found by Gallup on 10/23/16, is 57% approval/ 40% disapproval. A year ago it was 43% approval/51% disapproval. Six months ago it was 48% approval /48% disapproval. [Gallup]

The following are other approval/disapproval scores going back 3+ years.

Date	NBC/WSJ	WP/ABC	CNN/ORC	NYT/CBS	FOX
Oct 2016	53/44%		55/44%	51/43(CBS)	57/41%
Sept. 2016	52/45%	51/45%	51/48%	xxx	50/48%
Aug. 2016	52/44%	53/45%	xxx	xxx	52/45%
July 2016	51/46%	52/46%	55/45%	53/41%	xxx
June 2016	51/45%	54/43%	52/45%	43/37%(CBS)	42/39%
May 2016	51/46%	47/51%	51/46%	50/43%	48/49%
Apr. 2016	49%/48%	xxx	xxx	46/45%(CBS)	49/47%
Mar. 2016	49/46%	51/43%	51/46%	48/44%	48/46%
Jan. 2016	47/49%	50/46%	47/49%	46/47%	42/53%
Jan. 2015	46/48%	47/48%	xxx	xxx	45/51%
Jan. 2014	43/51%	45/52%	45/51%	46/47(CBS)	42/53%
Jan. 2013	52/44%	55/41%	55/43%	51/41%	

	<u>Approval</u>	<u>Disapproval</u>	(in final year in office)
Eisenhower	58	31	(10/23/60)
Clinton	57	38	(10/28/00)
<u>Obama</u>	54	43	(10/17/16)
Reagan	51	38	(10/24/88)
G W Bush	31	66	(10/26/08)

Obama has an approval/disapproval rating on the economy of 47% to 47% and an approval/disapproval rating on foreign policy of 42% to 46%. [Economist/YouGov, 10/8]

Peter Hart makes the point that Dwight Eisenhower, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton did little to help the person who was trying to succeed them. Obama is turning heaven and earth in support of Hillary Clinton.

He also makes the case that Barack Obama has had the best 7th and 8th years of any president in his lifetime.

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2016 Election

As the election approaches, 26% of likely voters say they are strong Democrats while an additional 9% say they are not strong Democrats.

19% say they are strong Republicans, and an additional 7% describe themselves as not strong Republicans.

33% describe themselves as Independents.

Of the Independents, 13% say they are strictly Independents while 9% say they lean Democrat and 11% say they lean Republican.

Combined, 44% describe themselves as some form of Democrat and 37% describe themselves as some form of Republican. [NBC/WSJ, 10/13]

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Only 18% of Americans approve of the way in which Congress is handling its job. Notwithstanding the fact that their party controls both the Senate and House, only 14% of Republicans approve of the job Congress is doing. [Gallup, 10/9]

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Based on the tracking of 109 polls from 20 pollsters, as of October 19th, 46% of people prefer a Democratic controlled Congress to 41% who prefer a Republican controlled Congress. [Huffpost/Pollster]

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The House

The Democrats continue on a path that is likely to result in an increase in their numbers in the House. However, current evidence is that the Presidential election is so far not having any particular effect on the down ballot races. Therefore, the prospect of a Democratic takeover seems pretty dim.

David Wasserman, the House editor of the Cook Political Report, estimates that the Democrats would have to win the national House popular vote by a least 8 points to win a majority. He notes that ,“while Democrats need a net gain of 30 seats in the House, there are currently only 37 competitive races, including six that are now held by Democrats.”

[WW relies on the Cook Political Report for the House data below.]

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Democrats	186
Republicans	246
Vacancies	3

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Safe in 2016	177	201
Likely	6	14
Lean	6	13
	<u>Tossup</u>	
	3	15

The Senate

If Clinton wins, a pickup of four Senate seats will allow the Democrats to control the operation of the Senate which will be split 50/50 between the Democrats + Independents and the Republicans. A pickup of five seats gives them control without tying up the Vice President.

Based on the races up this year, actual control is not beyond the pale.

It is quite likely that the number of female senators will increase with this election. The possibilities include Illinois, North Carolina, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Arizona.

THE U.S. SENATE

Republicans	54
Democrats	44
Independents	2

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2016	36	30
Safe in 2016	9	15
Leaning in 2016	2	1
	Kirk	McCain
	Johnson	
Total:	47	46

<u>Toss Ups</u>	
2	5
Nevada	Ayotte
Indiana	Toomey
	Blunt
	Burr
	Rubio

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The Contest for President

It is hard to imagine that two candidates could be more different than Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

In the Washington Post/ABC survey likely voters were asked a series of questions about the two candidates. [10/13]

	Clinton <u>Yes/No</u>	Trump <u>Yes/No</u>
Is Clinton/Trump qualified to serve as president	60 / 39	40 / 57
Is Clinton/Trump honest and trustworthy	36 / 60	35 / 62
Clinton/Trump has the kind of personality and temperament it takes to a serve effectively as president	58 / 41	36 / 62
Clinton/Trump has a strong moral character	45 / 52	30 / 66

Separately, 61% of likely voters believe that Hillary Clinton has the temperament to serve effectively as president. 61% also believe that Donald Trump does not have the temperament to serve effectively as president. [FOX, 10/17]

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66% of Clinton supporters are voting to express support of her and 33% are voting for her to express opposition to Trump. Conversely, 60% of Trump supporters are expressing support for Trump and 38% are voting for him in opposition to Clinton.

52% of likely voters have an unfavorable view of Clinton and 57% have an unfavorable view of Trump. [CNN/ORC 10/23]

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The 2016 presidential campaign seems to have caused significant, relatively conservative groups to become much more tolerant of behavior which they have historically considered to be anathema.

Since 2011, an increasing number of Americans have come to believe that a politician can be immoral in private and still perform their public duties in an

ethical manner. The number supporting this point of view has grown from 44% to 61% since 2011.

The most significant change has come among white evangelicals. In 2011, 30% of white evangelicals believed that “personal immorality was consistent with an ethical performance of official duties.” That number has grown to 72%.

According to an article by Bill Galston, the only credible answer for this change is the candidacy of Donald Trump. [Brookings/Public Religion Research Institute]

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As of October 24th – The following represent the current status of a number of states from Real Clear Politics:

New Hampshire	Clinton +15
Virginia	Clinton +12
Michigan	Clinton +13
New Mexico	Clinton +8
Colorado	Clinton +8
Wisconsin	Clinton +7
Nevada	Clinton +7
Pennsylvania	Clinton +6
Maine	Clinton +6
Arizona	Clinton +5
Georgia	Clinton +4
North Carolina	Clinton +2
Ohio	Trump/Clinton Even
Florida	Trump +4
Iowa	Trump + 4
Texas	Trump +2

Mitt Romney won the South by 7.1 points over Barack Obama in 2012. Donald Trump is winning in the South too, but by a mere 1.2 points. This is typified by Texas, where Donald Trump is leading by a rather slim margin for a Republican. A University of Houston poll has him up a mere 3 points. [FiveThirtyEight]

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One of the best descriptions I have seen of the 2016 presidential election is a piece called “2016 Perspective” by Peter Hart. The following are excerpts from that piece.

“.... This is not just the story of the fall of one flawed candidate, but the story of an electorate that allowed him to rise and remain competitive throughout this 16-month quest. He did nothing by the book; he ran what professionals may come to call “the worst campaign in the modern era of American politics.

“The lens needs to refocus on the real subjects of this story--the voters. This story is about a year that allowed Donald J. Trump to exist. It is about America today, complete with the anger and anti-Washington sentiment. An electorate fearful of domestic challenges—violence, race, the hollowing out of the middle class, and globally the fear from a war without borders or warning.

“To write the fall of Trump without acknowledging what allowed the rise of Trump and Sanders is to miss the point of the 2016 election. Though we may chew up all the numbers and follow the entrails, this election was never the celebration of a new era or a new and triumphant commemoration of breaking the glass ceiling--it was about a nation trying to find some sense of equilibrium in a period of tremendous turmoil. Donald Trump was a voice for the time, but a deeply flawed leader. The American public never accepted him, but they were transfixed by him, and he touched the raw nerve of 2016.”

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Charlie Cook wrote a column on October 6th entitled, “Elites shouldn’t ignore the lessons of 2016”. The following is an excerpt.

“Elites can condescendingly view what is going on as political barbarians at the gate, the masses rising up with pitchforks to overthrow the establishment, but they are better off trying to understand why and address it while they can.

“While Clinton’s inartful remark last month described half of Trump’s supporters as a “basketful of deplorables,” specifying them as “racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamaphobic—you name it,” unfortunately the second part of her statement was largely ignored by the media. As transcribed by the *Los Angeles Times*: “But the other basket—and I know this because I see friends from all over America here—I see friends from Florida and Georgia and South Carolina and Texas—as well as, you know, New York and California—but that other basket of

people are people who feel that the government has let them down, the economy has let them down, nobody cares about them, nobody worries about what happens to their lives and their futures, and they're just desperate for change. It doesn't really even matter where it comes from. They don't buy everything he says, but he seems to hold out some hope that their lives will be different. They won't wake up and see their jobs disappear, lose a kid to heroin, feel like they're in a dead end. Those are people we have to understand and empathize with as well."

"That's pretty good advice for the political leadership to consider, both in this country and abroad. Elites around the world have grown out of touch with a large segment of the population, and it's something that those in power should consider if they want to retain it."

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Selected polls, October 2016

The list below includes a series of surveys in the presidential race. It includes both Clinton vs Trump and Clinton vs Trump vs the Libertarian and Green Party candidates. The numbers for the latter two are treated as one for the purposes of this chart. (NBC/SM is NBC/Survey Monkey)

	Clinton	Trump	3 rd Party	Clinton/ Trump
10/25 FOX News	49	44	--	C+5
FOX News	44	41	10	C+3
10/24 Dem Corps	53	41	--	C+12
Dem Corps	50	38	8	C+12
10/23 NBC/SM	50	44	--	C+6
NBC/SM	46	41	10	C+5
10/23 CNN/ORC	51	45	--	C+6
CNN/ORC	49	44	5	C+5
10/22 ABC Tracking	53	41	--	C+12
ABC Tracking	50	38	7	C+12
10/18 Quinnipiac	50	44	--	C+6
Quinnipiac	47	40	8	C+7

10/17 FOX News	49	42	--	C+7
FOX News	45	39	8	C+6
10/16 CBS News	51	40	--	C+11
CBS News	47	38	11	C+9
10/16 NBC/SM	51	43	--	C+8
NBC/SM	46	40	12	C+6
10/16 Monmouth	53	41	--	C+8
Monmouth	50	38	7	C+12
10/13 ABC/WP	50	46	--	C+4
ABC/WP	47	43	7	C+4
10/13 NBC/WSJ	51	41	--	C+10
NBC/WSJ	48	37	9	C+11
10/13 GW Battleground	47	39	9	C+ 8
10/12 FOX NEWS	49	41	--	C+10
FOX NEWS	45	38	10	C+7
10/10 NBC/WSJ	50	40	--	C+10
NBC/WSJ	46	37	10	C+9
10/9 NBC/SM	51	44	--	C+7
NBC/SM	46	41	11	C+5
10/6 Fox News	48	44	--	C+4
Fox News	44	42	8	C+2
10/2 CBS News	49	43	--	C+6
CBS News	45	41	11	C+4
10/2 CNN/ORC	51	45	--	C+6
CNN/ORC	47	42	9	C+5

On October 18th, Chuck Todd, Mark Murray and Carrie Dann made the point that even with all that has happened in the presidential campaign since the

first of the year, the race has been relatively stable. Below is a comparison of the January 2016 NBC/WSJ and the October 10-13th NBC/WSJ survey.

- Trump's fav/unfav rating in Jan. 2016: 29% positive, 58% negative
- Trump's fav/unfav now: 29% positive, 62% negative
- Clinton's fav/unfav in Jan. 2016: 40% positive, 49% negative
- Clinton's fav/unfav now: 40% positive, 50% negative
- The two-way ballot in Jan. 2016: Clinton 51%, Trump 41%
- The two-way ballot now: Clinton 51%, Trump 41%

The Electoral College

In addition to the polls above, the Electoral College reflects the changes:

Real Clear Politics

10/27	Clinton 252	Trump 126	Toss Ups	160
10/24	Clinton 262	Trump 126	Toss Ups	126
10/19	Clinton 256	Trump 170	Toss Ups	112
10/14	Clinton 256	Trump 181	Toss Ups	101
10/3	Clinton 205	Trump 165	Toss Ups	168
9/1	Clinton 262	Trump 154	Toss Ups	122

Cook Political Report

10/20	Clinton 278	Toss Ups 81	Trump 179
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Rothenberg/Gonzales Political Report

10/14	Clinton 279	Toss Ups 68	Trump 191
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Sabato's Crystal Ball

10/20	Safe Clinton 183	Likely Clinton 75	Lean Clinton 94	Total 352
10/10	Safe Clinton 183	Likely Clinton 73	Lean Clinton 85	Total 341
10/4	Safe Clinton 183	Likely Clinton 37	Lean Clinton 96	Total 316
9/26	Safe Clinton 188	Likely Clinton 12	Lean Clinton 72	Total 272
10/20	Safe Trump 82	Likely Trump 75	Lean Trump 16	Total 173
10/10	Safe Trump 157	Likely Trump 16	Lean Trump 24	Total 197

10/4	Safe Trump	163	Likely Trump	27	Lean Trump	25	Total	215
9/26	Safe Trump	163	Likely Trump	27	Lean Trump	25	Total	215

10/20	Toss Ups	13
10/10	Toss Ups	0
10/4	Toss Ups	7
9/26	Toss Ups	51

FiveThirtyEight Election Forecast – Electoral Votes

10/23	Clinton	343	Trump	194
10/16	Clinton	337	Trump	201
10/4	Clinton	309	Trump	228

NBC Battleground Map

10/14	Clinton	287	Trump	157	Toss Ups	94
10/6	Clinton	268	Trump	190	Toss Ups	80
9/6	Clinton	272	Trump	174	Toss Ups	92

2016 General Election Debates

Most commentators say that Hillary Clinton won the first debate, and by just about any standard she did. However, Donald Trump did speak to his followers who were watching.

Pence was the clear winner of the vice-presidential debate. Someone obviously convinced Tim Kaine to be someone other than himself for this encounter.

By all accounts, Clinton won the second debate.

The third debate started out as one of Trump's best but that faded and Clinton was also the winner.

61% of likely voters believe that Hillary Clinton did the best job in the debates. Only 29% have that view of Donald Trump. [CNN/ORC 10/23]

First Presidential Debate:

Monday, September 26, 2016

Hofstra University

Long Island, Hempstead, NY

84,000,000 viewers – a record – previous record 80,600,000 Carter/Reagan, 1980

These numbers do not include people who watched live streaming of the event on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and other sites. [WP]

Vice Presidential Debate:

Tuesday, October 4, 2016

Longwood University, Farmville, VA

Moderator: Elaine Quijano – CBS

37.4 million viewers – This was the lowest number of viewers for a vice-presidential debate since 2000 when 28.5 million watched the debate between Dick Cheney and Joe Lieberman.

Second Presidential Debate:

Sunday, October 9, 2016

Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO

Moderator: Anderson Cooper – CNN & Martha Raddatz – ABC

69,000,000 viewers – again these numbers do not include people who watched living streaming of the event.

Third Presidential Debate:

Wednesday, October 19, 2016

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Las Vegas, NV

Moderator: Chris Wallace – Fox News

71,600,000 viewers- These numbers do not include those who live streamed the event .This debate was the third-largest presidential debate audience in history behind the first Clinton/Trump debate and the final Carter/Regan debate in 1980 – 80.6 million viewers.

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The Washington Watch relies on the following sources of political data: Cook Political Report, Rothenberg & Gonzales Political Report, Sabato's Crystal Ball, Ballotpedia, Real Clear Politics.com, Huffpost – Pollster.com and Polling Report.com.

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Women Will Get It Done

Going forward, the Washington Watch will be including short sections from a project that I have been working on called, “Women Will Get it Done.”

Women in Politics

Today, women hold more seats in Congress than ever before but this record number still only accounts for 20% of total seats. Women comprise more than 50% of the general U.S. population, but only hold 25% of seats in state legislatures, 10% of governorships and 12% of mayoral seats for the nation’s 100 largest cities.

Women have proven their ability to govern and they are as likely to win races as men are, so the problem isn’t that women can’t win but that not enough women are running.

Women face different challenges when considering a run for office. Women are less likely to have been socialized to consider politics as a possible career path in the first place and most women don’t want to run for office simply because of the ugliness of politics. Women have to deal with sexism and prejudices that can make the idea of running unappealing even to those who do have the desire—a population which is significantly smaller for woman than men. Studies find a major gender gap when it comes to political ambition. Only 37% of women said they had considered running for office, compared to 57% of men.

Women often do not want their personal lives subjected to national discussion and many women don’t consider themselves as viable candidates, even if they have the right credentials.

Once women do decide to run, if they win they still have distinctive challenges: 42% of female legislators disagreed with the statement “most men in my legislature are supportive of moving women into leadership positions” and 42% disagreed with the statement “the leaders in my legislature are as likely to consult with the women in their legislature as the men when making important decisions.” Politics is still very much an “old boys club” which can be both discouraging and counterproductive to women serving in government.

Our State Houses and Capitols need to be filled with diverse legislatures that reflect the realities of the American citizenry. With the challenges our government is tackling, it is time to take advantage of all of the talent and wisdom that both

men and women can bring to the table. To encourage more women to run for office, society must stop telling its young women that politics is not the place for them and then take advantage of the talents and experiences they bring once women do decide to enter the political arena.

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RESTAURANTS

BISTRO du MIDI
272 Boylston Street
Boston Mass 12116
617-426-7878

Debbie and I went to this restaurant with Heather. Heather recommended that we try it especially because it was within a block of our hotel.

The restaurant has two levels. To the right as you enter there is a with bar seating for about a dozen people and seating for 24 at tables. Both the dinner menu from the second floor and a separate bar menu are available.

The stairs to the second floor would clearly have been beyond me but there is a perfect elevator that holds several people at a time.

The second floor has another bar with seating for about a dozen and a variety of tables, 2,4s, and 6s, that seat 85 people.

When we arrived around 6:30 p.m. the restaurant was reasonably quiet. As the evening wore on and the number of diners and drinkers grew it became quite loud.

Our server came by several times but we were talking and frankly did not look at the menus. Debbie and Heather ordered some wine. I stuck with cranberry juice.

Heather started with Foie Gras Terrine, pain au lait, strawberry gel. She followed with Olive Oil Poached Halibut, yellow piperade, tomato confit.

Debbie did not order an appetizer but she managed a few mouthfuls of Heather's Foie Gras. For her main course she ordered Bouillabaisse Du Midi, saffron-scented broth, rouille, gruyere.

I selected the Spanish Octopus, fennel, capers, almonds, romesco. It was prepared with roasting whole tentacles, which I prefer rather than a series of cross sliced pieces. For my entree I picked the Monkfish, fegoa sarda, pine nut, capers, mushroom veal jus.

I was the only one to order a dessert Chocolate Kahlua custard. Heather and Debbie did sample it.

The restaurant offers three levels of tasting menus. There is a five course menu for \$85 with a wine pairing that costs an additional \$70. There is also a seven course menu for \$115 and a wine pairing for an additional \$85. Of course tip and taxes are additional.

While our server checked in with us regularly and we did delay ordering so it was 9:30 before we were finished.

On the way out I stopped at the men's room which is located at the back of the first floor dining room. The rest room is nothing special. It is clean. There is a single white ceramic commode in a walled off area but there is no door. The same arrangement provides the location for a wall hanging white urinal. The walls are covered with medium yellow/brownish tiles. The floor is a brownish cement like covering. There is a brownish marble shelf with two sunken white ceramic wash basins.

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BISTRO MISTRAL
223 Columbus Avenue
Boston, Mass 02116
617-867-9300

We had dinner with David and Susan. David suggested the restaurant and made the reservation.

Even several days in advance the only reservation available was at 5:30 p.m. When we arrived in a timely fashion the hostess confirmed our reservation and said that it would be a few minutes before they began seating people for dinner. There were a number of other dinner guests in the same situation and we stood together among a series of tables that are part of the bar area.

The dining room is straight ahead and quite long. It turns out that it is L-shaped and swings to the right at the end. To the right of the entry is a very long bar with 20 high stools. The backs of the stools are covered and seem unusually comfortable.

Some large pillars divide the dining room and bar area but they are fairly far apart and the greenery between the pillars still allows one to see into the bar area from the dining tables.

Around the entire outside edge of the dining room there are a series of rectangular booths with banquettes. Most of these booths seat 4 people. The rest of the tables are 2s, 4s, and 6s.

There are large windows on the outside walls so the room is quite open and airy.

Just after 5:30 p.m. a group of folks from the restaurant began taking the waiting parties to their tables. We were quickly seated.

The main dining room seats 140 people, 40 more can be seated in the bar area and there is a private dining room that can accommodate 60 people.

Even though the restaurant is somewhat formal, the dress varied from business casual to more formal outfits for women and men.

To begin the meal David ordered a thin crusted Tomato, Mozzarella & Oregano pizza for the table. It was quite large and could easily have served as an entrée.

Susan also ordered Lambs Lettuce with Soft Goats Cheese and & Pecan Melba with Apple Cider Vinaigrette. Feeling like having soup I ordered Heirloom Squash Bisque “En Croute” with Rosemary Crème Fraiche & Toasted Pepitas. The puff pastry that topped the very large bowl of soup added something extra to what may have been the best soup I have ever eaten in a restaurant.

For her main course Debbie ordered Half whole roasted duck, & Wild Mushroom Risotto, Dried Wisconsin Cherry Gastrique. Susan ordered Mistral Linguine with Tiny Tomatoes, Arugula & Parmesan Reggiano.

David selected Dover Sole Meuniere with Lemon & Capers, Sautee of Spinach & Onions, Fingerling Potatoes. I chose Pan Roasted Cornish Game Hen, Warm Pancetta & Spinach Salad, Lemon & Rosemary.

For dessert, Debbie ordered Profiteroles with Vanilla Ice Cream, Dark Chocolate Sauce & Pistachio Croquant. Susan chose the Warm Chocolate Torte, Vanilla Ice Cream, Sauce Anglaise. I selected Crème Brulee, Raspberries & Palmier Twist. As a practical matter each of the desserts was shared around the table.

All of the portions were ample. The service was excellent.

In the ordinary course I do not comment on the hostess or host at the reception desk. This is an exception. She always smiled and spoke nicely to every single arriving guest at the top of the evening, those who had to wait for a few minutes. I noticed that throughout the evening she moved with deliberate speed to the end of the dining room and back, either seating other guests or what appeared to be checking to see what tables were still free and which guests were coming close to the end of their meals. Her performance was such that for the first time in any restaurant I made a point on the way out to comment to her about her work.

The men's room is new and quite large. There are two white ceramic commodes, and multiple white ceramic wall hanging urinals of different heights. The floor is covered with large tan tiles. There is a tan marble wall hanging table top with two white ceramic washing basins embedded.

Valet parking is available.

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