

*Mike Berman's*

# WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

No. 154

April 28, 2017

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\*Any statements in this issue of the Watch which are not sourced are mine and identified by “WW”.

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## **State of the Nation**

34% of Americans say the country is headed in the right direction while 59% say it is on the wrong track. This is the highest wrong track number since Trump was elected. Just before the election in October 2016 the wrong track number was 65%. (NBC/WSJ, 4/17)

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## Employment

The official BLS seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for March 2017 is 4.5%.

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 unemployment rate for March 2017 is 8.9%. [BLS data is based on those 16 years of age and older.]

Early in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of April 2017, Gallup found an unadjusted unemployment rate of 5.6%. It also found an under-employment rate of 13.8% (unemployed + those working part-time but wanting full-time). [This is based on those 18 years of age and older.]

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Industrial robots alone eliminated up to 670,000 American jobs between 1990 and 2007. [WP, 4/10]

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There will be 1.4 million more software development jobs than qualified applicants by 2020. There are more than 500,000 computing jobs opening in this country but less than 43,000 computer science students graduated last year. [USA Today, 3/31/17]

In 1923, there were 863,536 coal miners. By the year 2000 there were 108,098 miners. Thereafter there was a surge in the number of coal miners and the number reached 143,437 in 2011. In 2016, there were 81,484 miners. [U.S. Department of Labor]

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In 2014, immigrants made up “17.1% of the total U.S. workforce or about 27.6 million workers of a total of 161.4 million.” 19.6 million workers, 12.1% of the total immigrant workforce, were in the U.S. legally. 8 million, or 5%, entered the country illegally or overstayed legitimate visas.

The following are the top 10 industries in which immigrants are a substantial share of the workforce.

	Lawful immigrants	Unauthorized immigrants
Private household	24%	22%
Textile, apparel, manufacturing	22%	13%
Agriculture	15%	18%
Accommodation	21%	11%
Food Manufacturing	17%	13%
Computer/Electronic products	22%	5%
Personal and laundry services	19%	7%
Admin support services	14%	11%
Construction	12%	13%
Misc. manufacturing	16%	7%

[PEW, 3/16/17]

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There are 373,807 jobs in the solar power sector in 2016, according to the Energy Information Administration, compared with 398,235 in the natural gas industry and 160,119 in the coal business. [The New York Times]

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There have been nine retail bankruptcies so far in 2017, equal to the total number of bankruptcies in 2016. [538 Newsletter, 4/11]

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56% are satisfied with the state of the U.S economy today. This is the highest satisfaction rate since Trump was elected and the highest since January 2002. [NBC/WSJ, 4/17]

30% think the economy is getting better, 18% say it is getting worse and 49% say it is staying the same. [WP/ABC, 4/17]

59% say that economic conditions in the country today are good while 41% say conditions are poor. [CNN/ORC, 4/25]

52% say things are going well in the country today while 44% say things are going badly. [CNN/ORC, 4/25]

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The typical Wal-Mart supercenter has 120,000 items available for sale. Wal-Mart has approximately 35 million products online. [Bloomberg]

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400 hours of content are uploaded to YouTube every minute. [WSJ]

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In a survey of 250 U.S. colleges and universities, 39% of the institutions reported a decline in applications from international students. [NPR]

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*Morning Consult* conducted surveys in December 2016 and April 2017 to assess Americans' beliefs about the credibility of various news outlets. There is no difference in the order of credibility between December and April. Most of the outlets showed small increases in credibility between December and April.

However, when you look at the difference in credibility scores between Republicans and Democrats there are considerable differences.

<u>Media Credibility</u>		<u>December 2016</u>	
December 2016	April 2017	Republicans	Democrats
ABC 67%	ABC 69%	Fox 73%	ABC 79%
CBS 65%	CBS 69%	WSJ 64%	CBS 79%
NBC 65%	NBC 68%	ABC 59%	NBC 78%
WSJ 64%	WSJ 67%	CBS 58%	CNN 77%
NYT 63%	CNN 63%	NBC 57%	NYT 76%
CNN 60%	NYT 62%	NYT 52%	WSJ 69%
Fox 55%	Fox 60%	CNN 51%	MSNBC 68%
MSNBC 55%	MSNBC 59%	MSNBC 48%	NPR 59%
NPR 51%	NPR 56%	NPR 46%	HuffPo 59%
Huff Po 46%	HuffPo 47%	HuffPo 37%	Fox 45%
Breitbart 19%	Breitbart 22%	Breitbart 26%	The Onion 22%
The Onion 18%	The Onion 18%	InfoWars 20%	Breitbart 17%
		The Onion 16%	InfoWars 16%

Amy Walter makes the point that other studies have shown that even when Republicans and Democrats read the same publication, they choose to read stories that comport with their own social/political viewpoint.

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Over the last 40 years Americans have lost confidence in a number of American Institutions. But they have gained confidence in a few institutions. [Gallup]

Institutions in which Americans have lost confidence:

	<u>Confidence level</u>		
	<u>1973</u>	<u>Other date</u>	<u>2016</u>
The presidency		72% (1992)	36%
U.S. Supreme Court	45%		36%
Congress	42%		8%
Church or Organized Religion	65%		41%
Public Schools	58%		30%
Banks		60% (1985)	27%
Organized labor	30%		23%
Big business	26%		18%
Newspapers		51% (1985)	20%
TV News		46% (1997)	21%

Institutions in which American confidence grew:

	<u>1973</u>	<u>Other date</u>	<u>2016</u>
The military	58%		73%
The police		52% (1995)	56%
Criminal Justice System		17% (1995)	23%

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53% of Americans oppose laws requiring transgender people to use bathrooms that correspond to their sex at birth rather than their current gender identity. 39% favor such laws.

Republicans favor such laws by 59% to 36%, while 57% of independents and 65% of Democrats oppose the laws.

64% of Americans would not allow small business owners in their state to refuse to provide products or services to gay or lesbians, even if doing so violates their religious beliefs.

There is broad support (across all major political groups) for laws that protect LGBT people from discrimination in jobs, public accommodations and housing, including 70% of all Americans, 60% of Republicans, 72% of Independents and 77% of Democrats. [PRRI, 3/10/17]

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Married Americans pay a disproportionate share of total income taxes paid even though the number of married U.S. adults has dropped substantially over the last 45 years.

In 1970, 69% of U.S. adults were married and they paid 80% of the income taxes. By 2014, the number of married filings had dropped to 50% but their share of income taxes dropped only to 74%. [PEW, 4/12/17]

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In efforts to “keep the country safe”, 41% of Americans believe that the U.S. has gone too far in infringing on people’s privacy. 20% believe the country has not gone far enough.

If the question asked of respondents is changed so that “keep the country safe” is replaced by “efforts to fight terrorism” the number who believe the country has gone too far drops to 38% and the number who think it has not gone far enough rises to 25%. [NBC NEWS/Survey Monkey, 3/24-28]

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In one of her recent Washington Post columns, Catherine Rampell wrote about the recent efforts of liberal-leaning students to stop people with whom they do not agree, from speaking on their respective campuses. In her column she presented five reasons she objects to these efforts. The following are the first sentences from each reason.

“First, you’re giving the speakers you abhor a much bigger platform when you martyr them.”

“Second, suppressing ideas you disagree with dulls your ability to cogently, convincingly rebut them.”

“Third, and relatedly, you’re not actually crushing opposing views by shushing them; you’re merely forcing them underground, where they can fester and mutate into more dangerous forms.”

“Fourth, you may not realize it yet. But you’re breeding resentment and reactionaryism – and turning potential allies into enemies.”

“Finally, the same censorship tools you’ve developed to silence your enemies will be used against you.” [WP, 4/14/17]

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### **This and That**

In her April 15-16 WSJ column, Peggy Noonan quoted the following from the famed NYT columnist, Bill Safire.

“Never join a pile-on, always hit ‘em when they are up. Don’t criticize the person who’s already being attacked. What’s the fun in that, where’s the valor? Hit them when they’re flying high and it takes some guts.”

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“Less than 1 percent of the 10,000 case studies published by the Harvard Business School feature black business leaders...even though black-owned businesses represent 9% of all U.S. firms.” [WP, 4/16]

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There is currently “\$1.3 trillion in outstanding student loan debt.” “\$137 billion in federal student loans are in default.” One example cited in a column by Michelle Singletary describes a doctor from Michigan who is carrying \$493,000 in debt. [WP, 4/16/17]

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Domino’s Pizza — through reinvesting in product quality and investments in digital ordering tech — saw its share of the American pizza market rise from 9 percent in 2009 to 15 percent in 2016. [[Bloomberg](#)]

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2017 is the 28<sup>th</sup> birthday, of the internet! Tim Berners-Lee, who created the internet, is concerned about three internet threats: a lack of control over personal data, misinformation and a lack of transparency. [Quartz]

The nature of the internet is a wonder. Recently, I emailed a well-known TV journalist when she was in Japan. My email sent at 12:20 p.m. EST. I received her response at 12:25 p.m. [WW]

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Nordstrom Department store is offering fake mud covered jeans for the low price of \$425 a pair. [MSNBC, 4/26/17]

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### **Percent of driving time spent on phone per day**

The actual device use among 3.1 million drivers over 5.6 billion miles of driving and found that in **88% of trips**, drivers made at least some use of their phones. On average, drivers spent 3.5 minutes per hour on their device.

The number of traffic deaths has been increasing since 2015 after a 40-year decline, with more than 40,000 people dying on the roads last year for the first time in a decade. It is estimated that a 2-second distraction increases the risk of a collision by 20 times. [AXIOS – Mike Allen]

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A high school classmate of mine by the name of Judy Lindley has for many years taken on the responsibility of keeping the whole class—Duluth East, Class of 1957—up to speed as to what various folks are doing or want to share with classmates.

Recently she circulated an item called, “Thanks for the memory” circa 1955:

\* Did you hear the post office is thinking about charging 7 cents just to mail a letter?

\* If they raise the minimum wage to \$1.00, nobody will be able to hire outside help at the store.

- \* When I first started driving, who could have thought gas would someday cost 25 cents a gallon? Guess we'd be better off leaving the car in the garage.
- \* Did you see where some baseball player just signed a contract for \$50,000 a year just to play ball? It wouldn't surprise me if someday they'll be making more than the President.
- \* I never thought I'd see the day all our kitchen appliances would be electric. They're even making electric typewriters now.
- \* It's too bad things are so tough nowadays. I see where a few married women are having to work to make ends meet.
- \* It won't be long before young couples are going to have to hire someone to watch their kids so they can both work.
- \* I'm afraid the Volkswagen car is going to open the door to a whole lot of foreign business.
- \* Thank goodness I won't live to see the day when the government takes half our income in taxes. I sometimes wonder if we are electing the best people to government.
- \* The fast food restaurant is convenient for a quick meal, but I seriously doubt they will ever catch on.
- \* There is no sense going on short trips anymore for a weekend. It costs nearly \$2.00 a night to stay in a hotel.
- \* No one can afford to be sick anymore. At \$15.00 a day in the hospital, it's too rich for my blood.
- \* If they think I'll pay 30 cents for a haircut, forget it.

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### **President Trump**

Donald Trump has now completed his first 100 days in office. It has been unlike the first 100 days of any presidency in modern memory.

The style in which Trump has decided to operate the White House and the executive branch looks to be different than any other new President we have experienced. The impact or effectiveness of his style cannot be judged this early in his tenure.

On his performance to date, Gallup found on April 25<sup>th</sup> that 39% of Americans approve his job performance and 56% disapprove. Below are his job ratings in Gallup on the first and 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Approval</u>	<u>Disapproval</u>
4/15/17	41%	53%
4/1/17	38%	57%
3/15/17	42%	53%
3/1/17	43%	51%
2/15/17	40%	54%
2/1/17	43%	52%

The following are some additional looks at his job performance.

<u>Date</u>	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN/ORC</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>	<u>FOX</u>	<u>QUIPAC</u>
APR	40/54	42/53	44/54	43/49cbs	xxx	35/57
MAR	xxx	xxx	45/52	40/52cbs	43/51	37/56
FEB	44/48	xxx	xxx	39/51cbs	48/47	38/55
JAN	xxx	xxx	44/53	40/48cbs	xxx	36/44

As you will see below, Trump’s job approval rating by the public at large is the worst of any president going back to Richard Nixon.

Here are the initial job approval/disapproval numbers of the last ten presidents before Trump. (Numbers are from Gallup for all the presidents up to Clinton and from NBC/WSJ after that.)

Approval – Beginning of first term

Kennedy	78% (4/61)
Eisenhower	73% (4/53)
Reagan	67% (4/81)
Carter	63% (4/77)
Obama	61%(4/09)
Nixon	61% (4/69)

George HW Bush	58% (4/89)
G W Bush	57% (4/01)
Clinton	52% (4/93)

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My favorite pollster, Peter Hart, recently wrote the following in a memorandum related to the recent NBC/WSJ survey (4/17/17).

“...there is one thing I have always observed: if a president has a strong economy and conducts a successful military action, feelings and attitudes toward the chief executive improves. For the first time, this has not happened. Some 62% support President Trump's actions in Syria in response to the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government. The satisfaction with the state of the U.S. economy is at the highest level since 2001. Despite these two bell weathers of public opinion, the President's ratings are down, not up.

“This is the start of the Trump presidency, and it is unwise to project out how his term will play out with the American public. However, it is fair to say that his first 100 days as measured through this survey indicate a lot of challenges lie ahead.”

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On Trump's handling of the economy, he has 44% approval and 46% disapproval. When it comes to foreign policy his rating is closer to his overall rating with 40% approving and 55% disapproving. [NBC/WSJ, 4/17]

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52% of Americans are not confident in Trump's ability as Commander-in-Chief while 46% are confident in his ability. As would be expected, 86% of Republicans are confident, only 14% of Democrats are confident and 45% of Independents are confident. [CBS, 4/27]

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38% rate Trump as being “honest and trustworthy” while 58% rate him as not being honest or trustworthy. [WP/ABC, 4/17]

In a second survey 61% say the phrase, “Is honest and trustworthy” does not apply to Trump while 37% say it does apply. [CNN/ORC, 4/25]

44% say he is less effective than other recent presidents. 57% are concerned about Trump's changes of positions on major issues. [NBC/WSJ, 4/17]

In April, Trump has a positive rating of 39% and a negative rating of 50%. Vice President Mike Pence has a positive rating of 38% and a negative rating of 39%. [NBC/WSJ, 4/17]

45% of Americans would prefer the Democrats in Congress to take a lead role in settling policy for the country while 26% would prefer President Trump and only 21% would like that task to be undertaken by the Republicans. [NBC/WSJ, 4/17]

61% disapprove of the President giving his daughter and son-in-law major positions in his White House. [WP/ABC, 4/17]

The number of Americans who believe that Trump keeps his promises was at 62% in February. In the first week of April it has dropped to 45%. [Gallup]

Americans are split down the middle on whether Trump has done a good job of keeping the important promises he made during the campaign. 48% say he has done a good job and 52% say that Trump has done a poor job. [CNN/ORC, 4/25]

56% of Americans say he has done a poor job of assuming a team of top advisors to work in the White House. 42% say he has done a good job. [CNN/ORC, 4/25]

10% of Americans have never heard of Vice President Mike Pence, but only 3% have never heard of Ivanka Trump and Melania Trump. All three have positive favorable/unfavorable ratings: Pence – 46%/39%; Ivanka – 46%/41%; and Melania – 45%/38%. [CNN/ORC, 4/25]

96% of Trump voters say that their support of Trump was the right thing to do. [WP/ABC, 4/17]

Trump lags the nomination/confirmation rate of the last Presidents in the first 100 days. [WP, 4/26/17]

	<b>Confirmed</b>	<b>Sent but not confirmed</b>	<b>Failed</b>
Obama	69	118	3
GHWBush	59	44	1
Clinton	49	125	2
GWBush	35	50	0
<b>Trump</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>3</b>

67% of Americans believe that the Democratic party is out of touch with the concerns of most people in the U.S. while 62% have that view of the Republican party. [WP/ABC, 4/17]

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Trump has had some real victories so far, beginning with the confirmation of Neil Gorsuch as the 9<sup>th</sup> Supreme Court Justice. This will have a lasting effect on the future of the country. There are various other evidences of success.

One thing that stands out in this White House is the stream of “unofficial information” coming from the innards of the building. The number of people talking “out of school” either officially or unofficially is setting new records. As Amy Walter said in a recent column, “I have seen sieves with fewer holes than this White House.”

President Trump is making it clear that he is prepared to do the basic things necessary to build a relationship with the Congress. There have been a variety of social contacts with members of the Congress including inviting the Freedom Caucus of the House to a bowling party and inviting Ted Cruz and his family for dinner at the White House.

Donald Trump and his family are very wealthy. It is likely that his service in the White House will, at the end of the day, make him and his family even wealthier. Those that voted for him certainly knew of his wealth and so far they do not seem to be bothered by reports that he and his family will do very well financially. The question that folks should be concerned about is how the actions of the President and those members of his family who are in the government and administration will affect their lives.

In general, the concept of “conflict of interest” seems to be a non-sequitur when you look at the various appointments being made across the executive branch.

As long as folks compare the way this President and administration operate to the way past administrations operated, they will be disappointed.

In a variety of ways the current administration seems to be preparing to roll back just about anything that protects individuals. As things are shaping up, it appears that those who have much will do well and those who are less fortunate will get the short end of the stick. [WW]

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President Trump wants to build a wall between the United States and Mexico. In order to do that, the government needs to acquire the land on which to build the wall. If people don't want to sell their land to build the wall, the government is going to condemn it and seize it by eminent domain. To do that, Trump's budget request includes funding for 20 additional Department of Justice lawyers. [The Texas Observer]

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Stan Greenberg and Nancy Zdunkewicz of The Democracy Corps, in partnership with the Roosevelt Institute, conducted four focus groups in McComb County, Michigan in mid-February 2017. The participants were all Trump voters, who identified as independents, Democratic-leaning independents or Democrats who voted for Obama in 2008 or 2012. Two of the groups were all women and the other two groups were all men.

The following is a list of their feelings toward Trump, roughly a month after the election.

1. He is a strong leader
2. He is not afraid to say what he thinks and be unpopular: he's not a double-talking, promise-breaking politician.
3. He will change everything in Washington.
4. He is business-minded and knows how to get things done.
5. He doesn't need their money and will challenge the political corruption in Washington.
6. He will protect us and keep us safe.
7. He will secure the border and control immigration.
8. He is fighting for us and putting Americans first.
9. He will hold companies accountable and bring back our jobs.

10. He will fix health care.
11. He loves America.

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The administration practices the Art of Distraction. [John Meecham, Morning Joe, 3/13/17]

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### **An uphill climb in the Rust Belt for Democrats**

"To understand the challenge facing Elizabeth Warren and other Democrats as they chart a path out of their Trump nightmare, you can't do much better than to spend a few minutes with the amiable fellow in a diner booth in blue-collar Pennsylvania, as he tucks into a plate of eggs-over-easy and sausage and ponders Donald Trump.

"John Randazzo is a registered Democrat who twice voted for Barack Obama, whose 2008 visit to the Avenue Diner near Wilkes-Barre is memorialized with a plaque and a special red stool at the counter. In 2016, Randazzo was among Rust Belt defectors who helped put Trump in the White House -- the sort of voter who prompted the president to boast last month that he was giving the GOP a rebirth as the 'party ... of the American worker.'

"I honestly feel that he's thinking like the average American right now, what he wants to get done,' said Randazzo, 70, a retired hydraulics company manager who has watched the quality of life here slip as the decades passed. 'I'm on board. I know he's trying hard.' He doesn't think much of the Democrats clamoring to win voters like him back. Asked about Warren, Randazzo suggested that the Massachusetts senator, who is arguably the Democrats' highest-profile advocate for the working class, is out of touch and lumped her in the same category as the entrenched House Democratic leader, Nancy Pelosi. 'Her and Pelosi, they'll never get my vote the way they're acting,' said Randazzo. 'They are completely the opposite of what Donald Trump stands for. He says one thing, they disagree and it's the other thing, and it's ridiculous.'" [by the Boston Globe's Vicky McGrane in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania]

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## The Congress

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72% disapprove of the job being done by Congress while only 20% approve. The last time the disapproval number was lower was in February of this year when it was 60%, before that it was February 2011 when the disapproval number was 69%.

When asked whether they prefer a Republican controlled Congress or a Democratic controlled Congress, respondents select a Democratic-controlled Congress by 47% to 43%. [NBC/WSJ, 4/17]

50% of Americans are not confident that Congress' investigation of Russia's role in the 2016 election will be conducted fairly. 42% have the opposite view. [WP/ABC, 4/17]

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## The House

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

### THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Democrats	194
Republicans	239
Vacancies	2

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Safe in 2017	173	205
Likely	12	24
Lean	7	12
	<u>Tossup</u>	
	3	2

The Cook Political Report has published the 2017 (20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition) version of the Partisan Voter Index. (Compiled by David Wasserman and Ally Flinn)

There is no way to fully describe the wealth of data that is included. The following is a minor amount of information that is included.

“The most striking House statistic in the last 20 years may be the decline of competitive districts, places where members have the greatest political incentives to work on a bipartisan basis.

“In 1997, our Partisan Voter Index scored 164 districts between D+5 and R+5, more than a third of the House, and greater than both the number of strongly Democratic and strongly Republican seats.

“After the hyper-polarized 2016 election, there are only 72 districts between D+5 and R+5 – this is less than one sixth of the House and a 56 percent decline since 1997. This also represents a 20 percent decline from just four years ago, when there were 90 swing seats.

“Over this same period the number of Republican districts rated R+5 or greater has grown from 148 to 195. The number of Democratic districts rated D+5 or great has grown from 123 to 168.

“As it turns out, gerrymandering wasn’t as much of a factor in the House’s polarization as some redistricting reform advocates might argue. Of the 92 “Swing Seats” that have vanished since 1997, 83 percent of the decline has resulted from natural geographic sorting of the electorate from election to election, while only 17 percent of the decline has resulted from changes in district boundaries.”

[Morning Consult.com]

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Four Democrats hold seats in the 25 Republican–trending districts. Eight Republicans hold seats in the top 25 Democratic-leaning districts.

A look at the top 25 most Democratic and most Republican districts reveals the top Democratic districts are further left than Republican districts are far right. There are 13 Democratic districts rated D+35 or greater. There are zero Republican districts rated R+35 or greater. The most Republican district is R+33.

[Quorum Analytics]

Of 395 members of Congress whose personal voter registrations were examined by the Washington Post, 20 members do not live in the district they represent. It turns out that members of Congress are only required to live in the state in which the district they represent is located. [WP]

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## The Senate

Republicans	52
Democrats	46
Independents	2

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>
Seats not up in 2018	23	44
Safe in 2018	12	7
Likely	4	0
	Stabenow	
	Menendez	
	Casey	
	Kaine	
Lean	5	2
	Nelson	Flake
	Tester	Heller
	Brown	
	King	
	Baldwin	

	<u>Toss-ups</u>
4 Democrat	0 Republicans
Donnelly	
McCaskill	
Heitkamp	
Manchin	

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Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the only U.S. Senator of them all who has a negative approval rating in his home state? Mirror, mirror on the wall who is the U.S. Senator who has the highest disapproval rating in his state of any other senator?

The answer to both questions is ...Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky.

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the most popular Senator of them all in his home state?

The answer is Bernie Sanders of Vermont (I) who has an approval rating of 75%. The following are the rest of the Senators who have the highest approval ratings.

2. Patrick Leahy of Vermont (D) – 70%
3. John Barrasso of Wyoming (R) – 69%
4. Michael Enzi of Wyoming (R) - 68%
5. Angus King of Maine (I) – 67%
6. Susan Collins of Maine (R) – 67%
7. John Thune of South Dakota (R) – 66%
8. Brian Schatz of Hawaii (D) – 65%
9. Ron Wyden of Oregon (D) - 65%
10. John Hoeven of North Dakota (R) – 65%

[Morning Consult.Com, 3/17]

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The following are the approval ratings from the Morning Consult.com survey of those senators who are up in 2018 and whose race is not rated as safe.

Likely Dem

Stabenow, MI (47%)  
Menendez, NY (40%)  
Casey, PA (49%)  
Kaine, VA (50%)

Likely GOP

0

Lean Dem

Nelson, FL (53%)  
Tester, MT (57%)  
Brown, OH (52%)  
King, ME (67%)  
Baldwin, WI (44%)

Lean GOP

Flake, AZ (44%)  
Heller, NV (43%)

Dem Toss-up

Donnelly, IN (46%)  
McCaskill, MO (47%)  
Heitkamp, ND (60%)  
Manchin, WVA (57%)

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Only 4.9% of Washington-based U.S. Senate staffers are African American. [WP, 4/25]

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Charlie Cook wrote a piece on April 6, 2017 about the United States Senate and the “nuclear option”. (Exercise of the “nuclear option” ended the filibuster as a device to be used during consideration of presidential nominations subject to Senate confirmation.) The filibuster on presidential nominations other than the Supreme Court ended during the leadership of Harry Reid when he was the Majority Leader of the Senate.

For those of us who revere Congress and, in my case, particularly the Senate, having first worked there as an intern 44 years ago, these are sad times. Partisanship is strangling what was long a functioning and effective institution, whose slow pace was in keeping with its claim to be the world’s greatest deliberative body. Republicans acted shamefully last year by refusing to act on Judge Merrick Garland, President Obama’s choice to fill the vacancy on the Supreme Court left by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia. Now, Democrats’ treatment of Judge Neil Gorsuch, President Trump’s nominee for that same Supreme Court slot, is equally shameful. Both men are eminently qualified and do not deserve to be whipping boys for the ugly partisanship that has poisoned Capitol Hill.

What makes the situation so unfortunate is that the uniqueness of the Senate as an institution has been rendered moot. It is now simply a redundancy. Originally elected not by voters but by state legislatures, representing the more diverse states rather than individual congressional districts, and with six-year terms as opposed to two year terms, the Senate was supposed to be very different from the House. It was supposed to be a bit removed from politics and taking the broader and longer approach to issues. The rules of the Senate were initially designed to bring about wisdom and consensus, while the House would reflect contemporary public opinion by majority votes.

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## **Women Will Get it Done: Women in the Military**

In 2013, then Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta lifted the ban on women serving in combat positions in the United States military. While many saw this as a positive step for women in the military, there are still many issues that need to be addressed to allow women the same opportunities as their male counterparts.

Of the over 722,000 enlisted reservists and National Guard troops, only 18% are women. Over 36,000 women serve in the officer corps but they makes up just 16.6% of the total corps. Additionally, among the top ranks, 7.1% of generals and admirals are women: 28 generals in the Air Force, 19 in the Army, one in the Marine Corps, and 21 admirals in the Navy. While the numbers of enlisted women and those who are officers have been increasing over the years, the male-dominated “tribal nature” of the military can be hostile to women.

The issue of sexual assault in the military has become a major issue for women’s rights advocates and military leaders. However, this issue needs continued attention and resources in order to change the culture of abuse and empower the victims. In 2014, 62% of women who reported being sexually assaulted while on-duty said they had experienced social or professional retaliation, primarily from their colleagues or peers.

In 2013, a law was passed making retaliation illegal but the number of women reporting retaliation stayed consistent in the following year. The military has made pledges of “zero tolerance,” the Senate has set-up coalitions to study the problem, documentaries have been made, and the media has reported extensively on the issue, but the problem persists. Research has found that the vast majority of cases go unreported, 85% were unreported in 2014. Victims of military sexual assault are often discharged or leave the service of their own volition losing opportunities to progress in rank and become the leaders the military needs.

Similar to any number of industries, if there are no women in the pipeline, finding women to fill high-level officer positions will be impossible. The U.S. military is the most powerful in the world and the current government plans to increase spending to build it up further. There is a great opportunity to encourage women’s participation in the armed services, protect them and their jobs, and create a stronger defense.

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1993 – Janet Reno was the first woman to become attorney general of the United States.

1995 – 19 year old Shannon Faulkner became the first female cadet to join the all-male military academy at the Citadel.

1997 – Madeleine K. Albright became the first woman to serve as Secretary of State.

2000 – Condoleezza Rice was the first black woman (and the second woman) to serve as the National Security Advisor to the president.

2005 – Angela Merkel became the first female chancellor of Germany.

2007 – Representative Nancy Pelosi became the first woman to be Speaker of the House.

2009 – Sonia Sotomayor became the first Hispanic and the third woman to become a Supreme Court justice.

2014 – Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan became the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

2016 – Hillary Clinton became the first woman in the United States to receive the presidential nomination from a major political party.

2016 – Kellyanne Conway became the first woman to manage a successful presidential campaign. [NYT, 4/2/17]

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In 2014, 74% of women but only 52% of men disagreed with the following statement: “It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.” [NYT, 4/2]

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Of the 774 million people who are illiterate around the world, two thirds are women. [Gender Avenger Blog, 4/2/17]

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“Female justices on the Supreme Court are far more likely to be interrupted than their male counterparts.” Many male justices interrupt female justices at double-digit rates in the average term. From 2004 – 2015 “when women made up 24% of the bench, 32% of interruptions were of the female justices, yet only 4% of interruptions were by the female justices.” “In 2015, 65.9% of interruptions were directed at the three women on the bench.” This rudeness extends to the male advocates who appear before the court. [WP, 4/16/17]

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Earlier this week, *The Washington Post* reported that Americans don’t like it when men-only groups make decisions about women. “Citizens don’t like all-male panels” the *Post*’s researchers found. Moreover, the study showed that American men seemed to dislike all-male panels “even more than American women.”

We take one small issue with this, which is, to put it bluntly: if men didn’t like all-male panels, there wouldn’t be so many all-male panels. Period. The article makes it seem as though the all-male panel is some inexplicable, naturally occurring phenomenon, but we’ve seen time and again that it isn’t. All-male panels happen when there is complete lack of effort or care to put together a gender-balanced event. [Gender Avenger Blog, 4/13]

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### **Restaurants**

ZANNCHI  
1529 Wisconsin Ave.  
Washington, DC 20007  
202-621-9162  
[www.zannchi.com](http://www.zannchi.com)

We first visited Zannchi with Beth and Sandy and then with Virginia and Tom.

The dishes described below are a combination of the dishes from the two visits. One visit was at dinner time and the other at lunch.

The restaurant is quite narrow. As you enter there is a counter to your right that has seven high stools. To your left and then extending alongside the counter and wrapping around the bar are a series of tables - twos, fours and one six.

From the section of the menu labeled “BANCHAN” (Tapas) we tried steamed Mandu Dumplings and Japchae, glass noodles with assorted vegetables. Then from the section of the menu labeled “BIBIMBAP” (Bowls) we tried the following: Short Ribs, short ribs & assorted vegetables; Bulgogi, beef BBQ, lettuce and onions; Klaennip & beef, Asia, onion & ground beef; Caramelized Kimchi & Beef, kimchi, lettuce, onion & ground beef.

One of our group asked whether chicken could be substituted for the beef in one of the dishes. The answer was a quick and pleasant “no”. There were some modest changes between the lunch and dinner menus. For example the lunch menu included a Korean-style cheese omelet.

The restroom is quite clean and as small as any I have ever used. Once you enter you need to close the door in order to make use of the facilities. There is a circular, clear, heavy glass wash basin hosted by a white ceramic shelf. There is a white ceramic commode. If one were so inclined one could wash one’s hands while sitting on the commode.

The service was quite attentive. There is no parking other than what you might find on Wisconsin Avenue, which is pretty rare unless you hit it right after 6:30 pm.

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Mirabelle  
900 16<sup>th</sup> St., NW  
Washington, DC  
202-506-3833  
Mirabelledc.com

Mirabelle is the newest downtown D.C. high-end restaurant. It opened for lunch on March 20<sup>th</sup> and for dinner on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mary Beth, Steve, Debbie and I had lunch at Mirabelle on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

Entering the restaurant, one’s first reaction is that it is quite grand. It is a bit on the formal side but of course it is all new, a new restaurant in a new building. The chef, Frank Ruta, has been around Washington for a number of years.

As you stand in the entryway, ahead you see a variety of seating arrangements. To the left are a couple of 4 tops. To the right are some 2 tops, circular booths, a series of 2 tops with a banquette providing the seating for one side of the 2 tops. And then behind the 2 tops is a bar with 14 high seats. Everything that can be covered in leather is covered in leather. The total seating in the restaurant is about 120 people.

The servers are all men dressed in suits and ties. Two of the men, who were not our servers, came over to say hello having recognized me from Fiola Mare and I Ricchi.

Debbie and Steve started with Pate Campagne, Country style duck pate, vegetables in puff pastry with mustard, endive. Then Debbie had the Yellowfin Tuna Nicoise, our confit tuna, arugula, devilled egg, black olive paste, sweet pepper bavarose. Steve followed with the Jambon Beurre, baguette, butter, ham.

Mary Beth enjoyed the Pan Bagnat, a traditional Provençal sandwich made with tuna confit and baguette.

I asked our server for his favorites and then ordered his suggestions. I started with the Petite Marmite, oxtail and capon consommé, vegetables, marrow and then had the Bouillabaisse Mirabelle, Fish and shellfish of the season in a flavorful broth scented with pernod.

For dessert we shared a Gateau Mirabelle.

There are a variety of items that I look forward to trying on my next visit.

(I did not check out the restroom but one can assume that with a new restaurant it is pretty well done.)

There is outdoor seating when the weather is right but I have never enjoyed exhaust fumes mixed with my food.

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*Mike*

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