

Mike Berman's

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

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November 10, 2017

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Washington, DC

Ghibellina

Silver

*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

31% of Americans say the country is headed in the right direction while 64% say it is on the wrong track. [CBS, 10/30/17]

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Employment

The official BLS seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for October 2017 is 4.1%, the lowest it has been since January 2001 when the rate was 3.9%. It is also a slight dip from the 4.2% rate in September.

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 September 2017 is 7.9%. [BLS data is based on those 16 years of age and older.]

October’s job growth of 261,000 jobs is the 85th straight month of job growth.

Gallup no longer tracks employment/unemployment.

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2017 Election

Democrats had run away victories in the gubernatorial races in New Jersey and Virginia. In New Jersey, Phil Murphy--in his first run for public office--was easily elected governor. In Virginia, Lt. Governor Ralph Northam handily won the governorship.

Leading up to this election, Republicans controlled the Virginia House of Delegates 66-34. With a little bit of luck in some recounts, the post-election split may be 50/50. Of the 15 seats that Democrats flipped, all were held by men and 11 were won by women.

In New Jersey, Democrats retained control of the state legislature and may have picked up some seats.

By a 2-1 margin, Virginia voters said they were casting their ballot to show opposition to Trump rather than support for him. In New Jersey the margin was nearly 3-1.

Trump's weak approval rating among voters in Virginia, 40 percent, was weaker still in New Jersey, a dismal 34 percent. [Exit polls]

Those 18-29 years of age voted for Northham by +39. This compares to the +18 who went for Clinton and the +5 who went for McCauliffe in 2013.

In Virginia, Danica Roem, a transgender woman, was elected to the House of Delegates. She is the first openly transgender person elected to be a member of a state legislature. She defeated a 25 year Republican incumbent who can best be described as homophobic.

In Minneapolis, Andrea Jenkins is the first openly transgender woman of color elected to the city council of a major U.S. city.

Jenny Durkan will become the first openly lesbian mayor of Seattle.

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64% of Americans believe that the current political system in the United States is basically dysfunctional. 35% would not agree with this assessment.

71% believe that the problems in American politics right now have reached a dangerous low point.

How much do you blame each of the following for the dysfunction in the political system?

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>Total</u>
Money in politics	65%	31%	96%
Wealthy political donors	56%	38%	94%
Donald Trump	51%	38%	89%
Social media	49%	44%	93%
The News media	49%	39%	88%
Members of Congress	47%	47%	94%

Liberal activists	40%	47%	87%
Republican Party	38%	53%	91%
Democratic Party	32%	54%	86%
Conservative activists	30%	52%	82%
Barack Obama	25%	38%	63%
Average voters	19%	55%	74%

[Washington Post/University of Maryland, 10/5/17]

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82% of Americans believe that either their families have achieved the American dream or are on their way to achieving it. 36% have already achieved it and 46% are on their way to achieving it. Those who say they have already achieved it are 41% White, 32% Hispanic and 17% Black. Among those who say they are on their way to achieving the American dream 62% are Black, 51% are Hispanic and 42% White.

What are the most essential elements of the average person's view of the American dream?

	<u>Essential</u>
Freedom of choice on how to live	77%
Have a good family life	70%
Retire comfortably	60%
Make valuable contributions to the community	48%
Own a home	43%
Have a successful career	43%
Become wealthy	11%

[PEW, 8/21/17]

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For the moment there is at least one other area in which majorities from both political parties are in agreement: certain aspects of gun control.

Overall, 79% of Americans (58% strongly) favor banning assault weapons. This point of view includes 70% of Republicans (48% strongly); 76% of Independents (45% strongly) and 91% of Democrats (74% strongly).

8 of 10 respondents support a federal database to track all gun sales. 83% favor (62% strongly) banning so-called “bump stocks” that allow rifles to fire like automatic weapons.

On the other hand, 53% of the public at large (28% strongly) believes that “the benefits of gun ownership” outweigh the risks. That group includes 72% of Republicans (28% strongly) and 62% of Independents (28% strongly). However, only 32% of Democrats (11% strongly) have that point of view. [NPR/Ipsos, 10/11/17]

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The percentage of U.S. households with guns has fallen from 47.3% to 31% from 1980 to 2014 but the number of guns in each of the gun owning households has doubled from four to eight over that 34 year period.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total households</u>	<u>% of households owning guns</u>	<u>Households owning guns</u>	<u>% of households not owning guns</u>
1980	80,780,000	47.3%	38,200,000	51.8%
1990	93,350,000	42.2%	39,390,000	56.7%
2000	104,701,000	32.4%	33,920,000	66.1%
2010	118,680,000	31.1%	36,910,000	65.0%
2014	123,230,000	31%	38,200,000	65.7%

[Percentages from Axios, 10/3/17. Numbers of households calculated by WW]

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Americans use 500 million plastic straws each day. Placed end to end they wrap the circumference of the earth 2.5 million times. They would fill 125 school buses every day. They weigh roughly as much as 1,000 automobiles. [National Park Service]

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Depending on who you choose to include there are either roughly 7 million or 9 million Americans in the federal work force. If you combine the 2 million federal employees, 3.7 million contractors, and 1.6 million grant employees, you get the 7 million figure. Additionally, if you include the 1.3 million active duty

military personnel and 500,000 postal workers, you end up with 9 million. [Paul Light, Washington Post, 10/3/17]

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An increasing number of adults, particularly young adults, are living without a spouse or partner. Over the last ten years the number has grown from 39% to 42%. [PEW, 10/10/17]

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If current “trends” continue, sometime before the year 2050, white people will no longer represent the majority racial/ethnic group in the United States.

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2050</u>
White	66.3%	47%
Hispanic	16.3	29
Black	12.6	13
Asian	4.8	9

The 2050 projections are based on the continuing arrival of immigrants at the same rate in which they have been arriving for the last several decades. It is quite possible that the attitudes toward immigration being expressed by the President and his administration may interrupt the current trends.

[2010 data, U.S. Census Bureau; 2050 projection, Pew Research Center]

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142 people die each day in the United States as a result of an opioid overdose. [MSNBC, 11/2/17]

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The Washington Post published a column by Michael Gerson on November 7th entitled, “Our political parties are in crisis.” The column included the two paragraphs below which make a particularly timely point.

“We have reached a moment of intellectual and moral exhaustion for both major political parties. One is dominated by ethnic politics – which a disturbing strong majority of Republican regulars have found appealing or acceptable. The other is dominated by identity politics – a movement that counts a growing number

of Robespierres. Both seem united only in their resentment of the international economic order that the United States has built and led for 70 years.

“The lead ideology of the Republican Party at the national level is now immoral and must be overturned – a task that only a smattering of retiring officeholders has undertaken. The lead ideology of the Democratic Party is likely to be overturned – by radicals with little to offer the country save anger and bad economics.”

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This and That

It is Friday afternoon September 29, 2017 and HHS Secretary Tom Price’s resignation is announced. The following are the times that the announcements from various news organizations hit my inbox.

4:40 p.m. Sam Baker, Axios
4:42 p.m. Politico
4:43 p.m. Washington Post (1st time)
4:54 p.m. Public Policy
4:56 p.m. New York Times
4:57 p.m. CNN
5:01 p.m. Washington Post (2nd time)
5:04 p.m. NBC
5:12 p.m. Washington Post (3rd time)
5:14 p.m. Huffington Post
5:24 p.m. NPR
5:37 p.m. The Daily Beast
5:59 p.m. The Atlantic Politics

It was subsequently reported to me that the news broke at 4:39 p.m. on Bloomberg (for subscribers). [Courtesy of Linda Douglass]

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There are growing partisan divides on the role of government, racial discrimination and the role of immigrants.

“Government should do more to help the needy”:

	Rep/lean Rep	Dem/lean Dem
2017	24%	71%
2010	25%	54%
1994	38%	58%

“Racial discrimination is the main reason why many black people can’t get ahead”:

	Rep/lean Rep	Dem/lean Dem
2017	14%	64%
2010	9%	28%
1994	26%	39%

“Immigrants strengthen the country with their hard work and talents”:

	Rep/lean Rep	Dem/lean Dem
2017	42%	84%
2010	33%	55%
1994	32%	30%

[PEW]

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After 10 months in office, Vice President Pence has broken more ties in the U.S. Senate than any of the past five Vice Presidents in their first year in office.

The first tiebreaking vote was cast by Vice President John Adams. Since then, 36 different VPs have broken 260 ties. Since 1981 there have been 24 tiebreaking votes cast by Vice Presidents. [Quorum]

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In 2016 there were \$122 billion dollars in mobile payments. This is up from \$8.3 billion in 2011. In China there were \$9 trillion dollars in mobile payments in 2016, up from \$15 billion in 2011. [WSJ, 9/23-24/17]

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68% of the people in STEM master’s degree programs in the U.S. and Canada last year were international students. In 1994 that number was 40%. [NYT]

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The median net worth for Americans with college degrees is \$292,100 compared to \$67,100 for those with a high school diploma. [FiveThirtyEight Newsletter, 10/6/17 – original source Quartz]

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The Federal Emergency Management Agency has removed key information from its website about the recovery from Hurricane Maria on Puerto Rico. A FEMA spokesman declined to explain the removal.

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86% of Americans would allow DACA arrivals to stay in the United States and 79% believe that employers should have to verify that the people they hire are in the country legally. [Washington Post, 9/26/17]

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19% of apparel sales were made online in 2016, up 11 percent in the last five years. Amazon is poised to enter the sportswear business, according to sources in the industry. This news initially depressed the stock prices of some companies already in the athletic apparel business. [Bloomberg]

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In just over one month, 6,663 inmates in Texas contributed a cumulative \$53,863 towards Hurricane Harvey relief efforts. This is serious charity from the group, many of whom typically have less than \$5 in their commissary accounts. [The New York Times]

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85% of U.S. adults would favor (47% strongly favor) automation if machines were limited to doing dangerous or unhealthy jobs. 58% of Americans say there should be limits on the number of jobs that businesses can replace with machines, even if those machines are better and cheaper. [PEW, 10/10/17]

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So far, in special elections in 2017 Democrats have flipped 8 GOP held seats while the GOP has flipped 1 Democrat held seat. [Quorum, 10/14/17]

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The Justice Department is sending a federal hate crimes lawyer to Iowa to help prosecute a man charged with fatally shooting a transgender teenager last year.

LGBT advocates have long been skeptical of Attorney General Jeff Sessions' pledge to prosecute acts of violence against transgender people. But the rare move, outlined in recently filed court papers, is a sign that he intends to do so even as the Trump administration has taken other steps to erode the rights of transgender people broadly. The New York Times first reported the decision. [Washington Post, 10/15/17]

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Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, who showed up on horseback for one of his early days in office, has instituted an arcane military ritual that no one can remember ever being used in the federal government. He has required that a special secretarial flag be flown from a flag pole on the top of the building whenever he is there. [Washington Post, 10/14]

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In 2017, Americans are projected to consume 2,072,342.8 pounds of butter. One third of that butter will be produced by Grassland Dairy Products, Inc. [Bloomberg]

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Diapers

This particular item is quite different from anything I have written about before in the Washington Watch, so forgive my interjection of this topic. And if you are not curious feel free to move on to the next section which is "Quotes".

A while back my niece Nicki turned 50. I sent her a financial gift and when she sent me a thank you note she said she had given the money to the St. Louis Diaper Bank.

I had never heard of a diaper bank so I asked what it did. She told me that she volunteered at an organization in St. Louis that provided diapers to families who cannot afford them. So I made an additional contribution directly to the St. Louis Diaper Bank.

I then had a conversation with a young woman who has a 1 ½ year old baby. From

her I learned that when her baby was ill she and her husband could use up to 15 diapers a day. They can afford to pay for the diapers they need and use a regular delivery service available on Amazon.

I then asked my wife Debbie and a number of other female friends whether they had ever heard of diaper banks and none of them had. I decided to learn more.

Nicki told me that the St. Louis Diaper Bank was a part of a larger national organization. So I did the obvious thing and went searching online.

I found the website for the National Diaper Network. The Network has 320 affiliates in 46 states, DC and Guam. Here is what I learned from the Network's website:

- *5.2 million children in the U.S. aged 3 or younger live in poor or low income families
- *1 in 3 American families report experiencing diaper need
- *Diapers cannot be obtained with food stamps
- *Disposable diapers cost \$70-80 per month per baby
- *Infants require up to 12 diapers per day, toddlers about 8.

There is an excellent directory of all the state and local organizations which allows you to connect with them in a single click.

It appears that by buying in bulk the diaper banks can often get lower prices than one can get commercially. And while Amazon and Target both have some lower priced options, you can't beat free.

There is one positive legislative item to note. California has passed legislation that will provide \$30/month/child stipend to qualified CalWorks families with young children. It is the first such statewide program designed to help struggling families with diaper needs.

This is not intended to be a direct solicitation but if this piece has piqued your interest and you want to help, it is easy to go on the NDN website (nationaldiapernetwork.org) for additional information or to find a diaper bank near you.

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Quotes

(Courtesy of Simma Leibman; other sources as noted)

“He has never been known to use a word that might send a reader to the dictionary.” – William Faulkner about Ernest Hemingway

“I didn’t attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it.”
– Mark Twain

“He has no enemies, but is intensely disliked by his friends.”
– Oscar Wilde

“I feel so miserable without you; it’s almost like having you here.”
– Stephen Bishop

“For all sad words of tongue and pen, the saddest are these: ‘It might have been’”
– John Greenleaf Whittier (quoted by Hillary Clinton)

“Men still rule the world and it is not going that well.”
– Sheryl Sandberg

“Aspire to inspire before you expire.”
– Eugene Bell, Jr.

“If a problem cannot be solved, enlarge it.”
– Dwight Eisenhower (quoted by George Will)

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President Trump

On November 5, 2017, Gallup found that 37% of Americans approve of President Trump’s job performance and 57% disapprove.

Below are the President’s job ratings among all voters as found by Gallup on the first of each month, the 15th of the month for the last three months and the first of the month for the previous months of the President’s term.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Approval</u>	<u>Disapproval</u>
11/1/17	38%	58%
10/15/17	38%	58%
10/1/17	37%	57%
9/15/17	36%	59%
9/1/17	34%	61%
8/15/17	36%	58%
8/1/17	36%	60%
7/1/17	37%	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%

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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]

<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>
OCT	38/58 A	37/59	38/57cnn	39/55cbsA	38/57	38/56
SEPT	43/52 A	42/54	37/56cnnA	xxx	42/53	36/57
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 ten months into 1st term

G.W. Bush	87% (11/01)
Kennedy	79% (11/61)
George HW Bush	70% (11/89)
Nixon	67% (11/69)
Eisenhower	59% (11/53)
Carter	55% (11/77)
Obama	52% (11/09)
Clinton	48% (11/93)
Reagan	43% (11/81)
Trump	38% (11/17)

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On the question of how Trump is viewed, favorably or unfavorably, and whether they approve or disapprove of his efforts on the economy and foreign policy, respondents have been consistently in the negative range except for a brief moment on the economy in September.

How folks view Trump, favorably or unfavorably, has gone up and down but most recently the number who view him favorably has dropped 8 points since the end of June and conversely those who view him unfavorably has risen by the same number of points in the same period.

	View him favorably	View him unfavorably	
10/24/17	39%	59%	
8/29/17	44%	55%	
6/27/17	47%	51%	
3/14/17	44%	53%	[Fox News]

On the economy, Trump’s approval rating has ranged within four points and most recently has been--for the second time--at the top of the range. The disapproval scale has ranged over 10 points and at the present time is down 8 points for its high point.

	<u>Economy</u>	
	Approve	Disapprove
10/30/17	46%	47%
9/24/17	43%	46%

8/6/17	46%	45%
6/18/17	42%	51%
4/24/17	43%	49%
3/28/17	44%	55%

[CBS News]

On foreign policy, Trump's approval and disapproval ratings have each been in a two point range since the spring.

Foreign Policy

	Approve	Disapprove
10/10/17	38%	58%
9/26/17	38%	57%
8/15/17	39%	58%
6/27/17	38%	57%
4/18/17	40%	56%

[Quinnipiac]

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The NBC/WSJ recently completed a poll of what are described as “Trump Counties”. Trump counties are the 438 counties that “flipped” from voting Democrat in the 2012 election to Republican in 2016 and counties where Trump got 20 points higher or more in 2016 than Romney did in 2012.

In the Trump Counties:

41% say the country is worse off now than it was when Trump became President and 32% say the country is better off now than before Trump won.

53% say they do not think that Trump has a clear agenda while 44% say that he does have an agenda.

35% say that Trump is “not that likely” to bring real change in the direction of the country while 27% say that it is “very likely” that he will bring change.

If health care costs increase and some people lose their health care coverage, 44% believe it is the fault of the Obama administration and Democrats in Congress. 46% believe it is the fault of the Trump administration and the Republicans in Congress.

Here are the news sources that people in Trump counties watch regularly.
 (Multiple answers were accepted)

NBC, ABC or CBS 47%
 Cable channel – Fox News 34%
 Cable channel – CNN 27%
 Cable channel – MSNBC 18%
 Don't watch any of the above 20%

Who do you want to see take the lead role in setting policy for the country?

President Trump -- 29%
 Republicans in Congress -- 22%
 Democrats in Congress -- 38%

62% of the folks in Trump counties are “upset that elites in this country look down on my values and beliefs. [NBC/WSJ, 11/4/17]

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In the recent WP/ABC survey, respondents were asked what kind of job they think Trump is doing:

	<u>Excellent/good</u>	<u>Not so good/poor</u>
On dealing with race relations	28%	70%
Improving the health care system	26%	70%
Dealing with the threat or terrorism	43%	55%

They were also asked if Trump:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Is keeping most of his campaign promises	35%	55%
Is honest and trustworthy	33%	65%
Is bringing needed change to Washington	42%	55%

	<u>Is biased</u>	<u>Is not biased</u>
Is biased against women	55%	40%
Is biased against black people	50%	42%

[WP/ABC, 11/1/17]

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About President Trump

It has become increasingly clear that the top of President Trump's agenda is to repeal or otherwise undercut in any way possible anything that is seen as action taken by President Obama.

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Trump just makes things up without checking and doesn't seem to care whether what he says is true. The following is a recent example.

On June 28th President Trump sent a tweet, "Very little reporting about the GREAT GDP numbers announced yesterday (3.0 despite the Big hurricane hits)."

On the same day of this tweet, these were front page headlines on three major newspapers:

Wall Street Journal: "U.S. Economy Picks Up Steam: Despite hurricanes, U.S. consumers and businesses drove a six month expansion....U.S. economy has posted two consecutive quarters of growth above 3%"

N.Y. Times: "Economy 3% Spurt Emboldens Tax Cut Supporters (and Critics)"

The Washington Post: "Economy shows strong growth, could provide GOP momentum"

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Americans disapprove of the President's "handling of his role as commander in chief", "the situation in North Korea", "the NFL players' protest during the national anthem", "the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico", "health care" and "the Iran Nuclear agreement".

They do approve of his "handling of the aftermath of Hurricanes Harvey in Texas and Irma in Florida" and the "economy". [NBC/WSJ, 10/26/17]

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The following is a summary of media coverage of President Trump's first 100 days in office based on a study by the Pew Research Center.

Stories from outlets with a politically right-leaning audience were at least five times more likely to carry an overall positive assessment of the Trump administration than those that have a left-leaning audience or a more mixed audience makeup.

The research also found that stories from outlets with a left-leaning audience and a more mixed audience included a wider variety of voices.

Additionally, direct refutations of a statement by President Trump or the administration were about seven times more common in stories from outlets with a left-leaning audience than a right-leaning one.

Coverage was more likely to be framed around Trump and the administration leadership and character than around policy.

Compared with past administrations, coverage of Trump's early days focused less on policy and was assessed more negatively. [PEW, 10/2/17]

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A longtime friend of mine who is not a Trump supporter sent me a full page email in mid-August and the following are two sentences from that email. "Everyone says President Trump is a racist or an idiot. I actually think there is a material chance that neither of these statements are true. When I look at his actions, I see the possibility that President Trump is incredibly shrewd at always changing the narrative with outrageous positions that (a) have a shred of truth; or (b) he can easily abandon."

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Another friend of mine, with a long career in law enforcement said, "Trump may not be a racist but has no trouble being seen as a racist."

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58% approve and 26% disapprove of the way Robert Mueller is handling his investigation of possible ties between Trump's campaign and the Russian government. And by 51% to 37% respondents do not believe that Trump is cooperating with the investigations.

49% overall believe it is likely that Trump committed a crime in connection with Russian attempts to influence the election. Of this number, 19% think there is solid evidence that Trump committed a crime, while 30% say that this is merely their suspicion.

82% of Republicans say it is unlikely Trump committed a crime. 74% of Democrats and half of Independents think it is likely that he did commit a crime.
[WP/ABC, 11/1/17]

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After Florida and Texas were hit by a hurricane, Trump tweeted, “We are with you today, we are with you tomorrow, and we will be with you EVERY SINGLE DAY AFTER, to restore, recover, and REBUILD.” he told Texas. Florida received the same message.

After Puerto Rico was hit by a subsequent hurricane that all but destroyed the island he tweeted to Puerto Rico, they “want everything to be done for them.” “We cannot keep FEMA, the Military & the First Responders, who have been amazing (under the most difficult circumstances) in P.R. forever!” [NYTimes, 10/13/17]

Could it be that the President sees Puerto Ricans as foreigners and not as U.S. citizens?

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By 55% to 45% a majority of registered voters trust the Democrats in Congress more than Donald Trump to handle America’s security. This is an 18 point swing from March when 54% to 46% trusted Trump more.
[Greenberg Quinlan Rosner poll, 10/10/17]

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In a speech in Alabama on September 22nd Trump said that if NFL players take a knee during the national anthem fans should leave the stadium and the NFL owners should fire the players.

As it happens the Winston Group had done a survey in August looking at the brand images of a variety of sports at the professional and college level. They did a follow up survey September 28-29.

In a report of the two surveys the Winston Group wrote, “In the first survey, 57% were favorable and 23% were unfavorable to the NFL. Post Trump’s statements and the player response, the NFL’s brand image slipped significantly to 44-40 favorable-unfavorable. The favorable margin went from +34% to +4% in the course of one month, so the country is now basically neutral toward the NFL. While some other sports saw minor slippage, none came close to matching the drop the NFL experienced.”

In the August survey the NFL had a favorable rating of 68% to 22% among men. By the end of September it had fallen to 45% to 44%. Among women in August the NFL had a favorable rating of 48% to 25%. By August it had fallen to 43% to 36%.

A separate piece of research by CBS News around this incident demonstrates the dynamics of the broader divides in this country.

When folks were asked what the players were trying to do they responded that the players were trying to:

	All	Dems	Reps	Inds
Call attention to racism	73%	82%	69%	69%
Call attention to unfair police tactics	69%	84%	61%	64%
Stick up for people in their communities	66%	86%	47%	65%
Disrespect the flag and anthem itself	40%	13%	70%	43%
Disrespect the military and veterans	33%	11%	59%	36%

[CBS News survey, 9/28/17]

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Disassembling

The Trump administration has taken a series of steps to cut funding for abortion providers and promote conservative reproductive policies, moving forward what supporters and opponents say could be the most antiabortion presidential agenda in recent memory.

Few of the actions have drawn much attention on their own but activists on both sides say that cumulatively they amount to an unusually broad offensive against abortion and contraception. [WSJ, 9/16-17/17]

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The Trump administration has told 2,500 Nicaraguans who have been living in the United States for nearly 20 years under Temporary Protected Status that they must leave the country within 14 months or change their residency status. The Temporary Protected Status was established during the Clinton administration after Hurricane Mitch hit Central America in 1998. This status has been routinely renewed through the 8 years of George W. Bush's administration and the 8 years of Barack Obama's administration.

This group is just the tip of the iceberg. There are 57,000 Hondurans living in the United States under the same status. The Department of Homeland Security apparently needs more time to consider their fate. 400,000 Salvadorans and 50,000 Haitians will have their current status expire next year. [Washington Post, 11/7/17]

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“The Army Corp of Engineers has filed notice in a court case that it is reconsidering the current ban on carrying firearms on its land (all federal lands); the Justice Department narrowed the definition of fugitives barred from purchasing weapons; and the Interior Department lifted a federal ban on hunting with lead ammunition in national parks.”

A bill that the President signed blocked the Social Security Administration from reporting mentally impaired recipients to a national background-check data base. [Washington Post, 10/5/17]

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By 51-50 vote in the Senate, with Vice President Mike Pence casting the deciding vote, bank customers will still be subject to what are known as mandatory arbitration clauses. These clauses are buried in the fine print of nearly every checking account, credit card, payday loan, auto loan or other financial services contract and require customers to use arbitration to resolve any dispute with his or her bank. They effectively waive the customer's right to sue.

A proposed regulation from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau would have largely restricted mandatory arbitration clauses by 2019. [AP, 10/25/17]

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The Trump administration rejected a Department of Health and Human Services report showing that refugees brought in "\$63 billion more in government revenues over the past decade than they cost," per the New York Times, arguing that it was "delivered by someone with an ideological agenda," and refugees from war-torn countries "are not a net benefit to the U.S. economy."

Chief policy adviser Stephen Miller has reportedly encouraged Trump to cap the number of refugees allowed into the U.S. well below 50,000 due to concerns about terrorism and the belief that refugees are "too costly."

Subsequently, the administration has set the annual cap for refugees admitted to the United States to 47,000. This is the first time the cap has fallen below 67,000, the number set by President Reagan in 1986. [Washington Post]

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The Mine Health and Safety Administration is trying to relax a hard rock mining inspections rule that was published three days after President Barack Obama left office. They are now allowing safety inspectors to do their reviews while miners continue working and not requiring companies to record hazardous conditions if they are immediately corrected. This rule change means that miners would have to work in an area that had not passed an MSHA safety inspection. [Washington Post, 9/14]

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The Trump administration issued a rule Friday that sharply limits the Affordable Care Act's contraception coverage mandate, a move that could mean many American women would no longer have access to birth control free of charge.

The new regulation, issued by the Health and Human Services Department, allows a much broader group of employers and insurers to exempt themselves from covering contraceptives such as birth control pills on religious or moral grounds.

The decision, anticipated from the Trump administration for months, is the latest twist in a seesawing legal and ideological fight that has surrounded this aspect of the 2010 health-care law nearly from the start.

Several religious groups who battled the Obama administration for years over the controversial requirement, welcomed the action. [Washington Post, 10/16/17]

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Attorney General Sessions has reversed a three year old policy of the Justice Department that Transgender people were protected from workplace discrimination by Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. [Washington Post, 10/6/17]

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In a case dealing with employee collective bargaining, the National Labor Relations Board and the Justice Department had both supported the position that employees were not bound by arbitration clauses in their employment agreements when briefs were filed in the Supreme Court. In the oral argument before the Supreme Court, The Trump Justice department changed the department's position and sided with the employers. [Washington Post, 10/3/17]

The Trump administration has decided to freeze a rule scheduled to go into effect in 2018 that would require employers to report additional information about employees and wages to the EEOC. The goal of the rule was to solve issues of equal pay, particularly between men and women. Ivanka Trump, who advises the President on women in the workplace, supported the decision to halt the rule. [Washington Post]

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A 2012 study by the Treasury Office of Tax Analysis showed that most of the burden of corporate taxes were born by investors. That study was posted on the Treasury website. When Secretary Mnuchin claimed that most of the burden was born by workers as a way to argue for corporate tax cuts, his statements were challenged based on the findings of that 2012 paper. The paper then disappeared from the Treasury website. [Washington Post, 10/3/17]

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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. There has been one addition to the list since the last issue of the WW, Mitch Landrieu, Mayor of New Orleans.

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~~

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 mayor, governor, and U.S. Senator

Mitch Landrieu (D) – Mayor of New Orleans

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Congress

The Congress as a whole remains in a state of substantial disapproval by the folks who elected them and there seems little prospect for that changing any time soon. Going back at least ten years it is not possible to find a time when approval of Congress exceeded disapproval.

	Approve	Disapprove
Reuters/Ipsos 10/31/17	22%	69%
Reuters/Ipsos 9/26/17	20%	69%
Monmouth 9/19/17	15%	73%
Fox News 8/29/17	15%	74%
Quinnipiac 8/23/17	10%	83%
CBS News 8/6/17	19%	73%
CNN/ORC 4/25/17	22%	75%

Members of Congress don't do much better when the question is about the members of one party or the other.

Members of Congress

	GOP members	DEM members
	App/Dis	App/Dis
ABC/WP 9/21/17	22%/69%	35%/57%
ABC/WP 10/18/15	24%/71%	35%/59%
ABC/WP 9/7/14	21%/72%	33%/61%
ABC/WP 3/10/13	24%/72%	34%/61%
ABC/WP 3/10/12	23%/71%	34%/60%

Preference for control of Congress in upcoming elections

[NBC/WSJ]

	Republican controlled	Democratic controlled	The result
10/17	41%	48%	
9/17	42%	48%	
6/17	42	50%	
10/16	44	46	RSen RHouse
11/14	42	46	RSen RHouse
10/12	43	45	DSen RHouse

1/10	46	44	DSen RHouse
10/08	36	49	DSen DHouse
10/06	37	52	DSen DHouse
10/04	43	44	RSen DHouse
10/02	43	42	RSen RHouse

* * * * *

In mid-October I emailed the following question to a person for whom I have great respect for her political knowledge and judgement.

“Do you think there is a real prospect for Democrats to take back the House in 2018?”

Her answer was, “Still not better than 50-50 now. Need a number of things to break their way; more retirements in GOP seats that are competitive; continued dysfunction in Congress including intra-party fighting between Trump and GOP; Ds get “right” candidates out of their primaries.”

Following last Tuesday’s election results she emailed me with a slightly more positive point of view particularly because of the continuing announcements by current Republicans in the House of Representatives who are retiring.

According to a WP/ABC survey of registered voters, 51% said they were more likely to support the Democrat candidate in the 2018 House races and 40% said they were more likely to support the Republican candidate. This is a +11 point spread for the Democrats.

However, when the potential voting group in the survey was limited to those people who said they had voted in the last mid-term and planned to vote in 2018, the Democrats margin dropped 9 points to 48% to 46%. In a couple of the previous mid-terms the Democrats also had a small edge and the GOP prevailed.

At this point in time, 24% of respondents say their vote will be in support of Trump and 27% say their vote will show opposition to Trump. [WP/ABC survey, 10/29-11/17]

[WW uses the Cook Political Report for the House chart below.]

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Democrats	194
Republicans	239
Vacancies	2

	Democrats	Republicans
Safe in 2017	174	180
Likely	11	25
Lean	7	23
	Tossup	
	3	12

* * * * *

Quorum Analytics has calculated the number of bills cosponsored by the ten members of each party in the House who have cosponsored the most and the fewest number of bills originally authored by a member of the other party.

The top 10 Democrats who have cosponsored the most Republican sponsored bills in the 115th Congress cosponsored an average 119.4 Republican bills.

The top 10 Republicans who have cosponsored the most Democrat sponsored bills cosponsored an average of 61.9 Democrat bills.

The top 10 Democrats who have cosponsored the fewest Republican sponsored bills cosponsored an average of 11.8 Republican bills.

The top 10 Republicans who have co-sponsored the fewest Democrat sponsored bills cosponsored an average of 0.6 Democrat bills. Four Republicans sponsored no Democrat authored bills and 6 only sponsored a single Democrat authored bill.

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

The two Democratic seats and one Independent seat that were seen as “Safe” in the September issue of the Watch have now dropped down one level to “Likely”. These seats are in New Jersey, Michigan and Maine. On the Republican

side of the aisle, with the retirement of Flake, Arizona drops from “Lean Republican” to a “Toss Up”.

The prospects of the Democrats taking over the Senate are less than limited.

THE SENATE

Republicans	52
Democrats	46
Independents	2

	Democrats	Republicans
Seats not up in 2018	23	43
Safe in 2018	12	6
Likely	7	1 Alabama
	King	
	Stabenow	
	Menendez	
	Tester	
	Casey	
	Kaine	
	Baldwin	
Lean	3	0
	Brown	
	Nelson	
	Heitkamp	
Toss-ups	3	2
	Donnelly	Heller
	McCaskill	Arizona
	Manchin	

* * * * *

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 currently employed women in the United States say they have personally experienced an “unwelcome sexual advance or verbal or physical harassment” at work.

41% of currently employed men admit that they have personally witnessed the mistreatment of women in the workplace.

67% of women and men think that sexual harassment happens in most if not all work places.

There are no political boundaries to the harassment of women with 44% of Republican women and 46% of Democratic women saying they have personal experience.

55% of women with college educations and 43% of women without a college education have experienced harassment as have 51% of white women and 43% of women of color.

54% of men under the age of 50 years say they are reconsidering how they interact with women but only 42% of men over age 50 share that interest. 61% of Democratic men, 44% of Republican men and 43% of independent man are in the “reconsidering” group. [NBC/WSJ, 10/26/17]

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75% believe that sexual harassment of women in the workplace is a problem in this country. 64% see it as a serious problem.

65% believe that a man who sexually harasses a women in the workplace “gets away with it.”

Of women who have experienced unwanted workplace-related sexual advances, 33% consider it to be sexual abuse while 79% consider it to be harassment.

58% of women who experienced unwanted sexual advances in the workplace did not report it. 42% did.

Among women who have experienced unwanted workplace-related sexual advances, 83% are angry, 64% feel intimidated, 52% feel humiliated and 31% are ashamed. [ABC/WP, 10/17/17]

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55% of Americans believe that women still face significant obstacles to getting ahead that men do not face. This includes 64% of women but only 46% of men. 63% of Rep/leanRep including 53% of Republican women believe that the obstacles that once made it harder for women to get ahead are largely gone.

73% of Dem/leanDem, including 79% of Dem/lean women, believe the obstacles remain. [PEW, 10/5/17]

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The U.S. has the highest maternal mortality rate of all industrialized countries. For every 100,000 babies born, 26.5% of mothers die in childbirth. The number is 7.3% in Canada and 7.2% in Western Europe. The U.S. is one of a handful of countries where the problem has gotten worse not better over the last three decades. [Broadsheet, 10/30/17]

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44% of women but only 29% of men think that discrimination in the tech industry is a major problem. Further, 33% of women and 19% of men think there is more discrimination against women in the tech industry than in other industries.[PEW 10/10/17]

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“Nikon has a serious optics problem. The Japanese camera giant chose 32 professional photographers across Asia and Africa to test-drive and promote its new camera, the D850. Of the 32 photographers chosen, Nikon managed to pick zero women.

“What is so obvious to me – a professional photographer – as well as colleagues, photography bloggers and social media users, was not obvious to Nikon. Instead, it seemed to have worked on the campaign, from the concept stage through to

development, marketing and public relations, without a thought for its female clients.”

[Gender Avenger, 9/19/17]

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Japan ranks 165th of 193 countries in the proportion of women in its national legislature. Among the world’s richest countries, it is dead last. [NYT, 10/21/17]

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Restaurants

Ghibellina
1610 14th St NW
Washington, DC 20009
202-803-2389
InfoGhibellina.com

Linda, Tevy, Paula, Corey, Debbie and I went to Ghibellina on a week night. Linda was the fifth grade teacher of the owner of the restaurant who was not there this particular evening.

As you approach the restaurant, there are a number of tables on the sidewalk. You need to pay attention so that you don’t accidentally walk into the restaurant next door.

As you enter, there are a couple of steps up to the main restaurant floor. Straight ahead is a relatively steep flight of stairs leading to an area available for private parties. The night we went there was a sign at the bottom of the stairs indicating that a Washington law firm was holding an event on the second floor.

To the right as you enter is a host stand. Also to the right there are a number of tables. Directly ahead is a U-shaped bar with high stools. And just past the U-shaped bar there is a long bar.

The restaurant is much longer than it is wide. The walls are exposed white brick. As you head toward the back of the restaurant to the right is the long bar. To the left are a couple of three person tables and a series of alcoves in each of which there are longer tables.

At the back of the restaurant, where we were seated, are a number of round tables that can seat up to six people and a banquette on the right wall that fronts a series of two person tables. The open kitchen is at the end of the room.

The restaurant seats a total of 90 people at tables that seat 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 people. There are some high-top tables but the majority of the tables are of normal height.

The U-shaped bar seats 12 people and the long bar has 18 high chairs.

Our server, Roxie, was quite attentive and helpful. It turns out that she is from the Ukraine.

Because we seemed to share whatever anyone ordered the following is a list of the dishes ordered. Varieta A D'olive, house cured olives; Burrata; Fegatini, chicken liver crostini, anchovy, capers and vermouth; Insalata Stagione, a number of fresh vegetables; and Funghi Arrostiti, herb roasted mushrooms, grana Padano.

The group then ordered three pizzas: Margherita Di Bufala, tomato sauce, basil, buffalo mozzarella; Funghi, herb roasted mushrooms, goat cheese, spring onions, pecorino, truffle oil; and Salsicce E Cipolla, tomato sauce, sausage, roasted onions, provolone, grana Padano, basil oregano, pereronciono.

The pizzas are served on stands and are accompanied by special scissors for cutting the pizzas which are not cut in the kitchen.

A little more than halfway back on the left side of the restaurant is a cut out that includes two unisex restrooms that face one another. Between the two restrooms are a couple of high stools for those who are waiting to use the facilities. I had not seen that accommodation before.

There is a single white ceramic commode and a white marble counter in which is set a single copper like metal wash basin. The floor is covered with large white marble-like tile. The walls are either covered with bright red mid-size squares or exposed bricks. There is a large mirror over the sink which looks as if it is permanently fogged up. I assume the other restroom is a carbon copy.

The restaurant's website is loaded with photographs of the restaurant and various dishes from the menu.

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Silver
New American Brasseries
At Cathedral Commons
3404 Wisconsin Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20016
202-851-3199
Reservations – eatatsilver.com

Debbie and I had two visits to Silver. Overall, the first visit with Bob and Rita was quite good, with the exception of one dish that was a little too spicy. We left there feeling quite good about the service and the food.

Our second visit with Tom put a bit of a damper on our initial impression.

Silver's interior has a traditional diner look. The reception stand is a few feet inside the front door. The restaurant seats somewhere between 180 and 200 people inside with another 50-60 outside weather permitting. They employ large heating umbrellas on cool evenings.

There are booths of various sizes, some that seat up to six people as well as 2, 4, 6, 8 and 12 tops and some high tops.

There is a banquette at the end of the dining room that is long with two short ends sticking out. On our first trip, the four of us were in a booth to the left at the end of the room.

Rita ordered the House made Tomato Basil Soup, but it was a bit too spicy. She could not eat it. Bob ordered the Corn chowder. Debbie and I had the Kale + Bleu Cheese Salad, Farro, carrots, cranberries, Champagne Vinaigrette. It was large enough to make a meal of it alone.

For main courses:

Rita had the Pan Seared Scallops, From Cape May to New England, with MD Bay seasoned lemon garlic sauce, wilted spinach, feta, cilantro, mashed butternut squash, mixed vegetables

Debbie had the Lemon Chicken with lemon garlic caper sauce, Italian parsley, garlic spinach, cauliflower mash, preserved lemon

Bob and I had the Chicken Pot Pie with cremini mushrooms, basil, butternut squash, peas, corn, scallions, and tarragon. The chicken was cut into strings rather than pieces. Chicken pot pie usually comes topped with a flaky, buttery crust across the top of the pot. In this case a well prepared crust was cut into two half circle pieces that are placed together standing up on the edge of the inside of the pot. The portions were so large that I could not finish mine.

We ordered Crispy Brussels sprouts with Cinnamon chipotle spiced, apricots, cranberries and Pecans to be shared by all.

For dessert we shared Butterscotch Pudding, topped with health bar crunch, and whipped crème; and Apple Beignets made to order with hazelnut powder, cinnamon sugar, caramel drizzle, side honey thyme butter.

Silver has an eclectic menu. Bob said it was the best chicken pot pie this side of Waukegan and that the only thing missing from the menu was an open faced turkey sandwich.

Many of the dishes have calories counts attached. There does not appear to be any rhyme or reason to why some dishes have calorie counts. In addition there is a section titled “Under 600 Calories” which has five entrees.

Carlos, our server, was excellent, responsive and careful about getting our order right. There are various folks that serve each table. There is the server who takes your order and answers questions about the menu. Your food is then delivered by a second group of people and the table is cleared by yet another group. In short there are plenty of people seeing to your needs.

As we were finishing our meal, the president and founder of the restaurant, Robert Giaimo, stopped by to ask how we enjoyed the dinner. We responded positively.

As you enter the restroom, to the left is a heavy black and white marble counter top with two sunken white ceramic washbasins and a large mirror. Immediately to the left there is a heavy floor to ceiling partial wall. On the other side is a single floor based white ceramic urinal, to the right is a metal partial wall commode room with a single white commode.

The floor is covered with a black and white square tiles designed with the white part composed of a vast number of tiny white squares. The walls are covered with white rectangle tiles placed vertically. Inside the commode area from about shoulder height, one wall is painted off white.

The restaurant takes a limited number of reservations on weekdays leaving the remaining seats for walk-ins. However, if you can't get a reservation they have what they call "Call ahead seating." Call 30 minutes in advance of your arrival to be added to the wait list. We were told that using this system one can usually get seated within a few minutes after your arrival.

Our second visit was with Tom. It was lunch time on a Sunday but the restaurant was only serving brunch.

We had no difficulty making a reservation online.

We were greeted at the door by Valentina, who turned to me and said "it is nice to see you again". I said, "I assume you say that to all your customers." She said she was on the door the last time I came and remembered me.

We were seated in a booth right away, in fact the same booth we had the first time. The visit did measure up to the first.

The menu only showed brunch. I asked for the regular lunch menu but was told it was not available.

We started by sharing a Hummus platter.

Tom ordered an egg white omelet with certain fillings. The wrong omelet was delivered. The person who he asked to take it back because it was wrong didn't quite understand what he was asking. Finally he got the original waiter to come over. He agreed to take it back and made the point that he "had it right on the order that he gave to the kitchen".

When the new omelet finally came Tom asked the server and then the waiter for mustard and Tabasco sauce. On his third request he got the mustard and still the Tabasco did not come. Finally he asked for the Tabasco a third time and came.

Debbie ordered a strawberry and fruit bowl and I chose the Angus burger with no bun. Both orders arrived as ordered.

At the table next to us, one of the two people got the wrong sandwich because it included something she wanted left off. She called the waiter over (the same one who served us) and he used the same line...that he had ordered correctly when he turned it into the kitchen.

And the kitchen was quite slow that day.

Since then Bob and Rita have eaten at Silver several times and had a good experience each time.

Mike

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