

Mike Berman's

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

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Washington, DC

Agua301

Millie's

Farmers & Distillers

Q by Peter Chang

*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

27% of Americans say the country is headed in the right direction while 60% say it is on the wrong track. [Reuters/Ipsos, 9/5/17]

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Employment

The official BLS seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for August 2017 is 4.4% a slight bump up from the 4.3% in July.

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 August 2017 is 8.8%**. [BLS data is based on those 16 years of age and older.]

Gallup no longer tracks employment/unemployment

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51% of employees are very/somewhat satisfied with their jobs. But this is down from 61.1% in 1987 and 58.6% in 1995. 52% of workers feel safe from a layoff. 60% of workers feel they can afford a comfortable retirement, down from 73% in 1993. [Conference Board, 11/2016; Employee Benefits Research Institute]

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This August, 59% saw it as a good time to find a quality job. In 2009 and 2010, 10% thought it was “a good time to find a quality job.”

A Gallup poll in 2017, found that 9 out of 10 workers did not feel threatened by outsourcing. [New York Times, 9/4/17]

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There are 7.5 million retail jobs in America. Retail jobs are both the most common jobs and the most likely to be impacted by computerization. 3.5 million

retail workers are cashiers. Cashiers are at the highest risk of computerization.
[FiveThirtyEight Newsletter, 8/18/17]

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57% of Americans rate the economy where they live as excellent (10%) or good (47%). This compares with 43% who held this view in 2015 – excellent (8%) and good (35%). [NBC/WSJ, 8/9/17 and Allstate National Journal poll, 2/22/15]

61% are not confident that “life for our children’s generation will be better than it has been for us”. [NBC/WSJ, 8/9/17]

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In 2006, 60% of Americans “identified themselves as upper or middle class, while 38% identified as working or lower class.

In 2015, well after the 2008-09 financial crisis, those identifying as upper or middle class had dropped to 51% and the working and lower class group number was 48%.

In June of this year Gallup found 62% placing themselves in the upper or middle class while 36% saw themselves as working or lower class.

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Median income in the United States hit \$59,039 in 2016, the highest ever reported by the Census Bureau. 12.7% (40.6 million people) still live in poverty but this is 2.5 million fewer people than in 2015. The poverty rate hit 15.1% in 2010. Only 8.8% of Americans do not have health insurance.

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“Politicians have no idea what it’s like to live day to day in our shoes.” 50% of voters consider themselves living paycheck to paycheck. There is research that shows that it’s actually closer to 78% of workers who are living paycheck to paycheck. [Winston Group, 8/25/17]

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The Asian population is growing faster than any other racial or ethnic group in the U.S., climbing 72% between 2000 and 2015 according to a new study from the Pew Research Center. Asian Americans are projected to eclipse Hispanic Americans in 2055 to become the largest immigrant group in the country. [Pew Research Center]

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About this Country

In August 2017, the NBC/WSJ survey focused on social trends. The following are some of the findings.

When asked how divided the country is, 80% of Americans say it is mainly (59%) or totally (21%) divided.

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Respondents were asked how well the economy works for different types of people. A similar question was asked about some of the same groups in January 2014. The following chart shows a few of the groups for which data was available in both years.

	<u>Very/Fairly well</u>	<u>Not that well/ Not well at all</u>
Men		
2017	64%	6%
2014	53	11
Women		
2017	43%	19%
2014	33	25
The Wealthy		
2017	91%	2%
2014	81	6
The Middle Class		
2017	31%	28%
2014	22	40
Those living in poverty		
2017	11%	73%
2014	13	72
You and your family		
2017	53%	14%
2014	37%	24%

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Over the last few years, there has been a lot of discussion about changes in American society and the increasing diversity of life styles, gender roles, languages and cultures. 55% of respondents are comfortable with these changes while 24% are uneasy about them.

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60% believe that immigration strengthens the United States while 28% believe it weakens the country.

Currently, there is a proposal to change the immigration system to a merit-based system that favors applications based on skill, education and ability to speak English. The result would be that many immigrants who have family members in the U.S. would not be allowed to live here permanently and that legal immigration would be cut by about 50%. Do you consider this to be a good idea or a bad idea?

Bad idea	45%
Good idea	27%

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60% favor allowing same-sex marriages. Five years ago that number was 51%.

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28% of us say that America is the single best place to live, another 17% say it is among the very few best places and 37% say it is above average.

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Respondents were asked, “Exclusive of your family, friends or fellow employees, is there one person you especially respect and trust?” (Respondents were not given a list.)

Heading the response list was Barack Obama who was named by 5% of the respondents, 3% named Bernie Sanders. Elizabeth Warren, Mike Pence, Jerry Brown and Jesus/God were named by 2%. All others on the list received 1% of the responses.

Only one of the 16 people who received at least 1% of the responses is a woman. Donald Trump was in the 1% group.

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This and That

In 2015, drug overdoses resulted in 52,404 deaths. In 2016 that number rose to 64,000. [New York Times, 9/3/17]

Between 2014 and 2017, the average price of legalized marijuana fell from \$9.38 to \$6.85 a gram in Colorado and from \$20.13 to \$5.81 a gram in the state of Washington. [AXIOS, 9/4/17]

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Uber passengers have paid their drivers \$50 million in tips since the company made in-app tipping available in late June. [FiveThirtyEight Newsletter, 8/24/17]

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For the first time in 2016, a majority of Americans favored cremation over the alternatives. The National Funeral Directions Association is forecasting that in 2025, nearly 64% of people who die in the United States will be cremated. [FiveThirtyEight Newsletter, 8/14/17]

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In 2013, 42% of Americans thought it was the responsibility of the federal government to ensure that all Americans have health coverage. 56% disagreed. By 2017, those who thought it was the responsibility of the federal government had grown to 60%. [Gallup and Pew Research]

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In South Korea there is 1 robot per 19 employed humans. The country is now considering changing its tax laws to make the country less friendly to automation. [Engineering & Technology]

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There are 116, 800 people currently on organ transplant waiting lists. [New York Times]

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Quotes

(Courtesy of Simma Leibman; other sources as noted)

A member of Parliament to Disraeli: “Sir, you will either die on the gallows or of some unspeakable disease.”

“That depends, Sir, said Disraeli, ‘whether I embrace your policies or your mistress.’”

“Thank you for sending me a copy of your book;
I’ll waste no time reading it.” --Moses Hadas

“A lie only runs until it is taken over by the truth”
--Gus, the diner owner in the movie “A Dash of Love”

“Figure out what you want and know how to ask for it.”
--Marriage counselor in the movie “How do you know”

“These are my principles. If you don’t like them, I have others.”
--Groucho Marx (Joel Goldstein)

“Sincerity is the key to success. Once you can fake that, you’ve got it made.”
--Groucho Marx (E.J. Dionne)

“I travel to countries where duck is a verb and a noun.”
--From the movie “RED – Retired and Extremely Dangerous” (John Rendon)

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President Trump

On 9/11/17, Gallup found that 37% of Americans approve of his job performance and 58% disapprove.

Below are the President’s job ratings as found by Gallup on the first of each month and the 15th of the month for the three most recent months. (All voters)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Approval</u>	<u>Disapproval</u>
9/11/17	37%	58%
9/1/17	34%	61%
8/15/17	36%	58%
8/1/17	36%	60%

<u>Date</u>	<u>Approval</u>	<u>Disapproval</u>
7/15/17	38%	56%
7/1/17	37%	57%
6/15/17	38%	57%
6/1/17	39%	55%
5/1/17	41%	55%
4/1/17	38%	57%
3/1/17	43%	51%
2/1/17	43%	52%

The following are some additional looks at the president’s job performance. (The numbers below are of registered voters unless followed by an “A” which means all voters.) [QUPIAC – Quinnipiac]

In June 2016, Nate Silver of FiveThirtyEight.com published an analysis of 99 polling firms in which he analyzed at least 10 separate surveys and graded them from A to F. The following are the grades given to each of the polls below: NBC/WSJ: A-; WP/ABC: A+; CNN/ORC: B+; NYT/CBS: B+; FOX: A-; Quinnipiac: A-; Gallup: B.

<u>Date</u>	<u>NBC/WSJ</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN/ORC</u>	<u>NYT/CBS</u>	<u>FOX</u>	<u>QUPIAC</u>
AUG	40/55A	39/58	40/56cnnA	36/58cbsA	41/55	35/59
JULY	xxx	36/58A	xxx	xxx	41/53	xxx
JUNE	40/56	xxx	xxx	36/57cbs	44/50	40/55
MAY	39/54	xxx	xxx	xxx	40/53	37/55
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

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The following are job approval numbers from Gallup for the last nine presidents and Trump from the same time period. As you will see, Trump’s job approval rating by the public at large is the worst of any president at this point in their tenure going back to Bill Clinton.

Job Approval – Roughly eight months into 1st term

G.W. Bush	80% (9/01)
Kennedy	79% (9/61)
George HW Bush	73% (9/89)
Eisenhower	61% (9/53)
Nixon	60% (9/69)
Carter	54% (9/77)
Reagan	52% (8/81)
Obama	46% (9/09)
Clinton	46% (9/93)
Trump	34% (9/17)

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On the economy Trump has an approval rating of 45% and a disapproval rating of 49%. On foreign policy he has an approval rating of 38% and a disapproval rating of 58%. [Quinnipiac, 8/17-22/17]

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About President Trump

I don't know whether Donald Trump is a racist, bigot, Anti-Semite, misogynist, white supremacist, neo-Nazi, Klan supporter, or any other type of extremist.

However, giving him the benefit of the doubt and assuming he is not any of those things does not mean that he hasn't emboldened, enabled, and promoted those who are. [WW]

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Former Vice President Walter Mondale was interviewed recently by the Minnesota Post. The following are limited excerpts of what Mondale had to say about President Trump.

“A leader has to be held responsible for the result of what he says. The results of what he's been saying is that our whole nation believes that he was supporting white extremism. [He] didn't have anything bad to say about Nazis.

That sort of thing. If he didn't mean it, he should have corrected it in a way that makes it clear what he means. But that is not what happened.

“[Trump] has an appalling record for using lies or near lies to draw outrageous conclusions and that's what he did there. We can't accept that. This nation has to be based on truth and facts. And our public officers have got to be measured against a standard of what's necessary for a healthy America....

“Every previous president I've known had had the qualities of intelligence, curiosity, ability to speak clearly and be understood. And adherence to truthfulness.

“Sure, sometimes they wiggle on the edges [of truthfulness], but over these years, we expected to hear the facts from our presidents, even if we might disagree with how they interpret them...”

“If we ever break that fundamental commitment, so that dishonesty and the rest are acceptable. I really worry about where we go next.

“We have a president who doesn't care about the facts. That's new and very dangerous. Shocking I would say. “

(To read the entirety of the Mondale interview, go to: www.minnpost.com/erick-black-ink/2017/08/i-don-t-know-why)

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Trump does not hesitate to insult law enforcement or express his disrespect for the federal judicial system.

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Historian Douglas Brinkley wrote an article in the Washington Post entitled “What it takes to stand up to bigotry.” He included the following paragraph:

“By slapping Maddox down, Carter demonstrated how a true leader deals with hatemongers: crush them and render them powerless. That takes strength, something Trump doesn't have. Carter didn't kowtow to racists and he wouldn't play dog-whistle games for their support. If Trump had an iota of Carter's moral rectitude and personal strength, America wouldn't be gasping today, whistling unhappily a very old tune.”

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When President Trump visited Pope Francis in May, one person was conspicuously absent from their meeting. Sean Spicer, the then White House Press Secretary and devoted catholic, was not included even though he had expected to be. Three White House staffers of lesser stature were included in the meeting along with the President's family.

Apparently the President was ticked at Spicer at the time for one reason or another. Spicer's exclusion was noted by many in the media. He apparently let his colleagues know how he felt about being excluded.

Now that Spicer is no longer in the White House, he and his family were able to get an audience with the Pope on a subsequent visit to the Vatican.

Notably, the Pope's countenance in the Spicer meeting is much friendlier than in the meeting with the President. [WW]

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In business, his personal life, his campaign and now his presidency, Trump has sprung surprises on his allies with gusto. His dealings are frequently defined by freewheeling spontaneity, impulsive decisions and a desire to keep everyone guessing – especially those who assume they can control him.

Trump also repeatedly demonstrates that, while he demands absolute loyalty from others, he is ultimately loyal to no one but himself. [Ashley Parker and Phillip Rucker, Washington Post, 9/10/17]

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In a mid-August Quinnipiac University poll respondents said the following:

59% think Trump has encouraged white-supremacist groups.

65% think the level of hatred and prejudice in the U.S. has increased since Trump's election.

62% think he is doing more to divide than unite the country.

62% think he doesn't provide the U.S. with moral leadership.

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Trump continues to say things that simply are not true. Does he know that what he says is not true?

One of the most recent examples of Trump’s statements differing from the truth has to do with the impact of the federal estate tax on family farmers. Trump said, “We are not going to allow the death tax or the inheritance tax or whatever-you-want-to-call-it to crush the American dream.”

According to the Department of Agriculture, in 2016, 0.4 percent or 153 farms out of 38,328 farm estates actually paid any estate tax. [Washington Post, 9/8/17]

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Disassembling

President Trump and his administration have not accomplished much legislatively other than nominating and installing a Supreme Court Justice, which has considerable importance.

However, when it comes to taking actions to “disassemble” existing or pending rules or policies, he and his administration are having considerable success.

According to Charlie Cook, of the Cook Political Report, the administration has achieved enactment of 14 public laws under the 1996 Congressional Review Act solely for the purpose of overturning rules adopted by the Obama administration. “Before this year, in fact only one regulation had ever been undone via the procedure specified in that law.”

[The Congressional Review Act, enacted in 1996, establishes special congressional procedures for disapproving a broad range of regulatory rules issued by federal agencies. Before any rule covered by the Act can take effect, the federal agency that promulgates the rule must submit it to Congress. If Congress passes a joint resolution disapproving the rule, and the resolution becomes law, the rule cannot take effect or continue in effect. Also, the agency may not reissue either that rule or any substantially similar one, except under authority of a subsequently enacted law. There is a 60 day period after the rule is submitted to Congress in which action must be taken.]

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Education Secretary Betsy DeVos announced plans, “to scrap an Obama-era civil rights policy that pushed colleges to take a harder line against campus sexual assault.”

The Obama administration official who signed the 2011 letter that announced the enhanced policy said that the DeVos position “threatens to take us back to a system that disempowers and silences survivors of sexual violence, making our institutions of higher education less safe for all our students.”

Advocates for accused students hailed the change, arguing that the Obama guidelines “destroy the lives of wrongfully accused male students.” [Washington Post, 9/8/17]

In fairness, the jury is out on this review and possible change of the rules for handling sexual assault in schools.

In her column in the Washington Post on September 8th, Ruth Marcus had this to say, in part:

“And yet it is also true that the current regime under which campus sexual-assault allegations are investigated and adjudicated is seriously flawed...

“Which is how I find myself in the unexpected position of writing not to lambaste DeVos but to praise her, albeit tentatively and preliminarily, for announcing plans to reword the department’s approach to Title IX, the federal law prohibiting gender discrimination at education institutions.”

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At various times over a number of years before and during the presidential campaign, Donald Trump at least gave the impression that he was modestly sympathetic to gay rights. At one point he supported amending the 1964 Civil Rights Act to include discrimination based on sexual orientation. He noted at one point that if he became president sexual orientation would not be considered in hiring for his administration. He in fact stated at one point that his administration would be great for the LGBT community.

The person he selected as his vice-president is notably anti-LGBT.

But at the same time he was saying a number of things that suggest he was less than sympathetic including saying he would consider appointing Supreme Court Justices who would overturn the rulings that legalized same-sex marriage.

Now Trump and his administration are making it clear where they stand. The Department of Justice has filed a brief in the Supreme Court on behalf of a baker who refused to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple. He has gutted key provisions of federal rules adopted in the Obama administration that required contractors to prove they are in compliance with non-discrimination provisions as relates to LGBT people. HHS, under his appointee, has removed questions identifying LGBT people from important data collection programs which will result in certain programs receiving needed resources.

And of course most recently he banned transgender people from serving in the military although the Defense Department has six months to make a plan for carrying out his executive order.

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The administration on August 29th announced “a review and immediate stay” of EEOC data collection rules adopted during the last administration requiring companies with 100 or more employees to submit data on worker pay broken down by race, ethnicity and gender. The goal was transparency.

The Trump OMB decided that the rule placed too great a burden on business.

Today on average women earn 79 cents for every dollar earned by men. The gap varies from state to state. For example, in New Mexico and North Carolina the gap is 10-15% but in Louisiana and Wyoming it is 31-35%.

For Asian women the gap is 84%, for white women it is 75%, for black women it is 60% and for Hispanic women it is 55%.

And Ivanka Trump, who casts herself as a champion of equal pay for women, supported the decision saying, “Ultimately, while I believe the intention was good and agree that pay transparency is important, the proposed policy would not yield the intended results.” In fairness to her she should not be expected to take public positions that are different from the administration. [Senate Joint Economic Committee Democratic staff, 2016]

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The Obama administration extended overtime pay eligibility to millions of workers by raising the threshold to more than \$47,000, an increase from about \$23,600.

At his confirmation hearings the new Secretary of Labor, Alexander Acosta, suggested that the new administration was looking at a lower threshold, perhaps closer to \$30,000. He also suggested that there was some question whether the Secretary of Labor had the authority to make the change.

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During the Obama era the DOD practice of sending excess military weapons to American police departments was ended. The equipment is best described as that typically used in warfare like grenade launchers, armored vehicles and bayonets. The Obama order has been rescinded.

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The Trump administration has proposed a budget that slashes a number of departments including EPA by 31%.

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The Trump Interior Department has given new life to coal mining on federal lands. It is also drawing up plans to reduce wilderness and historic areas that are now protected as national monuments.

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Last but not least Trump has pardoned Arizona Sheriff Joe Arpaio. Arpaio was convicted by the Obama administration of criminal and civil contempt of the federal district court. He violated a judge's order to stop detaining Latino drivers solely because they were "suspected" of being undocumented. He told the media he was not going to change what he was doing.

This pardon by Trump came before Arpaio was sentenced and without any review by the pardon attorney in the Department of Justice.

Michael Gerson in his Washington Post column on August 28th described Arpaio's behavior in the following way.

“Arpaio had a career of dehumanizing prisoners in his charge. His pardon sends the signal that some people are less than human. In one sense, this is perfectly consistent. Trump has employed dehumanization as a political tool from the start – of refugees, of migrants, of Muslims. By his pardon of Arpaio, he has Metaphorically pardoned his own cruel and divisive approach to politics.”

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The general instinct of most of the media is to find ways to be critical of Trump and his administration, even if for minor things.

The media (not all of it) made a big deal of the fact that Melania Trump was wearing stiletto heels as she walked across the White House lawn on the way to a Helicopter as she and the President headed to their first trip to Texas after the hurricane. Notably, by the time she got off the plane in Texas she was wearing tennis shoes.

What stories about what the First Lady wears add to the discourse is not at all clear to me.

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2020

The following is a list of people who have been mentioned as potential candidates in 2020. Folks are on the list whether or not they have claimed or disclaimed any interest in running.

The list of people without government experience is followed by a list of current or past government officials who have been mentioned or have done something to suggest they are thinking about running for president.

Dwayne Johnson – Actor

Bob Iger – CBS

Howard Schultz – Chairman of Starbucks

Mark Cuban – Businessman and Owner, Dallas Mavericks

Kanye West – Entertainer

Mark Zuckerberg – CEO, Facebook

Oprah Winfrey – Oprah Network (Says she is not interested)

Congressman John Delaney (D) – Announced 7/22/17

John Hickenlooper (D) – Governor of Colorado

Steve Bullock (D) – Governor of Montana

Corey Booker (D) – U.S. Senator
 Martin O'Malley (D) – Former Governor
 Amy Klobuchar (D) – U.S. Senator
 Terry McAuliffe (D) – Governor of Virginia
 Kamala Harris (D) – U.S. Senator
 Joe Biden (D) – former V.P., former U.S. Senator
 Kirsten Gillibrand (D) – U.S. Senator
 Elizabeth Warren (D) – U.S. Senator
 Jason Kander (D) – former Missouri Secretary of State/failed U.S. Senate candidate
 Congressman Tim Ryan (D)
 Congressman Seth Moulton (D)
 Eric Garcetti (D) – Mayor of Los Angeles
 Julian Castro (D) – Obama Secretary of HUD
 Lincoln Chafee (D) – former Rhode Island Governor, U.S. Senator and Mayor

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The Congress

As of the last week of August, Congress had a disapproval rating of 74% and an approval rating of 15%. [Fox News, 8/29/17]

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[WW uses the Cook Political Report for the House chart below and a combination of the Cook Political Report, Inside Elections and Sabato for the Senate chart below.]

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

	Democrats	194
	Republicans	241
	Democrats	Republicans
Safe in 2017	175	186
Likely	10	23
Lean	7	23
	Tossup	
	3	8

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[WW uses a combination of the Cook Political Report, Inside Elections and Sabato to create the chart below.]

THE SENATE

Republicans	52
Democrats	46
Independents	2

	Democrats	Republicans
Seats not up in 2018	23	43
Safe in 2018	15	6
Likely	4	1 Strange
	Tester	
	Casey	
	Kaine	
	Baldwin	
Lean	3	
	Brown	1
	Nelson	Flake
	Heitkamp	
Toss-ups	3	1
	Donnelly	Heller
	McCaskill	
	Manchin	

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What goes around comes around

Senators Ted Cruz and John Cornyn voted against some of the relief for victims of Hurricane Sandy that savaged New Jersey and environs on the grounds that it contained unrelated pork. The Congressional Research Service reported that there were a few small unrelated provisions. “Strangely enough” they both voted for the recent bill for the initial aid for hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

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Women Will Get it Done

48% of top bank employees are women as compared to 33.2% in Silicon Valley. [Jamie Dimon of J.P. Morgan]

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The Google gap

A spreadsheet compiled by Google staff members finds that female employees are paid less than their male counterparts at most job levels within the company. While the document is far from comprehensive—it includes salary and the andhebonus information for around 1,200 U.S. Googlers, about 2 percent of the company's global work force—it doesn't look great for the tech giant, which is under investigation by the Labor Department for allegations of pay discrimination. [New York Times]

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The honorable Jack B. Weinstein, United States federal judge in the Eastern District of New York, is 96 years old, still maintains a full docket, and is shedding light on the lack of gender equality in courtrooms. Last month, “following the lead of a handful of other federal judges, Judge Weinstein issued a court rule urging a more visible and substantive role for young female lawyers working on cases he is hearing.” He recognized that “the lack of female lawyers in leading roles at trials and other court proceedings” is a growing concern, so he made sure to file an official “guidance” rather than just encourage the change informally. [Gender Avenger]

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While much attention has been paid recently to sexism in tech (for good reason), a new study published this month serves as an excellent reminder that workplace cultures that are hostile to women are not exclusive to Silicon Valley.

Alice Wu, who will start her doctoral studies in economics at Harvard next year, mined more than a million posts from an anonymous online message board frequented by economists. The site, econjobrumors.com, began as a place for economists to exchange gossip about who is hiring and being hired in the profession. Over time, it evolved into a virtual water cooler frequented by economics faculty members, graduate students and others.

Wu's analysis of the posts yielded a result that is disturbing to say the least: the 30 words most commonly associated with women (in order) are: hotter, lesbian, bb (short for "baby"), sexism, tits, anal, marrying, feminazi, slut, hot, vagina, boobs, pregnant, pregnancy, cute, marry, levy, gorgeous, horny, crush, beautiful, secretary, dump, shopping, date, nonprofit, intentions, sexy, dated and prostitute.[Broadsheet, 8/21/17]

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Restaurants

There are two similar D.C. restaurants, one in Southeast, Agua301, and the other in Northwest, Millie's. They are both quite large with indoor seating and additional outdoor seating when the weather permits.

One menu is best described as modern Mexican and the other, casual seafood Nantucket style.

The goal of each is to turn the tables as often as possible as demonstrated by the speed of service and the hovering servers looking to clear plates and glasses as soon as possible.

Aqua301 takes reservations and can be found on OpenTable. Drop-ins are welcome. Millie's does not take reservations but generally suggests that if you come a half hour before the time you would like to eat and get on the list you will usually be seated.

Neither restaurant has dessert as part of the menu.

Each has a limited amount of parking in proximity.

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AGUA301
301 Water Street SE
Next to the fountains at Yards Park
Washington, D.C. 20003
202-484-0301
www.agua301.com

Debbie and I went to Aqua301 with Iris and Larry.

It is one of a series of four restaurants facing the river at this particular location.

The restaurant is L-shaped. The front door is at the foot of the L. To the right as you enter there is a U-shaped bar which seats 20 people. The end of the U is the service bar for the rest of the restaurant. There are a number of seating areas to the right of the front door. I asked one of the greeters how many the restaurant can seat and after thinking for a moment she said 400. Looking around I think that is a bit of a stretch.

On the long side of the L there is a banquette fronted by a series of 4 tops. There are several sections of 2 and 4 tops. One section near the door and the bar is all round, 4 person high top tables and related high chairs.

The restaurant is quite loud.

Aqua has a private dining room that can seat up to 30 people.

There is an outdoor seating area wrapped around the L with a variety of tables.

Iris started with Ceviche de Pescado Blanco, white fish, lime juice, cilantro, red onion, cucumber, tomato, Jalapeno. For her main course she selected Empanada de Pollo, chicken tinga, peppers, onions, garlic, garnished with pico de gallo.

Debbie and Larry chose exactly the same combination of dishes. They started with Caesar Salad al a Parilla, grilled romaine, croutons, Cotija cheese, anchovies, chipotle Cesar dressing. Then they chose Empanada de Jaiba, jumbo lump crabmeat salad with fresh corn, cheese sauce and pico de gallo.

I ordered the Chicken Tortilla Soup, shredded chicken, avocado, pico de gallo, chile rajas, quajillo tomato broth to be followed by Paella Mexicana, mussels, clams, shredded crab meat, spicy chorizo.

My order seemed to flummox those in the kitchen. Our server brought the first dish for Iris, Larry and Debbie and without saying a word left the table. I

assumed that he could not carry four dishes and went back to get mine. I encouraged the others to get started. But he did not return.

Sometime later he returned carrying all four of the main course dishes. He set mine down last and said they were just finishing my first course in the kitchen, cutting the avocado he said.

A short time later the soup arrived without a further word. I must say it was worth the wait.

The others cleaned their plates but there was just too much paella. I managed to “harvest” all of the seafood.

There are two unisex restrooms. I only saw one of them but assume they are the same. Each of them has a white ceramic commode and a white ceramic washbasin. The walls are covered with square grey tiles except for a periodic strip of blue tiles. The floor is painted grey and could use a bit of rehab. It is best described as serviceable but not special.

Dinner

Sunday–Wednesday 3-10 p.m.

Thursday–Saturday 3-11 p.m.

Lunch

Monday–Friday 11 a.m.–3 p.m.

Brunch/Lunch

Saturday–Sunday 10:30 a.m.–3 p.m.

Parking is available in Lot L which is a block away or by valet parking right on the corner of the restaurant. When we arrived at the valet parking sign no one was there to take cars.

* * * * *

MILLIE’S

4866 Massachusetts Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20016

202-733-5789

milliesdc.com

Debbie and I joined Florence and Peter for dinner at Millie’s.

The restaurant seats 260 people, 180 inside and 80 outside.

Inside there are a series of tables and booths with a banquette or two. Outside there are tables with attached benches and attached large umbrellas.

We were seated inside at a table that fronted one of the banquettes.

Guacamole and tortilla chips are placed on the table as you browse through the menu. They are replaced as you eat them.

The server was eager to take our order. But we dallied a bit before ordering.

Florence ordered Sautéed Soft Shell Crabs with fingerling potato, lemon brown sweet soy glaze, sesame lime salad.

Debbie went with Muskeget, Premium Maine lobster on buttered toast roll with bibb lettuce, lemon, chives-served with potato salad.

Once their selections came Debbie and Florence shared the two dishes.

Peter opted for Smith Point, Grilled shrimp in corn tortillas with tomato and sweet corn salad, avocado, cilantro and chili ranch dressing.

I went with Hither Creek, Grilled local rockfish in corn tortillas with tomato & sweet corn salad, avocado, cilantro and lime sour cream.

There are no desserts but there is an ice cream stand in the building that can only be reached from the outside. There is also a take-out window in the same location.

I asked one of the greeters whether I could go out and order ice cream and then sit inside to eat it. The answer was a smiling “no”. There is also a sign that tells you that once you have your ice cream you cannot sit at one of the outside tables to eat it. There is however a bench on which ice cream eaters can sit.

As you enter the wooden door to the men’s room, to the left there is a single very large ceramic washbasin that looks a bit like half of a tall barrel hung by its side. There are two separate water faucets and attendant equipment.

To the left of the washbasin are two wall hanging urinals of different heights. There is a full height wall between the washbasin and the urinals with a partial wooden wall between the two urinals.

There are two separate commode rooms that open at top and bottom with grey metal enclosures. The larger commode area also has a baby changing shelf.

The floor is covered by small rectangular tiles. The walls are covered by square wall tiles with ornate blue patterns up to shoulder height with white painted walls above.

* * * * *

Farmers & Distillers
600 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001
202-464-3001
famersanddistillers.com

Debbie and I went to Farmers & Distillers with Sherry and Mike.

Farmers & Distillers is the latest addition and sixth restaurant in the Founding Farmers group of restaurants.

The restaurant seats 310 people in a variety of seating options ranging from booths for two to booths that can handle up to six people. There is also a bar area and a section of four top tables. Just past the greeter station there is an area where a variety of delicious looking donuts are being prepared.

There were some notes online about people waiting an especially long time to be seated when they arrived at the time of their reservation. In our case we were seated in about 10 minutes.

We were seated in a booth at the far end of the restaurant to the right. It could not have been a more perfect place. First, the heart of the restaurant is pretty noisy but in our location it was not very noisy at all. I also noted that the booth was quite comfortable, particularly as to the amount of room between the benches of the booth and the table itself.

The menu is quite extensive. In fact, it is the most extensive menu that I recall. By my count there are 139 separate items on the regular menu plus 23 desserts. It is the perfect example of why it is a good idea to review the menu online before going to a restaurant for the first time.

Sherry, Debbie and Mike (the other Mike) shared a vodka- based drink from the menu called a “Cucumber Delight.” It was served in a “copper-like vessel” shaped like a pineapple.

Corey was our server. He turned out to be as good as any server I can recall even though he had only been at the restaurant for four months. He was well informed about the menu. He first took our order for appetizers.

Sherry ordered Whirley Pop, kettle corn, made-to-order. Corey had to tell her that the restaurant was out of kettle corn. As an alternative Sherry ordered the Italian Sunday, romaine, aged provolone, fennel, oregano, red onion, and red wine vinaigrette. Debbie ordered Local “raclette”, melted cheese, warm white boule, and pickled vegetables. Mike ordered two items; Polpette, beef & pork meatballs with red sauce and an Apple & Stilton Blue salad, with romaine, shaved celery and roasted tomatoes.

I did something different. I ordered an entrée as an appetizer because I wanted to try it but also wanted a different entree. I ordered Cauliflower Steak, roasted heirloom carrots and parmesan grits. I did not come close to finishing it. Before the appetizers arrived a fresh baked loaf of bread was delivered to the table.

For their main course Mike and Sherry decided to share an order of BBQ Fried Chicken, romaine, kale, cabbage, apple, pickled green beans, feta, onion “comeback sauce” and lemon dressing.

Debbie ordered Steak Frites Béarnaise, with French fries and roasted tomato.

I picked Hong Kong Style premium white fish (on this evening it was cod) savory soy broth, sautéed bok choy and white rice. (The bowl of white rice was enough to feed the table and then some.)

I had enjoyed the cauliflower so much that I asked Corey to see if he could find out how it was made. He said he would see what he could do. A bit later a fellow approached our table led by Corey. He introduced himself as David, the sous chef.

Once he introduced himself around the table I asked him how the cauliflower was prepared. He said he starts by cutting a whole cauliflower in half. It is then blanched in boiling water for 2-3 minutes and allowed to cool. After that it is marinated in a mixture of soy sauce, brown sugar, and pesto. Then with a smile he said there were several other ingredients that would remain a secret.

For dessert Debbie ordered AFFOGATO with vanilla bean. Sherry ordered Salted Caramel Ice cream with chocolate sauce. (Sherry asked for hot fudge but they do not have it.) Mike ordered a Cinnamon Sugar donut with vanilla ice cream. I ordered a scoop of chocolate ice cream and a scoop of salted caramel.

Each course was delivered in a timely fashion.

Directly to the right as you enter the men's room are two white ceramic wash basins sunk into a heavy dark wood counter. Hanging on the wall over the wash basins is a large mirror.

Straight ahead are three wall-hanging urinals without any dividers between them. They are so close to each other that there is no way for three full size males to use them at the same time. To the left of the urinals is a fully enclosed room in which there is a single white commode. The walls inside the commode room are covered to shoulder height with very large brown wood like square and triangular designs. Above shoulder height the walls are painted brown.

The floor of the entire restroom is covered with square and triangular designed flooring.

Parking is available at a very large parking garage in the 600 Mass Ave building. The restaurant provides a voucher to be used when leaving the garage.

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Q by Peter Chang
4500 East West Highway, Ste 100
Bethesda, Maryland 20814

Rita, Bob and Debbie and I went to Q for dinner.

The reception desk is straight ahead as you walk in. To the far left there is a section of 4 person booths the length of the dining room. They are separated from the balance of the restaurant by a half wall. On the other side of that wall are 2 person booths also running the length of the restaurant.

On the far side of the restaurant is a banquette that runs half the length of the restaurant starting at the back. There are also two person tables that could be pulled together. Next there is a bar that seats 7 people.

The balance of the restaurant contains a variety of four person tables that seem to be larger than the average four top. There is at least one round table that can seat up to 8 people.

To order a whole Peking duck you have to do it in advance which Debbie did when she made the reservation.

Each of us ordered one or more items but there was so much sharing that it makes sense to just list all of the items. Vegetable Dumplings; Joyful Pyramid Dumplings (Shrimp, Salmon, Chicken, Vegetable); Duck Tofu Soup (Cabbage Juice, Tofu, Duck) [Bob said “soup is good even though it is green”]; Dry Fried Eggplant; Simple Veggie Stir Fry (Asparagus, Snow Pea, White Mushroom, Carrot, Garlic); Assorted Grain Rice; Egg Fried Rice with Green Onion; Szechuan Kung Pao Chicken and General Tso’s Chicken.

After we received our order we saw a dish being served to another table that looked like a space ship, so we ordered it. It turned out to be a Scallion Bubble Pancake. To begin eating it you punch a hole in it, the air escapes and you cut it up. It is essentially a form of bread.

Many of the items on the menu are spicy. Spiciness is clearly marked on the menus with a hot pepper symbol that for each dish ranges from no hot pepper to 5 hot peppers.

The service was reasonably timed and attentive even when the restaurant filled up.

The take out menu is a bit different than the dining room menu. And you cannot order from the takeout menu if you are seated at a table. Bob tried to do just that and the server double checked but the answer was, “Sorry, no.” (I picked up

the take out menu on the way in to take notes on along with the menus I printed out from the internet.)

There is a wooden door leading into the men's restroom. Immediately upon entering there is a yellowish marble-like counter with two white square ceramic wash basins.

To the left are two white ceramic wall hanging urinals of different heights with a partial wall between them and a wall between the urinals and the wash basins.

It has a single white ceramic commode in a stall with partial walls. The floor is covered with tiny yellowish square tiles. The walls are covered by mid-size square black tiles.

There is a parking garage about a block and a half from the restaurant. The restaurant will give you directions if you call.

Mike

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