

Mike Berman's

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

No. 105

December 16, 2011

HAPPY NEW YEAR

* * * * *

STATE OF THE NATION
Peter D. Hart Research Associates

* * * * *

THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION

* * * * *

PRESIDENT OBAMA

* * * * *

2012 PRESIDENTIAL GENERAL ELECTION

* * * * *

THE CONGRESS

* * * * *

RESTAURANTS
Shanghai Village

* * * * *

STATE OF THE NATION

In mid-December, 69% of Americans said that the country is on the wrong track. This is slightly better than the 73-74% who have had that view since August. [NBC/WSJ 12/11]

* * * * *

By 74% to 23% we do not have a favorable opinion of the U.S. economy. [NBC/WSJ 12/11]

* * * * *

The University of Michigan Consumer Confidence Index is 67.7, an increase from 64.2 in November, 60.9 in October, and from the low point of 55.7 in August. It is still below the 74.3 recorded in March. [U of Mich 12/9/11]

* * * * *

The Gallup survey of unemployment through December 11 ticked up slightly to 8.6% from 8.5% at the end of November. Looking at Gallup's second number, which it defines as "underemployed" (those who are unemployed and those working part-time but want full-time) is at 18.3% as opposed to 18.1% at the end of November. [Gallup]

* * * * *

66% believe that the most important problems facing the country today are unemployment and the economy in general.

As of December 11th, 51% of Americans describe the economy as poor, while 10% say it is excellent/good.

To consider themselves rich, Americans say they would need a median income of \$150,000 per year. In 2003, the median income was \$120,000. 30% of folks would consider themselves rich if they made \$100,000; 18% would feel rich at \$60,000; and 15% say they would need a million dollars or more. (Ed. note: The \$150,000 amount is just slightly more than the increase in the consumer price index for period the 2003 to 2011.)

In March, 56% of us felt better about our personal financial situation. That has dropped to 49% in late November.

[Gallup 11/11 unless otherwise noted]

* * * * *

During the height of the recent recession the individual savings rate rose to 8%. As of mid-November, it has dropped to 3.5%. [WP 11/11]

22% believe the economy generally will get worse in the next year, and 33% say that their personal economic situation has gotten worse in in the past twelve months. [NBC/WSJ 12/11]

Data from 2008 shows that, of the top 400 tax payers,

- 30 paid an average tax rate between 0 and 10%
- 59 paid an average tax rate of 30-35%
- 238 had a marginal tax rate of 35% and above
- 17 had a marginal tax rate of 0 to 26%

[WP 12/11]

* * * * *

76% of Americans believe that this past year has been either one of the worst years for the United States (27%) or, at best, below average (49%). [NBC/WSJ 12/11]

* * * * *

There has been considerable public attention to the wealth gap between the rich and the poor. It is the core tenant of the Occupy movement. However, 82% of Americans say it is extremely/very important to expand the economy. 70% opt for increasing “the equality of opportunity for people to get ahead if they want to.” Only 46% say it is extremely/very important to “reduce the income and wealth gap between the rich and the poor.”

58% of Americans say that the country is not divided into “haves and have-nots.” Interestingly, when asked to choose which group they were a part of, “haves or have-nots,” 58% said they were “haves.” [Gallup 12/11]

* * * * *

By 48% to 46%, respondents believe that the government should promote traditional values.

68% have a great deal/fair amount of trust and confidence in local government to handle problems, and 57% have that view about State government. At the other end of the spectrum, only 31% have confidence in the Federal legislative branch, and 47% have that view about the executive branch. [Gallup 10/11]

* * * * *

While considerable media attention is paid to the role of Wall Street in the country's current economic situation, the Federal government is blamed for the economic problems facing the country by 64%, while 30% blame Wall Street.

Over 70% of Americans trust small-business owners and local business leaders to come up with the ideas for creating jobs in the United States. Only 43% trust the Democratic and Republican leaders in Congress to have productive ideas. 52% trust President Obama to have job creating ideas. 22% of small business owners say that complying with government regulations is the most important problem facing them today.

Historically, big government has been seen as a bigger threat to the country than big business or big labor. That attitude has not changed, except that the number of people identifying the Federal government as the biggest threat has grown over the last 45 years. While there is always considerable noise about the threat of big labor, it is pretty clear that it is an also-ran in the minds of Americans.

	<u>1965</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2011</u>
Big government	35	65	55	64
Big business	29	24	32	26
Big labor	17	8	10	8

[Gallup 10,11,12/11]

* * * * *

55% of Americans do not have much faith in the media to report the news "fully, accurately and fairly." [Gallup 9/11]

* * * * *

The social safety net is being pulled apart, loop by loop.

* * * * *

The Occupy Wall Street movement hangs on, but its encampments are being disassembled city by city. So far, the groups who set up camp in New York City, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Boston have been forced to move out, and their housing has been torn down by order of municipal officials.

While the movement has not generated enough support to really change government or business behavior, it is interesting how much public attention it has achieved through the actions of a relatively small number of people.

* * * * *

The 1% describe themselves as slightly more Republican, while the 99% describe themselves as slightly more Democratic. However, philosophically there is little distinction between them. [Gallup 12/11]

	<u>99%</u>	<u>1%</u>
Republican	28%	33%
Independent	39	41
Democratic	33	26
Conservative	40	39
Moderate	37	41
Liberal	21	20

* * * * *

31% of Americans selected the phrase, “the wealthiest one percent getting richer and the middle class declining” as the most personally disappointing event of the past year. 29% named the “lack of economic recovery,” and 27% named “the failure of Congress to reach a compromise on the budget deficit.” [NBC/WSJ 12/11]

* * * * *

There are striking similarities between the levels of support and the positive/negative evaluations of the Tea Party Movement and The Occupy Wall Street Movement.

27% consider themselves to be supporters of the Tea Party Movement (65% are not). 25% say they are supporters of the Occupy Wall Street Movement (67% are not).

27% say they are positive about the Tea Party Movement. 27% say they are positive about the Occupy Wall Street Movement. 43% are negative about the Tea Party Movement and 44% are negative about the Occupy Wall Street Movement.

There is, of course, at least one big difference between the two movements. The Tea Party has identifiable electoral successes in the last round of Federal elections. The Occupy Movement did not come into being until after the last Federal elections. [NBC/WSJ 12/11]

* * * * *

Just 51% of those 18 years of age and over are married. This is a record low. In 2000, 57% of the same age group were married. [WP 12/11]

* * * * *

There is nothing new in the case of Richard Verone in Gaston, North Carolina, at least nothing has been reported of late in the Gaston, Gazette.

* * * * *

Where We Are, Where We See Others and Who Best Reflects Our Views

David Winston, of the Winston Group, has done an interesting piece of research which he has kindly allowed WW to reproduce.

Using a national sample, Winston asked respondents to place themselves and other individuals and organizations

- on an ideological spectrum on which “9” represents Conservative and “1” represents Liberal, and

- on a spectrum on which “9” means respondents’ views are completely reflected, and “1” means their views are not at all reflected, by the persons or organizations listed.

Americans described their own political ideology as something right of center. Of note is that, when asked who reflects their views, no person or organization on the list received a score better than a 4.56 on the scale of 9.

See Next Page

* * * * *

If you have not discovered FactCheck.Org and the Washington Post’s Fact Checker, take a gander. Both do an excellent job of laying bare the truth about a variety of campaign claims.

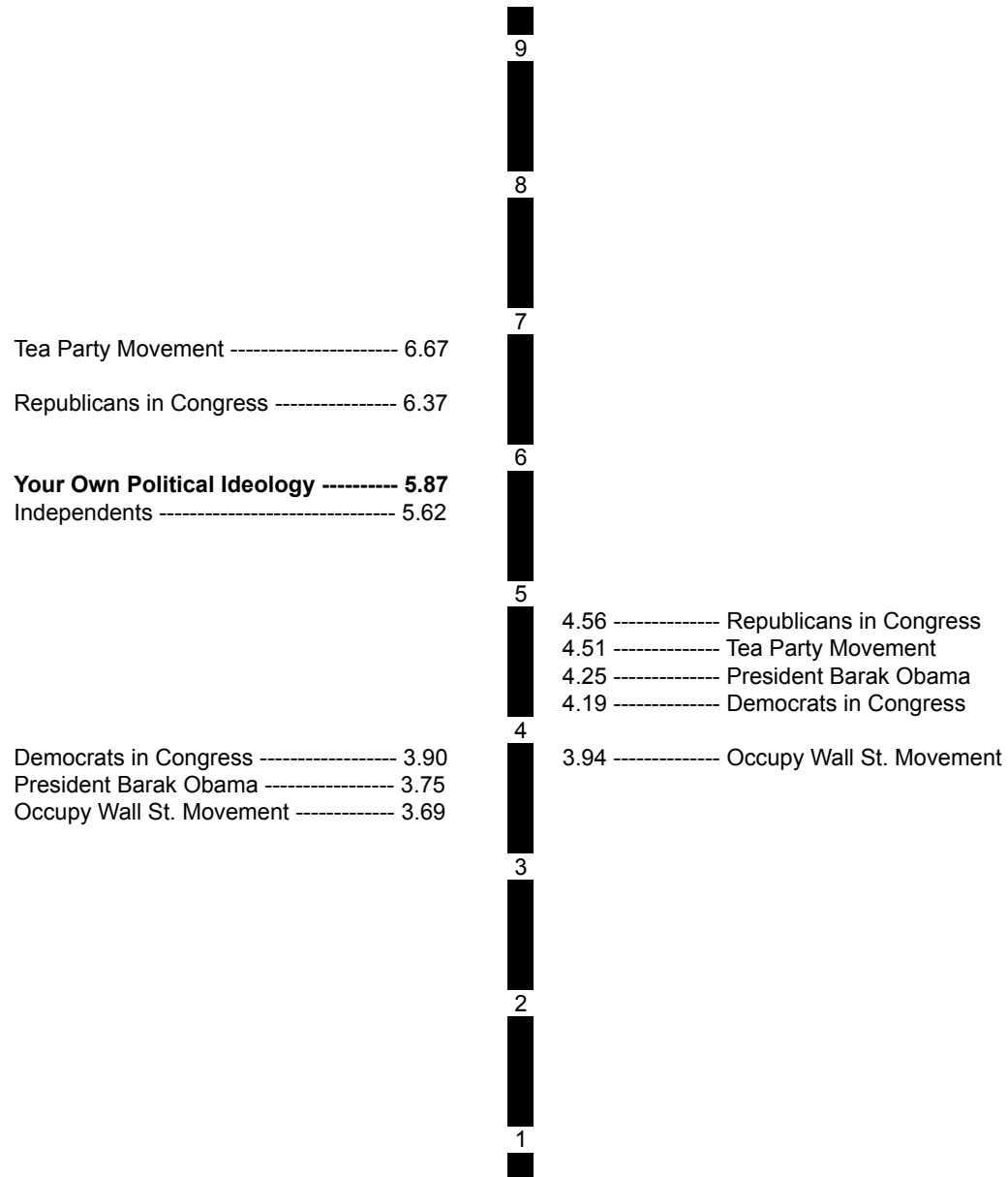
* * * * *

Where do you place the following on the
Ideological Spectrum?

Who or What reflects your own views?

Conservative

Completely



Liberal

Does Not Reflect

Peter Hart

I have known Peter Hart since 1969. We met at the DNC and on the tennis court.

He is my friend, and he is the source of much of what I pass along as my personal “wisdom” about politics.

Recently, he celebrated the 40th anniversary of the company which he formed in 1971, Peter D. Hart Research Associates. It is a premier survey and strategic research firm.

During an evening anniversary celebration, Mark Shields shared the following bits of information with the group.

During this forty year period Peter’s organization has conducted nearly 7,000 surveys, 6000 focus groups, and has interviewed nearly 3,000,000 people. (Or as one wag said ,1 person nearly 3,000,000 times).

Peter has, for many years, been the Democratic anchor and pollster for the NBC/WSJ survey.

The quantity of work is quite amazing, but I was struck by two other details as the evening unfolded. First, Peter has drawn together a group of terrific professionals, who guarantee the generational succession of the company, when and if, he decides to slow down. The second observation may be even more important. There are an extraordinary number of people who have worked for this company for multiple decades, making it clear that Peter D. Hart Associates is successful internally, as well as externally.

Congratulations, my friend.

* * * * *

2012 REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION

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

7 people are still running

Michelle Bachmann

Newt Gingrich

Jon Huntsman

Ron Paul

Rick Perry

Mitt Romney

Rick Santorum

2 is the number of real players at the moment

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

* * * * *

Musical Chairs

As the Republican nomination contest has progressed, more Americans (31%) say that their impression of the GOP field has worsened rather than improved (14%). [PEW 12/11]

The leadership of the national Republican nomination battle has moved back and forth since the middle of 2011. At this time, the race has become a contest between two of the candidates, Newt Gingrich and Mitt Romney. It is unlikely that any of the other five candidates will break out before the end of the contest.

First, Romney led and Gingrich was among several also-rans. Then Perry took the lead, Romney roamed in second place, and Gingrich and Cain continued to inhabit the bottom tier.

Romney returned to the lead in September, but Herman Cain had a run, and was essentially neck and neck with Romney, while Gingrich started creeping up a bit. As November dawned, Romney was still in the lead, but by mid-month

Gingrich had taken the lead, Romney was a close second, and Cain had started to fade.

In the first week of December, Gingrich took the lead by 15 points over Romney, and Cain collapsed. Romney has now decided that he has to take Gingrich on directly. Gingrich continues to say that he will not attack the others. Except for a little dig here and there, he is doing that. However, he will respond when hit by one of the others.

In the current December NBC/WSJ survey of likely Republican primary voters, Gingrich leads with 40%. Romney is a poor second with 23%, and Ron Paul and Michele Bachman follow, with 9% and 8% respectively.

Assuming that the size of the field will continue to decline, a three way race finds Gingrich with 53%, Romney 31%, and Ron Paul in 3rd with 13%.

And if the race were to be held today between Gingrich and Romney, Gingrich would win with 59% to 36%.

But the bloom may be off Gingrich's political rose. In the most recent Gallup survey the national race is closing, as are State polls.

* * * * *

The charts below track the movement in this race beginning in July.

First, November through early December.

	<u>Nov 2-6</u>	<u>Nov 13-17</u>	<u>Dec 1-5*</u>	<u>Dec 10-14</u>
	%	%	%	%
Gingrich	13	22	37	29
Romney	22	21	22	24
Paul	6	9	8	10
Perry	11	8	7	5
Bachman	3	4	6	7
Santorum	2	1	3	4
Huntsman	1	1	1	2
Cain	22	16	-*	-
None/No opinion	22	18	14	

[* Cain suspended his campaign part way through this survey period. The second choice of those who had selected Cain was used to compute preferences without him.]

The following chart summarizes polling on this subject from mid-July through October.

2012 Republican Presidential Candidate

<u>Survey</u>	<u>Last date of survey</u>	<u>Romney</u>	<u>Cain</u>	<u>Gingrich</u>	<u>Perry</u>	<u>Paul</u>	<u>Bachmann</u>	<u>Santorum</u>	<u>Huntsman</u>
NBC/WSJ	11/5	<u>28</u>	27	13	10	10	4	2	0
ABC/WP	11/3	<u>25</u>	23	12	14	9	4	1	1
CNN/OpRes	10/16	<u>26</u>	25	8	13	9	6	2	1
ABC/WP	10/2	<u>25</u>	17	9	17	9	7	2	1
Fox News	9/27	<u>23</u>	11	17	19	6	3	3	4
USA/Gall.	9/18	24	5	5	<u>31</u>	13	5	2	1
ABC/WP	9/1	23	3	4	<u>29</u>	8	6	2	1
NBC/WSJ	8/31	23	5	5	<u>38</u>	9	8	3	2
Fox News	8/9	<u>21</u>	6	5	13	6	7	2	2
Gallup	7/24	<u>17</u>	3	3	15	8	11	2	2
NBC/WSJ	7/17	<u>30</u>	5	8	11	8	16	3	2

* * * * *

There is one other “national poll” that, it is claimed, has been quite accurate in the past. It is the Intrade Prediction Market. Here you can buy and sell shares in the prospects of candidates for President (and other offices), i.e., you are investing on the % probability of that event (election of that candidate) occurring.

As of 9:45 a.m. December 16th, here are the bids for shares in various candidate’s prospects. (The higher the bid the more likely the buyer believes the prospects of victory.)

Romney	61.6
Gingrich	16.2
Paul	7.6
Huntsman	6.1
Perry	3.5
Bachmann	1.5
Santorum	0.6

If you are interested, go to www.Intrade.com.

* * * * *

One has always needed a scorecard to keep track of either political Party's primaries and caucuses, but in the case of the 2012 Republican delegate selection process, you also need a special rule book. (Democrats have been here before.)

*Rule #1 – Any State that selects its delegates before February 1, 2012 will be penalized.

*Rule #2 – Other than the states of Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, and South Carolina, any State that begins its process before the First Tuesday in March 2012 will be penalized.

*Rule #3 – Any State, other than the four carve-out States noted in Rule #2, that conducts its process before April 1, 2012 must allocate its delegates on a proportional basis.

*The Penalty – Any State that violates these rules will lose 50% of its delegates and alternates.

[* These items are all part of the same Republican National Committee rule, but broken out for the purpose of the following.]

The Republican primary season is divided into four tranches.

1st tranche – January 3 – 31, 2012

2nd tranche – February 4 – March 3, 2012

3rd tranche – March 6 – 24, 2012

4th tranche – April 3 – June 26, 2012

January 3 – 31, 2012

Iowa (c), New Hampshire (p), South Carolina (p), Florida (p)

Theoretically, all four States will be penalized for violating Rule #1. However, because Iowa's delegates are not, in fact, selected until later in the process, it is exempt. Florida is also to be penalized for violating Rules #2 and #3. New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Florida will lose 50% of their delegates. And,

Florida's remaining delegates will be selected on a proportional basis. (NH, SC, and FL are exempt from the proportionality penalty.)

The following represents the state of the race in each of these States at this time.

<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Iowa</u>	<u>New Hampshire</u>	<u>South Carolina</u>	<u>Florida*</u>
Gingrich	22	24	42	41
Romney	16	29	23	28
Paul	21	21	9	9
Perry	9	1	7	4
Bachmann	11	4	7	4
Santorum	8	2	2	1
Huntsman	5	11	3	1

- * Iowa – PPP 12/11-13/11
- * New Hampshire – Insider Advantage 12/12/11
- * South Carolina – NBC/Marist 12/6/11
- * Florida – NBC/Marist – 12/11/11

February 4 – March 3, 2012

Nevada (c), Maine (c), Colorado (c), Minnesota (c), Missouri (p), Arizona (p), Michigan (p), Washington (c)

Other than Nevada (c) which is exempt, all of the above States are in violation of Rules #2 and #3. All of these States will lose 50% of their delegates, and the remaining delegates must be selected on a proportional basis. (It is possible that the caucus State delegates in this group are selected in the same manner as those in Iowa. They would then be exempt from the 50% loss rule.)

March 6 – 24, 2012

Of the 19 primary and caucus States that commence their processes during this period, their delegates must be allocated on a proportional basis.

April 3 – June 26, 2012

The 21 primaries and caucuses scheduled during this period are free to allocate their delegates proportionally or on the basis of winner take all.

[Note: Any rule established by the Republican National Committee to regulate the delegate selection process (Rules 1-3 above) can be modified by action of the

convention prior to the time that delegate votes are cast. Whether and how the convention acts to modify these rules could well depend on the impact such changes might have on the outcome of the nominating process.]

* * * * *

In gross terms, 345 delegates are selected in the States starting their processes before March 6th, Super Tuesday. On Super Tuesday, 564 delegates will be selected, bringing the total to 909 delegates, 40% of the total. (However, the number of delegates selected before March 6th may be reduced by 50%.)

* * * * *

The Trump Primary

Donald Trump decided not to run for the Republican nomination for President. Instead, he set himself up to be a king maker, so to speak.

For reasons that are not entirely clear, a series of the Republican candidates have chosen to “visit” with Trump at his New York headquarters to seek his “advice.” The group includes Gingrich, Romney (he went in the back door), Bachman, Perry, and Cain. Perhaps the best line from one of the folks who did not make the trek came from Jon Huntsman, who said, “I’m not going to kiss his ring and I’m not going to kiss any other part of his anatomy.”

Donald Trump has decided not to moderate “Trump Debate,” scheduled for December 27th. Trump was to be the sole moderator at the debate in Des Moines, Iowa, sponsored by Newsmax Media & Ion TV. It was not turning out to be a candidate magnet. Only Gingrich and Santorum had agreed to participate. Huntsman, Paul, Romney, Bachmann, and Perry had kindly declined.

The given reason for his withdrawal from the debate was that he was not yet willing to say that he would not be an independent candidate for President. Jay Leno had a different view. He said the debate was canceled for “lack of interest.”

* * * * *

Newt Gingrich

How could it be that Newt Gingrich is doing so well with Republicans for

whom family values and a variety of other virtues are so important? 57% of Republicans say they would be less likely to support a candidate who had an extra-marital affair. [PEW 5/11]

The answer may be that they have said to themselves, “So what?” The Republicans are not looking for a minister for their church or for someone who is a proper role model for their children. They want someone who can stand toe-to-toe with President Obama, and make their case in the general election.

Listening to some of the things that come out of Newt Gingrich’s mouth reminds me of a political operative with whom I worked many years ago on multiple campaigns. He also was a person who said just about everything that came to mind, with little filtering. After a while I found that, like many others, I stopped listening to anything he said, and treated each idea as another hair-brained scheme.

A while later I “accidentally” gave some thought to something he had suggested, that I had originally rejected because of the source. I realized that it made a lot of sense, and, in fact, when we put it into play, it had a very positive effect on the project of the moment.

Thereafter, whenever this colleague started to talk, I closed my eyes in an attempt to block out the source. Lo and behold, I came to discover that every X one of his ideas was really terrific.

Similarly, some of what Newt Gingrich says is out of left field, but some of the things he says make sense. The question is whether the far out commentary will make it impossible for the electorate at large to sift through what he has to say and hear that with which they might agree.

* * * * *

Mitt Romney

The Romney campaign’s original plan seems to have been that he would win the nomination because he would be the last person standing. Survey research from the first four selection events, which shows Gingrich leading in Iowa, South Carolina and Florida, and closing the gap in New Hampshire, suggests that that strategy has become very high-risk.

As noted in the tables above, Romney's share of the potential caucus/primary electorate is simply stagnant.

It does not seem to be enough to look like a President, have a stable family, be a successful businessman, and former public official. He has tried to stay above the fray, but that is clearly not working.

Romney is dealing with the reality that only 29% of Republican primary voters view him as a conservative, while 53% see him as a moderate. At the same time, 57% see Gingrich as a conservative, and 28% seem him as a moderate. [NBC/WSJ 12/11]

It remains to be seen whether Romney can successfully change his style and his message over the next month and a half.

* * * * *

Ron Paul

Ron Paul is not going to be the Republican nominee, but he may have the best organized campaign. He is currently running a distant third, but he has more potential to affect this race than anyone else.

If there is one person who knows what he thinks and always says it, it is Paul. His point of view has not changed in all the years he has been in Congress or from his previous run at the Presidency in 2008. He is clearly the most real anti-government candidate in the field. And who else in the field would stand up in New Hampshire and come out for the right to sell and drink raw milk, an issue in that State?

Paul has now run three times for President. He first ran as Independent in 1988 as a Libertarian, and then in 2008 as a Republican. The net result is that while the size of his support group is not as large as others, he probably has the most dedicated group of supporters.

More so than anyone else in the field, when his time comes to leave the race, as it inevitably will, his unfettered support for one of the other candidates could have a real impact.

One of the best pieces I have read about Paul, is Dan Balz's column in the December 11, 2011 Washington Post.

* * * * *

And There Went Herman Cain
or
4 Weeks in the life of a candidacy

It is hard to imagine that anyone running for President in 2011 would believe that there is any aspect of their life is not fair game once their candidacy becomes real. But, it does appear that Herman Cain thought he was above that kind of scrutiny or that, if it occurred, the public would not care. He also seemed to misunderstand that, if, in fact, you are clueless about aspects of government with which the public thinks you should be familiar, your time as flavor of the month will be short-lived.

- * October 24th, Herman Cain was leading the GOP primary pack with 25% of the vote in a CBS/NYT survey.
- * October 30th, Cain still leading with 30% of the vote in a Quinnipiac poll.
- * October 31st, "Politico" broke the story alleging that Cain had sexually harassed one or more women during his tenure at the National Restaurant Association.
- * November 6th, CBS survey finds Cain at 18%, but still leading the pack.
- * November 7th-10th, new harassment accusers surface and the first accuser is identified.
- * Cain continues to demonstrate that there is a lot he does not know about the Federal government in general, and foreign affairs in particular.
- * November 13th, Cain garners support from 14% of GOP primary voters and is now in 3rd place in CNN/OR survey, 10 points behind the leader.
- * November 28th, a woman comes forward alleging a 13-year extramarital affair with Cain.
- * November 30th, Rasmussen survey has Cain at 8, trailing the leader by 30 points (Rasmussen not a favorite of WW but the only poll available).
- * December 3rd, Cain suspends his campaign, effectively ending it.

* * * * *

While debates have long been important in Presidential campaigns, they may be playing a unique role in the GOP nomination fight in this election. Most of the real-time audiences have not been all that large. However, the information that flows from them to those paying attention and those not paying attention is all but over whelming.

Whether your primary source of information is local newspaper or TV, one of the cable networks, the Yahoo News Service, or one of a variety of other internet sources, it is hard to escape the replay of segments or commentary on who won or lost, each debate.

At least at this stage of the game, the new information flow is serving as a substitute for the role early State organization efforts have played historically.

Of the 13 media-sponsored Republican nomination debates to date, the largest audience – 7.58 million viewers – was the ABC/DesMoine Register/ Yahoo News debate on December 8th. This was the most watched debate since the Fox-carried debate on September 22nd.

Republican nominating process
Debates with one or more media sponsors

5/5/11	Fox News - 3.26 million viewers
6/13/11	CNN - 3.2 million viewers
8/11/11	Fox News - 5 million + viewers
9/7/11	NBC/MSNBC/Politico - 5,400,000 viewers
9/12/11	CNN - 3,600,000 viewers
9/22/11	Fox/Google - 6,100,000 viewers
10/11/11	Bloomberg/Washington Post – no ratings available (Bloomberg does not subscribe to Nielsen)
10/18/11	CNN - 5.46 million viewers
11/9/11	CNBC - 3.33 million viewers

11/12/11	CBS/National Journal - 5.3 million viewers
11/22/11	CNN - 3.6 million viewers
12/10/11	ABC/DesMoines Register/Yahoo News/Iowa GOP/ 7.58 million viewers 2.1 million viewers (25-54)
12/15/11	FOX/Iowa GOP [data not available at press time]

* * * * *

PRESIDENT OBAMA

The President is less than one year away from the day on which the American public will give him his report card for his first term. As he approaches that day, the public's grade for the job he has done is lower than any of the 7 previous Presidents in their 3rd year in office.

The President's current job approval rating in Gallup is 42%. Following is the list of 8.

	<u>App</u>	<u>Dis</u>
Eisenhower	75	13
GW Bush (II)	63	34
Reagan	54	38
Clinton	51	44
G Bush (I)	50	41
Carter	50	35
Nixon	50	37
Obama	42	50

* * * * *

Following are several additional cuts at the President's job approval rating.

	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN/ORC</u>
Dec 2011	46/48	44/46 (CBS)	----	----
Nov 2011	44/51%	-----	44/53%	44/54
Oct 2011	44/51%	46/46%	42/54%	45/52%
Aug 2011	44/51%	48/47%	44/46 WP	44/54%
July 2011	47/48%	---	47/48%	45/54%
June 2011	49/46%	48/43%(CBS)	47/49%	48/48%

The only major survey that shows the President having a higher job approval than disapproval rating is PEW, which, in its December survey, has the President's job approval number at 46% to 43% disapproval.

* * * * *

The most recent NBC/WSJ survey found that 45% have favorable feelings about the President, while 42% have unfavorable feelings about him. There has not been much, if any, movement in this measurement since August. This matches up with a 48% favorable/49% unfavorable result in the December WP/ABC.

On his handling of the economy, disapproval of the President's performance remains at 57% to 40% approval. The last time the President had a positive performance rating on his handling of the economy was in September 2009, when his performance on this measurement was 50% approval to 42% disapproval. The next month it was even, and he has been in negative territory ever since.
[NBC/WSJ 12/11]

* * * * *

The current NBC/WSJ survey gave respondents the opportunity to identify accomplishments and failures of the Obama administration by selecting from a fixed list of options. The top two accomplishments were in the foreign policy/military category, and the top two failures were failing to improve economic conditions and increasing government spending.

Accomplishments - Top 4 (over 10%)

Killing Osama bin laden	27%
Bring troops home from Iraq	25%
Preventing another economic depression	13%
Passing the health care law	11%

Failures - Top 5 (over 10%)

Unable to improve economic conditions	24%
Increasing government spending	18%
Not providing strong leadership	16%
Passing the health care law	13%
Keeping American troops in Afghanistan	12%

* * * * *

The health care law passed by the Congress and signed by the President during Obama's first term continues to be a problem for the President. It is treated as "his" healthcare law and its popularity has not improved.

46% (36% strongly) favor eliminating the law. 40% oppose its elimination. The number favoring elimination has not changed since January 2011. The number opposing has dropped from 46%. [NBC/WSJ 12/11]

* * * * *

President Obama has chosen the course of his Presidency. Rather than use Washington to achieve his goals, he derided the way Washington works and many of its players. He has chosen not to regularly engage with, let alone court, the Members of Congress in his own Party or the other Party. It does not appear that he has maintained the strength of connection to the electorate that he achieved in winning election in 2008.

* * * * *

THE PRESIDENTIAL GENERAL ELECTION

At this time a Ouija (pronounced weegie) board may be as useful in predicting the outcome of the 2012 general election as any series of polls, opinions and other pieces of "hard" evidence. With that said, here are some thoughts on the 2012 election.

* * * * *

Rather than rely on a Quija board, WW asked Charlie Cook how he would describe the 2012 Presidential election campaign. As always, Charlie has a way of

describing an election in plain English.

“ The answer depends on two questions. Is the election going to be a referendum or a choice, will it be about economics or demographics? A referendum probably means it’s about the economy. In the absence of a strong turnaround, that’s tough for President Obama. A choice of two competing visions and directions could well be a fairer fight that could go either way. The Democratic argument about demographics is a hard sell. While African American turnout may well remain very high, among young people and Latino voters, replicating the intensity of 2008 is a real challenge.”

* * * * *

There is at least one thing that Obama has going for him in the coming general election. A substantially larger number of people (39%) are quite confident that he has the personal characteristics to be President, versus those who say they are quite confident that either Gingrich (17%) or Romney (20%) have those characteristics.

On the negative side, 34% are not at all confident that Obama has the personal characteristics to be President. Only 31% have this view about Romney but 42% lack confidence in Gingrich. [NBC/WSJ 12/11]

* * * * *

The Obama campaign is growing increasingly optimistic, according to the headline in a recent Washington Post article, which was written following a briefing for reporters by the campaign’s leadership.

Apparently, one of their reasons for optimism is that a bruising GOP nomination fight will leave the Republican candidate battered. The other reason is that it is starting to appear that Newt Gingrich may be the eventual nominee. A warning – Be careful for what you wish for.

At the briefing, the campaign outlined 5 potential paths to victory.

- * Win Florida and its 29 electoral votes.
- * Sweep Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada and Iowa
- * Win Ohio and Iowa
- * Repeat his 2008 performance and win North Carolina and Virginia

* Win Arizona

There is little question that the campaign is building an election team that is unparalleled in Presidential campaign history. One area in which it will certainly not be equaled or beaten is in the use of technology. For those of you who are interested in the campaign infrastructure, I recommend the article by Julianna Goldman in Bloomberg 12/14/11.

From all appearances, they will be able to fund the campaign they want to run.

* * * * *

A generic Republican candidate for President beats Obama 45% to 43%. However, he bests Romney by 47% to 45%. Obama beats Gingrich 51% to 40%, and Paul by 50% to 37%. [NBC/WSJ 12/11]

When potential voters are pushed on the question of whether they are certain to vote for Obama, 34% said yes. Another 37% say they will vote against him, and 27% will cast their vote based on who is the GOP nominee. [NBC/WSJ 12/11]

49% of self-identified Republicans/Leaners are more enthusiastic about voting in the general election, as compared to 44% of Democrats/Leaners. [Gallup 12/11]

* * * * *

During the first week of December 2011, USA/Today/Gallup conducted a survey of registered voters in 12 swing States: Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin. It is matched with a national Gallup survey of national registered voters.

While Obama bests Romney 47% to 46% among national registered voters, he trails Romney among the swing State registered voters, 48% to 43%. He leads Gingrich among national registered voters 50% to 44%, but loses to Gingrich 48% to 45% among swing State registered voters.

* * * * *

THE CONGRESS

There is yet another example of Congressional action that puts the lie to claims that the Congress can not get anything done.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) wants to establish a Climate Service similar to the Weather Service. Currently, data on the subject of climate is scattered through various NOAA departments. NOAA wants to establish the equivalent of a “one-stop shop” for climate information. The idea is supported by the person who was the head of NOAA for eight years under President George Bush.

There was no request of new funding for the new proposed entity. The funding would come from the funds already received by the various shops that would be combined.

The Senate approved most of what NOAA requested in its 2012 budget. The House approved none of it, and it was nowhere to be found in the final agreement on the budget.

According to the Washington Post, “a House Appropriations committee release implied that Congress had saved \$322 million in fiscal year 2012 by nixing the climate service.” An interesting example of the accounting conventions to which the Congress subscribes.

* * * * *

Through November 30th, the 112th Congress has been less productive than any Congress at least since 1991. The House has passed 326 bills, the Senate 368 bills, and the President has signed 62 into law.

The previous low in each category since 1991 was

The House 483 – 1995

The Senate 346 – 1995

Bills signed 88 – 1995

* * * * *

75% of Americans rate the accomplishments of this year's Congress as one of the worst (42%) or below average 33%. Just 1% call it one of the best.

In a close race, 69% disapprove of the job being done by Republicans in Congress, while 62% disapprove of the job being done by the Democrats.

By 45% to 43% the public prefers that the new Congress be controlled by Democrats rather than Republicans. The Democrats have been slightly ahead since October. [NBC/WSJ 12/11]

* * * * *

How do Americans rate the honesty and integrity of Members of Congress? 64% rate them low or very low. This puts Members of Congress below lobbyists, telemarketers, and car salespeople. In fact, this rating is the lowest of the 21 professions tested by Gallup. This is by far the lowest rating on this question in the last 35 years. [Gallup 12/11]

* * * * *

In the last NBC/WSJ survey, respondents were asked to select from a list what most disappoints them about the current Congress. Here is their answer.

Lots of partisan disagreement with nothing getting done	28
Republican leadership is unwilling to compromise with Democrats	17
Not enough being done to fix the economy	13
They have not gone far enough in cutting federal spending	12
Special interests have too much control	10
Obama is unwilling to compromise with the Republican leadership	6
They have gone too far in cutting critical government programs	5

* * * * *

67% now say that most current Members of Congress should be voted out of office in the 2012 election. This is the highest number ever recorded by Pew Research. 53% had that view in 2010. 33% do think their own Member of Congress should be re-elected, just slightly more than the 31% who thought that in 2010, when 58 Members of Congress lost re-election bids. [Pew 12/11]

* * * * *

THE SENATE

There has been only one change in the structure of the Senate race since the November issue of the Watch. North Dakota has moved from Leaning Republican to Toss-Up.

* * * * *

THE U.S. SENATE

Democrats	51
Republicans	47
Independents	2 (caucus Dem)

Here is how the 33 Senate elections -- 23 Democratic incumbents (includes 2 Independents), 10 Republican incumbents -- look to me at this time . (D=Dem incumbent in office, R=GOP incumbent in office, I=Ind. Incumbent in office) Underlining reflects retirement.

Safe <u>Democrat(8)</u>	Leaning <u>Democrat(7)</u>	<u>TossUp(10)</u>	Leaning <u>Republican(3)</u>	Safe <u>Republican(5)</u>
California	<u>Connecticut</u>	<u>Hawaii</u>	<u>Arizona</u>	Indiana
Delaware	Florida	Mass.	Maine	Mississippi
Maryland	Michigan	Missouri	<u>Texas</u>	Tennessee
Minnesota	Ohio	Montana		Utah
New Jersey	Pennsylvania	Nebraska		Wyoming
New York	Washington	Nevada		
Rhode Island	West Virginia	<u>New Mexico</u>		
		<u>No. Dakota</u>		
		<u>Virginia</u>		
		<u>Wisconsin</u>		

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2012	30	37
Safe in 2012	8	5
Leaning in 2012	7	3
Total	45	45
Toss-ups	10 (2R/8sD)	

* * * * *

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WW has regularly reprinted the “House Dashboard” published by the Cook Political Report. The data below, 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 reflects the Cook’s current Competitive House Race Chart through December 8, 2011.

THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Republicans 242
Democrats 192
Vacancy 1 (D)

	<u>1/20/11</u>	<u>6/21/11</u>	<u>8/12/11</u>	<u>11/16/11</u>	<u>12/8/11</u>
TOTAL Dem	193	---	---	---	---
Solid Dem	150	---	---	---	---
Likely Dem	27	22	22	18	18
Lean Dem	12	13	17	13	14
Toss-up	10	17	15	20	21
D	4	6	6	8	8
R	6	11	9	12	13
Lean GOP	15	18	20	21	21
Likely GOP	38	42	40	31	29
Solid GOP	183	---	---	---	---
TOTAL GOP	242	---	---	---	---

[As always, thanks to “The Cook Political Report.”]

* * * * *

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

Safe Democrat	164
Competitive	80
Lean Dem	42
Lean GOP	38
Safe Republican	191

The net result of this projection is that Republicans will hold 229 seats after the election and the Democrats will hold 206 seats.

* * * * *

RESTAURANTS

Shanghai Village

4929 Bethesda Avenue
Bethesda, Maryland 20814
301-654-7787
301-654-7788

Bob, Rita, Debbie, and Maureen visited the Shanghai Village on a Sunday night.

There is nothing fancy about this restaurant, but the food is worth the “trip.” There are a large number of tables, ranging from two to twelve people. Total seats are approximately 100. The majority of the chairs are straight, wooden chairs, although a number of tables, including ours, were surrounded with folding card table chairs.

This was a Bob-directed meal, although others in our party were solicited for their favorite dishes.

When the serving person approached our table, having dropped off water, she asked if we had any appetizer preferences. Bob asked her the length of preparation time for Peking Duck. She responded that it took 20 minutes. Bob asked her to immediately go to the kitchen and order Peking Duck, even before we placed the appetizer order. At first she hesitated, I assume thinking that he was kidding. When it became clear that he was serious, and that we were not going to

order anything else until she place the Peking Duck order, she left the table and did just that.

Thereafter, each time she approached the table, someone in our group reminded her of the time remaining in her 20 minute estimate. The Duck was delivered at the 17th minute.

Three soups were ordred, “Hot and Sour,” “Wonton,” and “Egg Drop.” Other dishes were “Tung Tin Shrimp,” “Chicken Chow Mein,” “Combination Vegetables,” and “House Fried Rice.”

All of the dishes, including the Peking Duck, were very tasty.

The men’s room was clean and more than adequate. The floors are dark brown. The walls are covered with mid-sized white tiles, except for a series of large black tiles that adorn the walls in a line at shoulder height. The commode, urinal, and washbasin are all in the same area, with no walls separating them, although the urinal is in a little alcove.

Bob found parking on the street, but there is apparently ample parking in the rear of the restaurant.

* * * * *

Mike

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

mberman@dubersteingroup.com