

Mike Berman's

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State of the Nation – page 2

This and That – page 4

Diapers – page 6

* * * * *

Quotes – page 8

* * * * *

President Trump – page 9

About Trump – page 12

Disassembling – page 18

2020 – page 20

* * * * *

Congress – page 21

House – page 22

Senate – page 22

* * * * *

Women Will Get It Done – page 26

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Restaurants – page 27

Washington, DC

Pineapple and Pearls

Bakeries – Page 31

Seylou Bakery & Mill

*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

28% of Americans say the country is headed in the right direction while 58% say it is on the wrong track. [Reuters/Ipsos, 12/5/17]

68% of Americans are dissatisfied with the way things are going in this country today. 27% are satisfied. [Pew, 12/4/17]

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Employment

The official BLS seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for November 2017 is 4.1%, this is identical to the October number and the lowest it has been since January 2001 when the rate was 3.9%.

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 November 2017 is 8.0%. [BLS data is based on those 16 years of age and older.]

Looking at October state data (November is not yet available), 26 states have unemployment rates that are lower than the national rate, the state of North Carolina is even with the national rate and 24 states and the District of Columbia have unemployment rates that are higher the national rate.

11 states have unemployment rates of 4.8% or higher: Alaska 7.2%; D.C. 6.6%; West Virginia 5.1%; Kentucky 5.0%; Nevada 5.0%; Ohio 5.0%; California 4.9%; Illinois 4.9%; Mississippi 4.9%; New Jersey 4.9%; New York 4.8%.

November's job growth of 228,000 jobs is the 85th straight month of job growth.

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There are 554,000 homeless people in the United States. 193,000 do not have access to nightly shelter. This is one percent higher than in 2016 and the first increase in the homeless population since 2010. [Associated Press, 12/8/17]

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In recent weeks sexual harassment has increasingly been a central part of the public dialogue.

66% believe that recent allegations of sexual harassment and assault mainly reflect widespread problems in society. Another 28% believe they are mainly isolated incidents of individual misconduct. [PEW, 12/4/17]

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81% of Americans think sexual harassment goes on in most American workplaces today (31% a lot, 50% some).

67% believe that sexual harassment incidents have not increased of late but are reported more because people are willing to speak up.

66% say if a politician has been accused of sexual harassment, they would not support him/her even though he/she had good leadership skills and shared their view on the issues.

46% of men say that due to the recent stories they have given more thought to their own behavior towards women. 52% say they have not given more thought to their own behavior.

46% of women say that having seen the recent stores about sexual harassment they are more likely to speak up about the issue.

Of those who are currently employed, 90% say sexual harassment is not a problem in their workplace. 87% say they would be comfortable reporting sexual harassment in their workplace. [NBC/Survey Monkey, 11/30/17]

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Respondents to the recent PEW survey were asked how important each of the following issues are to them. They are listed below in the order of most selected to least selected, they were offered in a different order in the survey.

	Important <u>Very</u>	<u>Somewhat</u>	Not <u>Important</u>
The issue of sexual assault and harassment	74%	18%	8%
Proposed changes to the federal tax system	69%	18%	8%

Possibility of a federal government shutdown in the next few weeks	59%	19%	17%
Status of immigrants who came into the country legally when they were children	52%	28%	19%
Investigation into alleged Russian involvement in the 2016 election	49%	17%	30%

[PEW, 12/4/17]

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There is a religious gap between Republicans and Democrats

	<u>Republicans</u>		<u>Democrats</u>	
	<u>2006</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2016</u>
White evangelical Protestant	37%	35%	17%	8%
White mainline Protestant	22%	18%	16%	11%
White Catholic	20%	16%	16%	10%
Mormon	2%	4%	1%	1%
Black Protestant	2%	1%	18%	17%
Hispanic Protestant	3%	3%	3%	4%
Hispanic Catholic	3%	3%	8%	10%
Jewish	1%	1%	3%	2%
Other world religions	1%	1%	2%	3%
Unaffiliated	4%	11%	9%	26%

[PRRI 2016 American Value Atlas, PEW]

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54% of African Americans think the City of Boston is unwelcoming to people of color. Following Boston on that list, are Charlotte (38%), Philadelphia, Chicago and San Francisco (34%), New York (28%), Miami (24%), and Atlanta (16%). [The Boston Globe]

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This and That

As a result of e-commerce, 6,000 brick and mortar stores have closed so far this year. There are 65,000 fewer retail jobs since January 2017. [Axios, 11/25/17]

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In 1820 only 12% of the world's population could read. Now, 86% are able to read. [Human Progress.org]

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The first country to legalize gay marriage was the Netherlands. Now 26 countries are on the list and one additional country allows gay marriage in some jurisdictions. The following are the month and year when each country legalized gay marriage.

Netherlands 12/2000; Belgium 1/2003; Canada 7/2005; Spain 7/2005; South Africa 11/2006; Norway 1/2009; Mexico (in some jurisdictions) 12/2009; Sweden 5/2009; Iceland 6/2010; Portugal 6/2010; Argentina 7/2010; Denmark 6/2012; Uruguay 5/2013; New Zealand 4/2013; France 5/2013; Brazil 5/2013; England & Wales 7/2013; Scotland 12/2014; Luxembourg 1/2015; Finland 2/2015; Iceland 5/2015; Greenland 5/2015; United States 6/2015; Columbia 4/2016; Germany 6/2017; Malta 7/2017; Australia 12/2017 [PEW, with the addition of Australia]

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The Harvard Institute of Politics surveyed 18-29 year olds in early November. Here is a selection of its findings.

- * 72% say they are registered to vote
- * 64% say they voted in the 2016 election
- * 37% say they are liberal, 28% say they are moderate and 32% say they are conservative.
- * 38% say they are affiliated with the Democratic Party, 22% say they are affiliated with the Republican Party and 39% say they are independents
- * Only 24% say they are politically engaged or active and 23% say that this is the case with their friends.
- * 54% say the country is on the wrong track
- * 67% say they are fearful about the future of America
- * 56% support Single Payer Health Care (referred to as Medicare for All)
- * 46% support and 28% oppose race-based affirmative action programs designed to increase the number of African Americans and Hispanic students on college campuses
- * 72% do not approve of Trump's job performance as President
- * 57% prefer that the outcome of the 2018 election be a Congress controlled by Democrats while 38% prefer that Republicans be in charge

- * 80% have Facebook accounts, 59% have Instagram accounts, 54% have Snapchat accounts, 42% have a Twitter account, 40% have Pinterest accounts, 31% have LinkedIn accounts.
- * 67% say we need a new spirit of community or the American Dream will continue to wither
- * 42% feel comfortable sharing their political views at their college without fear of censorship or negative repercussions; 29% do not share that view.
- * 48% believe that social media platforms have an obligation to regulate fake news; 16% disagree
- * 21% say the Republican Party cares about people like them; 34% say that about the Democratic Party.
- * 67% believe that the greatest threat to America comes from a force inside the country.
- * 81% consider the Islamic State to be a serious threat to America; 77% believe that about North Korea; 60% believe that about Russia; and 41% believe that about China.
- * 81% believe that hackers/cyber-terrorists are a serious threat to America; 64% believe that about white nationalists
- * 53% believe the idea of the American Dream is alive while 44% believe it is dead
- * 79% are concerned about the state of race relations in America today.
- * 54% believe that based on the current state of the economy students in their class in college will find it difficult to find a permanent job upon graduation

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More about Diapers

48% of families delay changing a diaper to extend their supply of diapers.

The poorest 20% of Americans who buy diapers spend nearly 14% of their after-tax income on diapers.

“...members of the National Diaper Bank Network across 46 states distributed over 52,000,000 donated diapers during 2016, helping ensure that more than 278,000 children had the diapers they needed.” [H.Res. 490]

In October 2011, U.S. Representative Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) introduced The Diaper Investment and Aid to Promote Economic Recovery Act (DIAPER ACT). In short, the bill directs the federal government to distribute free diapers through

day care centers. The bill did not become law and someone from The Heritage Foundation was quoted as saying, “This is a literal push for the nanny state.” “With no regard for the Constitution and regardless of our deficit and debt, there’s no issue too local or too small for liberals to find a role for the federal government.” [Human Events, 10/19/11]

In November 2015, Representatives DeLauro and Ellison (D-MN) introduced the Hygiene Assistance for Families of Infants and Toddlers Act of 2015 (H.R. 4055) which would create a demonstration Project to allow states to provide diapers or a diaper subsidy for low-income and working families.

In his statement at the time of the introduction of the bill, Ellison said “Today, 1 in 3 families struggle to provide diapers for their children. Working families often cannot afford the high cost of diapers because diapers cannot be purchased with Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program funds.”

DeLauro said “Diapers are a basic need for parents of young children.” “No parents should have to choose between buying diapers for their children or buying groceries.” [Ellison press release] The bill did not become law.

On July 28, 2017 Representatives DeLauro, Ellison and Lee introduced House Resolution 490 titled “Supporting the goals and ideals of a ‘National Diaper Awareness Week’”. It was referred to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. The bill has not moved as of 12/7/17.

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I had heard that parents in Puerto Rico with young children were cleaning off paper diapers and reusing them. When I contacted the folks at the National Diaper Bank Network (NDBN) they responded that, “We have been told that diapers are among the most sought after basic needs items in Puerto Rico.”

They had not heard specifically about diapers being reused but they did note that “it is far too common for families experiencing diaper need to reuse soiled diapers – dumping solid wastes and/or air drying urine-soaked diapers.”

I also heard from my old friend David Stauss in North Dakota who wrote, “After seeing your WW piece about the diaper bank, as president of Prevent Child Abuse ND, I proposed that we establish one for our home visiting sites on the Spirit Lake and Turtle Mountain Reservations.”

A day later, David wrote again to add the following from one of the folks he works with.

“Andrea from the Great Plains Food Bank confirmed that after speaking to the directors, GPFB would like to work on statewide projects and initiatives, so anything we do in collaboration with them will have to be statewide and not focused on the MIECHV communities.

“At our request, Andrea will be speaking with the directors of the GPFB to schedule a conference call meeting for PCAND and GPFB to discuss future collaborations and efforts in North Dakota. She is hoping to get back to us soon with potential dates and times for this call.

“Jacob Davis, Tribal Programming Director, would like to reach out to the National Diaper Bank and discuss a possible partnership between the National Diaper Bank and PCAND to deliver diapers to the reservations in North Dakota. This would provide concrete services to the communities in need that we work with in North Dakota.”

It is one small step but it is a step.

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Quotes

(Courtesy of Simma Leibman; other sources as noted)

“You can’t help a chick peck out of the shell.”

-- Author unknown (Julia Bromley)

‘Complicit’ is Dictionary.com’s word of the year:

It is an adjective meaning “choosing to be involved in an illegal or questionable act, especially with others; having complicity”

“I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play; bring a friend if you have one”

-- George Bernard Shaw to Winston Churchill

“Cannot possibly attend the first night, will attend second...if there is one.”

-- Winston Churchill, in response

“He is a self-made man and worships his creator.”
-- John Bright

“His mother should have thrown him away and kept the stork.”
-- Mae West

“Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go.”
-- Oscar Wilde

“The future will belong to those who have passion and are willing to work hard to
make our country better.”
-- Paul Wellstone

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”
-- Eleanor Roosevelt

“Freedom of speech and expression; freedom of worship; freedom from want; and
freedom from fear—everywhere in the world.”
-- President Franklin D. Roosevelt

“Give a girl the right pair of shoes, and she can conquer the world.”
-- Marilyn Monroe

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President Trump

On December 11, 2017, Gallup found that 35% of Americans approve of President Trump’s job performance and 60% 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>
12/11/17	35%	60%
12/1/17	33%	62%
11/15/17	37%	57%
11/1/17	38%	58%
10/15/17	38%	58%

10/1/17	37%	57%
9/1/17	34%	61%
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>
DEC	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	37/57 35/58
NOV	xxx	xxx	38/57 cnn	36/57cbs	xxx	38/55
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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A PEW Research Center survey taken through December 4th shows Trump with an approval rating of 32% and a disapproval rating of 63%. This reflects a drop in approval of 7 points since June 18, 2017. [PEW]

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The following are job approval numbers from Gallup for the last nine presidents and Trump for 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 Ronald Reagan.

Job Approval – Roughly eleven months into the 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	56% (11/77)
Obama	49% (11/09)
Clinton	50% (11/93)
Reagan	49% (11/81)
Trump	37% (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, continues to move within a narrow range. Currently, 35% view him favorably and 60% unfavorably in the Marist survey. Since February it has been as high as 38%. [12/7/17]

On the economy, Trump’s approval rating has ranged within four points. The disapproval scale is as high as it’s been since March.

	<u>Economy</u>		
	Approve	Disapprove	
12/5/17	42%	52%	
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 three point range since the spring.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
11/13/17	37%	58%
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]

In a more recent measurement than the above, Reuters/Ipsos has Trump's approval on foreign policy at 40% and disapproval at 53%. [12/5/17]

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About President Trump

President Trump's goal is to eliminate, undermine or otherwise undercut anything done by President Obama. Further, he will not do what Obama or George W. Bush would have done in any circumstance. [WW]

Trump's actions don't have an organizing principle. [Bob Woodward, Morning Joe, 11/8/17]

The secret strategy is that there is no secret strategy. Trump acts and reacts. He says stuff. He parries and jabs. He tries to win the minute-by-minute news cycle with little concern about any sort of long-range plan. That's it. [Chris Cillizza, CNN.com, 12/11/17]

In his first 10 months Donald Trump told more discernable lies (103) than Barack Obama did in entire tenure (18). (The NYT Sunday Review for 12/17/17 has detailed lists.

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The President's Labor Department has proposed a rule that would allow restaurants to take the tips from servers and redistribute them among un-tipped staff such as dishwashers. The rule does not require that those tips be redistributed among un-tipped staff – so legally as long as the tipped employees are paid the

minimum wage the restaurants can just keep the money. It could amount to \$6.1 billion annually. [Economic Policy Institute]

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One area in which Trump is making considerable progress, and will continue to do so, is the appointment of federal circuit and district court judges. Trump and the Republicans in the Senate are going full steam ahead to fill every available circuit court vacancy as quickly as possible.

There were 21 vacant appellate seats open when Trump came into office and an additional six vacancies have occurred since he took office. Many of these were vacancies that the Republicans stopped Obama from filling. (See “Demise of the Filibuster” in the Senate section on page 24.)

Nearly half of the 150 current appellate court judges are eligible to take senior status which permits the appointment of an additional judge.

So far, Trump’s appellate nominees have been pretty well qualified but that does not seem to be the standard for District Court nominees. One District Court nominee has virtually no trial experience. Interestingly that particular nomination has been pulled at the request of Judiciary Chairman Chuck Grassley. That person was rated as completely unqualified by the American Bar Association. Now a second District Court nominee has been pulled down because he was unlikely to make it through the Judiciary Committee.

Trump’s nominees are primarily male and mostly white. [NYT, 11/12/17]

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Various autocrats such as Vladimir Putin of Russia, Xi Jing of China, Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines, Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and King Salman Bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia have Donald Trump’s number -- and I don’t mean his phone number. He pines to be like them. [WW]

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President Trump having talked with Vladimir Putin at the recent Asia Summit said thereafter, “[Putin] said he absolutely did not meddle in our election. He did not do what they are saying he did.” Later in the same conversation with media on Air Force One, Trump said that Putin has repeatedly told him, ‘I didn’t do that’ and I really believe that when he tells me that he means it.” [NBC News, 11/11/17]

The President said the above, notwithstanding that all U.S. intelligence agencies have reported that the Russians did attempt to interfere in the 2016 election.

Subsequently, after his initial response drew a fair amount of criticism, Trump said:

“What I said there is that I believe he believes it. And that’s very important for somebody to believe. I believe that he believes that he and Russia did not meddle in the election. As to whether I believe it or not, I’m with our agencies, especially as currently constituted with their leadership. I believe in our agencies. I’ve worked with them very strongly.”

[Minnesota Post]

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The Tax Bill

The tax cut being promoted by President Trump and the Republican-controlled Congress is a back door method to cut basic social programs like Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid by starving the federal government of revenues until cutting those programs is the only option. And they are being up front about it. Speaker Ryan has been open about the need to reduce federal health care and anti-poverty programs in order to tackle the debt and the deficit.

As the Watch is going to distribution, the machinations over the tax bill between the House and Senate conferees, mostly behind closed doors, seem to be coming to an end.

On September 15, 2016 Trump said, “The tax relief will be concentrated on the working and middle-class”...it won’t even be close.

On November 30, 2016, the man who became Secretary of the Treasury, Steve Mnuchin said, “There would be no absolute tax cut for the upper class.”

On May 23, 2017 Mnuchin said, “The president’s priority has been not cutting taxes for the high end.”

On September 27, Trump said, “The reform will protect low-income and middle-income households, not the wealthy and well-connected.”

On October 18th, Mnuchin said, "So when you're cutting taxes across the board, it's very hard not to give tax cuts to the wealthy with tax cuts to the middle class."

Asked if the tax package in aggregate would mean a middle-class tax cut Edward Kleinbard, a former chief of staff for the Joint Committee on Taxation said, "That's delusional or dishonest to say. It's actually untrue."

He added, "The only group you can point to that wins year after year and wins in very large magnitude is the very highest income."

[Washington Post, 12/10/17]

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A federal judge on Monday declined the US government's request to put on hold an order allowing transgender individuals to join the military beginning in January. The decision means transgender people will be free to enlist in the New Year.

"In sum, having carefully considered all of the evidence before it, the Court is not persuaded that Defendants will be irreparably injured by allowing the accession of transgender individuals into the military beginning on January 1, 2018," Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly said in her ruling.

The Pentagon said it was already following a court ruling last week and is "planning to prepare to access transgender persons," as of January 1, US Army Maj. Dave Eastburn, a Pentagon spokesman said in a written statement following the ruling.

White House press secretary Sarah Sanders said the Department of Justice is "reviewing the legal options".

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Peter Hart (WW's favorite pollster) organized a focus group in Wilmington, North Carolina on November 15th on behalf of Emory University. I was able to watch the bulk of the 2 hour plus session on closed circuit cable. Rather than trying to capture the evening myself I am setting out below pieces from the Washington Post coverage authored by James Hohmann in an article published in the Post on November 16th.

Trump carried North Carolina by four points last year. With 15 electoral votes, the Tar Heel State was a hotly contested battleground and will be again in 2020. Barack Obama won here in 2008, and Mitt Romney picked it off in 2012.

The participants in the focus group included five independents, four Republicans and three Democrats

Annie Anthony, 56, voted for Trump last year because she opposes abortion and did not like how Hillary Clinton handled Benghazi. Now she fears that Trump is marching us toward war with North Korea. She describes the first 10 months of his presidency as “chaotic, stressful and an uphill battle. “ While I thought his ideas appealed to me, since he’s been in there he’s embarrassed me by his behavior.” [Anthony is a registered Republican]

When Hart asked for one word or phrase to describe Trump, the group initially erupted in laughter. Only two of 12 said something positive (“bold” and “fights back”). The others called him incompetent, a baffling fool, childlike, a loose cannon, an immature narcissist and ignorant.

Melissa Hight, a 62-year-old married retiree who has a postgraduate degree and voted for Trump, used the word “antagonistic” to describe him. “I had high hopes, but he just goes about things in a way that gets everybody’s back up against the wall,” she lamented. “He doesn’t facilitate working together. He comes out with these grandiose ideas, and there’s no follow through. It’s a lot of talk...He hasn’t acted presidential at all.”

Only one of the 12 participants emerged as an unapologetic defender of the president. Cynthia Layton, a 64-year-old nurse, said she loves Trump’s tweets. “I like him because he talks like my neighbor talks to me,” she explained. “I don’t need an elitist person talking down to me. The media does not give an honest opinion. That’s why I turned off cable 10 years ago. I read my sites. I listen to his tweets. ... That’s how I hear from him. The media doesn’t tell you what’s going on, so you have to find out what’s going on on your own. ... To me, I think his tweets are simply what he honestly feels because he uses white and black language and doesn’t give you all these flowery descriptions about everything. I appreciate that he’s direct and tells it like it is.

The economy and health care were the issues that everyone cared about most. Seven of the 12 participants said they think Trump is doing a good job on the economy; 10 said he’s not doing a good job at addressing racial tensions.

Asked to name their top concerns, no one mentioned Russian interference or the ongoing investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller. Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.), who got reelected last year, is leading one of the inquiries into Moscow's meddling as chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

The room remained quite downbeat about Clinton. Participants described her as annoying, crooked, a thief, outmatched, troubled, despicable and a sore loser.

Interestingly, Joe Biden received widespread praise as savvy, smart, nice and levelheaded.

The focus group really underscored the extent to which the deep unease that propelled Trump's victory a year ago has only gotten worse. Asked for one word to describe the state of America today, the answers were chaotic, tornado, backward, troubled, disrupted, fearful, anxious and embarrassing. Only Layton used a positive word: "Improving."

Michael Leimone, 41, cooks pizzas at a chain restaurant and backed Trump last year. Asked to describe how the presidency has gone, he used the words "whirlwind" and "vacant." "He's not been there when you needed him to be there," he said. "After Charlottesville and (the hurricanes), he was out doing other stuff."

Leimone — who is married, has kids at home and didn't go to college — added later that he still thinks Trump is probably doing a better job than Clinton would have. "We kind of knew what we were getting with him," he said. "He's kind of a loose cannon — I don't like that — but what we've had for years and years — not just Obama, but leading up to that — they weren't getting the job done in terms of leading the country. So he's still better than the alternative of a career politician."

He said he remains optimistic. "I expected a lot out of him ... but nobody can do it all," Leimone said. "He has a harder road because everyone hates him, not just the Democrats. He still has a lot of time to prove himself."

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In a major announcement, the President has announced that he plans to block the import of elephant trophies from Zimbabwe and Zambia. [WPost, 11/20/17]

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Disassembling

The Trump administration has plans to shrink and diminish protections in at least ten of America's national monuments. The goal seems to be to make many of these lands available for one form of exploitation or another including logging, mining and commercial fishing.

Heading the list are Bear Ears, established by President Obama, and Grand Staircase-Escalante established by Bill Clinton. The former would be reduced by 1 million acres from its current 1.35 million acres. The 1.9 million acre Grand Staircase would be reduced by 700,000 to 1.2 million acres. [WPost, 11/29/17]

Notably President Obama ha expanded or created 34 national monuments.

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Betsy DeVos, the Secretary of Education has set out to shrink the Department of Education, and she is making progress.

DeVos attempted to cut the departments' budget by 13.5%. She planned to do this by "eliminating teacher training and college-prep programs for impoverished children investing instead in expanding school choice and increasing funds for charter schools and possibly offering vouchers for private schools." Congress has suggested it is likely to restore many of the cuts.

But DeVos has the power to trim the staff of the department. She cut 46 people from the office of Civil Rights in an effort to scale back the activities of the office. She ordered the staff to narrow the scope of their investigations. She is also using buyouts and early retirement offers in an effort to reduce the size of the student aid office, notwithstanding the fact that there are 87,000 applications to be processed by just 14 people.

The Secretary does not hide her goal of turning the control of education to the states. [Facts and quotes above are from WPost, 11/9/17]

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President Trump has directed that unless a statute requires otherwise, an agency of the federal government can only issue a new regulation by rescinding two or more existing regulations. [WSJ, 11/19/17]

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Trump has stopped any rule making that was in progress and revoked numerous existing rules or executive orders by previous Presidents at a record pace.

The affected rules include:

- a rule that expanded the number of people who could earn overtime pay
- an executive order that related to protecting women in the workplace
- ended a rule that allowed consumers to file class-action suits against financial companies
- the Clean Power Plan
- reversed a ban on drilling for oil in the Arctic
- a rule banning dumping of waste from mining into streams.

The list is endless. For a complete list through the end of October see Phillip Bump's article in the October 27th Washington Post entitled "What Trump has undone."

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Scott Pruitt, the Environmental Protection Agency administrator, has said the Trump administration's high-profile regulatory rollback does not mean a free pass for violators of environmental laws. But as the Trump administration moves from one attention-grabbing headline to the next, it has taken a significant but less-noticed turn in the enforcement of federal pollution laws.

An analysis of enforcement data by The New York Times shows that the administration has adopted a more lenient approach than the previous two administrations — Democratic and Republican — toward polluters.
[NYTimes.com, 12/10/17]

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2020

The following is a list of people who have been mentioned (by themselves or others) 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 have been several additions to the list since the last issue of the Watch: U.S. Senator Chris Murphy of CT, U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown of OH, and Deval Patrick, former Massachusetts Governor.

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

Cory 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

Bernie Sanders (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

~~Al Franken (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

Chris Murphy (D) – U.S. Senator

Sherrod Brown (D) – U.S. Senator

Deval Patrick (D) – former Massachusetts Governor

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Congress

The three members of Congress who resigned the week of December 4th is the largest number of resignations in a single week since the Civil War.

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52% of Americans (66% of Democrats and 37% of Republicans) say that compared to recent Congresses, this Congress has accomplished less than recent Congresses. 8% (17% of Republicans and 3% of Democrats) say it has accomplished more and 33% say it has accomplished about the same amount.

56% say that this lack of accomplishment should be blamed on the Republicans leaders and 16% say it is the fault of Democratic leaders.

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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.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
Reuters/Ipsos 12/5/17	20%	70%
Quinnipiac 12/4/17	12%	80%
Reuters/Ipsos 11/28/17	19%	69%
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%
Quinnipiac 3/6/17	18%	20%
NBC/WSJ 2/22/17	29%	60%

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Women are stepping forward to run for Congress in unprecedented numbers. As of the end of the first week in December, 354 women have announced they are running for the House (291 Democrats and 63 Republicans) and 38 women are running for the Senate (25 Democrats and 13 Republicans). [NYTimes, 12/5/17]

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

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Democrats	195
Republicans	240

	Democrats	Republicans
Safe in 2017	174	178
Likely	11	24
Lean	6	21
	Tossup	
	4	17

* * * * *

U.S. SENATE

The story of the moment in the Senate is the December 12th victory of Doug Jones over Ray Moore in the Alabama special election to fill the seat of Jeff Sessions who was appointed Attorney General of the United States.

Jones got 49.9% of the vote to Moore's 48.4%. 1.7% of the votes cast were write-ins for one or more individuals. A total of 1,365,536 people voted. This represents a turnout of 41% of registered voters.

	<u>Jones</u>	<u>Moore</u>
18-29 year olds (13% of voters)	60%	38%
65 and older (23% of voters)	40%	59%
Whites (66% of voters)	30%	68%
Black (29% of voters)	96%	4%
Men (49% of voters)	42%	56%
White men (35% of voters)	26%	72%

Black men (11% of voters)	93%	6%
Women (51% of voters)	57%	41%
White women (31% of voters)	34%	63%
Black women (17% of voters)	98%	2%

One of the profiles in courage that affected the result was the decision by Republican Senator Richard Shelby to make a public announcement through the media that he was not going to vote for Moore but rather would write in another Republican. You may recall that Shelby was originally elected to the Senate in 1986 as a Democrat and switched to the Republican Party in 1994.

Peter Hart shared the following the day after the Jones victory:

Thoughts about last night.

Last night was a good night for democracy. The victory speech by Doug Jones was exemplary in so many ways. It helped remind us about what is best about people in public life. He was genuine; he did not trash his opponent; he was grateful and proud of his supporters and generous in his praise and thanks to his team. But above it all, he achieved what candidates often forget to do--he used the platform to help define what this election meant in a larger term. He signaled out the importance of the CHIP program.

This was not an excoriation of the tax advantages for the special interests, but a call to the best of us in a positive way. In the end, the CHIP program will end up being saved because of Jones. As we know, elections have consequences and special elections have special consequences. This was a large and loud message by Jones that took us past the tawdriness of Roy Moore and inspired us to the best in us and in the basic good of the United States of America.

For the same reason, DACA is going to be saved---it is about the basic fairness. This is not a bargaining chip for the Republicans; but this is about the respect for the Constitution and the basic character of the country.

Last night was about a candidate who provided a light about the way to move forward.

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Demise of the Filibuster

In 1917 the first filibuster rule (Rule 22) was adopted in the United States Senate, determining that debate could be ended on anything with a two-thirds vote.

The first major change to Rule 22 came in 1975 when the filibuster rule was reduced from 66 to 60 votes in an effort led by then Senator Walter F. Mondale.

The beginning of the end of the filibuster began in 2013 when Democrats, then in control in the Senate, decided to reduce the threshold for confirming executive branch nominees and judicial nominees (excepting Supreme Court nominees) from 60 to 51 votes. The rule remained intact as it relates to debate on legislative matters.

The use of the filibuster rule as it relates to Supreme Court nominees was ended by the Republican majority in 2017 with the nomination of Neil Gorsuch.

How long might it be before the last leg of Rule 22 goes by the wayside?

Right along with the diminution of Rule 22, Senator Chuck Grassley, Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, has at least for now decided not to honor the “blue slip process” for current appellate or district court nominees. The blue slip process is the device by which a Senator can essentially stop a nomination from going forward for a district court judge in his or her state and an appellate court judge for the circuit covering his or her state.

The “blue slip process” is a Senate tradition not a rule. Historically, Judiciary Committee Chairs have enforced it rigorously for district court nominations but have been more flexible for circuit court nominations. So Grassley’s position is not unprecedented.

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THE SENATE

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

Phil Bredesen, the twice elected Democratic governor of Tennessee, has announced he will run for the seat being vacated by Bob Corker. Bredesen was last in public office in 2011. At least for now, this moves that seat into toss-up.

This chart reflects the situation after the swearing in of Doug Jones which will not occur until January 2018.

	Republicans	51
	Democrats	47
	Independents	2
	Democrats	Republicans
Seats not up in 2018	23	42
Safe in 2018	12	5
Likely	7	0
	King	
	Stabenow	
	Menendez	
	Tester	
	Casey	
	Kaine	
	Baldwin	
Lean	3	0
	Brown	
	Nelson	
	Heitkamp	
Toss-ups	4	4
	Donnelly	Heller
	McCaskill	Arizona
	Manchin	Tennessee
	Minnesota	Alabama

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Women Will Get It Done

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Women make up 24% of the computing workforce, and that number is declining. Four out of ten women are leaving STEM careers despite engineering and computer science jobs being some of the fastest growing and highest paying in the world. With computer science and engineering fields having the highest return on investment compared to any other field of study, these jobs play an important role in the future of women and our world. [Gender Avenger Blog, 5/24/17]

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The Consumer Electronics Show, one of the most well-known trade shows in this country, has its next show in January 2018. To date, all of the keynote speakers are men. [Gender Avenger, 11/19/17]

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Federal law enforcement agencies remain as male dominated as they were 20 years ago. In 1966, women held 14% of federal law enforcement jobs. Currently, women represent 15% of those jobs. [Gender Avenger, 11/19/17]

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The European Commission is considering proposals that would require companies whose non-executive directors are more than 60% male to prioritize women when candidates of equal merit are being considered for a post. [Gender Avenger, 11/22/17]

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A black woman is 243% more likely to die from pregnancy or child bearing-related causes than a white woman. [ProPublica]

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“For the first time, married women are better educated than their husbands.”

In 25.3% of marriages the wives have more education than their husbands. In 24.5% of marriages the men have more education than their wives.

This past fall, 56% of all college students were women. 59% of female high school students expect to complete a bachelor’s or graduate degree. 53% of men say the same thing.

73% of married men have higher incomes than their spouses, down from 91% in 1960. [Daily Good, 11/22/17]

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6.33% of all commercial pilots are women. Now and then a Southwest Airlines flight will end up with an all-female crew; pilot, co-pilot and flight attendant. [Money.Good.is, 10/25/17]

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Only 10% of the lawmakers in the lower house of the National Diet of Japan and 16% of the members of the upper House of the Diet are women. [WP, 11/25/17, Google]

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Restaurants

Pineapple & Pearls
715 8th St SE
Washington, DC 20003
202-595-7375

Pineapple & Pearls is the latest addition to the Barracks Row cluster of restaurants in Southeast Washington.

Chef owner Aaron Silverman opened the restaurant on April 7, 2016, just thirty months after opening his first restaurant in the area, Rose's Luxury.

Rose's was an instant hit and remains a dining destination for which folks lineup each day (or hire someone to do it for them) to score one or more of the 76 seats that are available in the restaurant for several seatings a night. On a really busy night the restaurant may serve 250 people.

(Reservations were taken at Rose's for New Year's Eve. The reservation line opened at 11:00 a.m. on December 5, 2017. By the time I checked in at 2:00 p.m., the only openings left were one reservation for 4-6 guests, one reservation for 7-8 guests and a reservation for 10-12 guests on the roof top.)

When Silverman began thinking about Pineapple and Pearls he envisioned a “small coffee shop in front and a reservations-only prix fixe tasting menu restaurant in the back.” “I envision a five-star, luxury hotel pampering,” Silverman says. [Bethesda Magazine, 12/1/2017]

Virginia and Tom and Debbie and I went to Pineapple & Pearls on a Tuesday night to celebrate Debbie’s birthday.

There is no sign on the front of the restaurant only the number 715. But it is easy to find because there is a large sign on Rose’s Luxury which is right next door.

There is a patio outside the front of the restaurant that has four round tables which I assume are used for the coffee bar when weather permits.

As you enter the restaurant you are in the coffee shop. There are a number of expected accoutrements. It is also where dinner guests are greeted. As you wait to be seated, champagne and a similar non-alcoholic beverage are offered.

There are two seatings a night, one at 5:30 p.m. and on at 8:30 p.m. We had an 8:30 p.m. reservation. Tom got there first and was enjoying a libation when Virginia, Debbie and I arrived shortly thereafter. We were seated around 8:20 p.m. Expect dinner to take 2.5 to 3 hours.

To the left of the greeters stand is a white curtain hanging over an entry way that leads to the balance of the restaurant.

As you pass through the entry into the rest of the restaurant you first come to a U-shaped bar with high chairs, seating up to 8 people.

As you move past the front bar, there is an unmarked door with a cloudy glass door on each side of the entry way into the balance of the restaurant. These glass doors are the gender neutral restrooms.

You are now in the main room of the restaurant. To the right are four 2 tops that can be configured to handle two, three, four or six people. In the middle of the room there are four 2 tops in various combinations. To the far left is a single large booth that seated 5 people the night we were there but looks to be able to accommodate six.

At the end of the room is the open kitchen with an eating bar across the front that seats 8 people who look into the working kitchen.

We were seated at the middle 4 top on the right side of the room. To our right was a party of two and to our left a party of 3. All in all, the restaurant can seat 36 people at each seating.

When I made the reservation through the concierge at the Four Seasons Hotel, I told him that this dinner was to celebrate Debbie's birthday. On our table was a little sign wishing her a Happy Birthday.

There are various levels of people serving guests. The people that had us as a primary responsibility were Joe and Ricki, Joe being the senior server. During the evening at least seven other people served various dishes to us including our coffees at the end. All in, including the kitchen staff, the two folks who greeted guests and various levels of service people it appears that there are 18-20 people who in one way or another are taking care of the 36 people at each seating. The night we were there, there were a few empty seats.

When seated you do not find a menu that tells you what you will be eating that night. Eleven separate dishes are served each night. When we asked about changes to the menu over time, we were told that usually one new dish is added each week and one dish is removed. There is no way to know in advance what the eleven dishes will be. At least one of them changes every week.

When you make reservations you are provided an opportunity to relate special needs. I had failed to do that so I called and left a message on the restaurant answering machine noting certain dietary needs that I have. When we were seated the lead server at our table asked me about those needs relative to the menu for that evening. Those needs were met by substitutions from items that were served that evening. I had noted that I cannot eat raw or rare meat. When a piece of Wagyu beef was served, I was served separately with a more well-done piece of meat than the others.

There were seven alcohol based drinks served that night in which Debbie and Tom imbibed. Virginia and I were offered seven non-alcoholic beverages. One of the drinks we received included a juice that I need to avoid and I pointed that out to our server and soon thereafter I received a substitute.

As dessert was served, Debbie received a slightly different dessert with a lit candle.

The presentation of the entire dinner was just about perfect. While no course is more than a bite or two, we finished the evening pleasantly filled. From the time we sat down until we got up to leave, dinner took 2 hours 45 minutes. The dinner as a whole met and exceeded our expectations.

I noted that with the one drink that was served with straws, they were not paper.

As you leave the restaurant you are handed a bag with the following inside: a card listing the menu for the evening, a card listing the alcoholic beverages that were served, a card listing the non-alcoholic beverages that were served and two small jars containing herbed butter and jam as well as a thank you note from Chef Silverman.

At one point in the evening our server Joe, seeing that I was heading for the restroom, went ahead to check which of the two restrooms was open.

The restroom I used was as clean as can be. On one wall is a standard white commode of reasonable height. On another wall is a rectangular wash basin made of marble-like material and a tall gold faucet topped by a full mirror. There is a pile of wrapped towels next to the washbasin. On a third wall next to the door, there is a rectangular wooden table topped with a couple of glass cylinders, circular white cups and a lighted candle. Under the table there is a white cabinet with a wooden top and a sunken container for depositing used towels etc.

For an unusual touch, there is a photo of the inside of one of the restrooms included in the various photos on the restaurant's website.

The restaurant is open Tuesday through Friday night and an occasional Saturday. Saturday dates are listed on the website.

Reservations are only taken on the restaurant website. However, the phones at the restaurant are theoretically answered between 12:00 noon and 2:00 p.m. on the days that the restaurant is open.

While the restaurant does not publish a menu on its website it does have something I had not seen before, a list of questions that might come up as you

think about the restaurant and the answers. For example, “Do you take walk-ins?” The answer: “We generally do not take walk-ins. When last minute seats open up day-of reservations we will post the opening on our Instagram account @lastminutedinnerplans.”

A meal with alcohol costs \$280 per person. Without alcohol the cost is \$255.

The charge includes gratuities and taxes. I asked our server whether additional gratuities are permitted. He first made it very clear that the gratuity is covered but then noted that some guests do leave additional gratuities. We did that.

One half of the total amount for the evening, in our case four people, is charged to your credit card the day you make the reservation. The balance is charged to your card on the morning of your reservation.

Bakeries

Seylou Bakery & Mill
926 N Street NW, Suite A
Washington, DC 20001

Seylou Bakery and Mill is off the beaten path of my usual ventures around Washington but I was intrigued by an extended story about Seylou in the Washington Post.

It caught my eye because when I went to learn more about it on its website Seylou described itself as a whole grain bakery and said, “Our mission is to foster an interconnected local grain community where growers, bakers, staff and guests learn, taste and flourish together.”

The bakery is owned by a spousal team, Jonathan Bethony and Jessica Azeez. Jonathan’s history as he became a baker is quite interesting and worth a read on the bakery’s website under the “ABOUT” section.

In short, this is a bakery that uses only whole grains. Rather than buying flour it buys bulging sacks of wheat berries and other whole grains from local farmers. The grains are milled on the premises after which a starter is fermented and then backed in an imported wood-fired oven. It is worth the trip just to see the very large, floor to ceiling oven.

I went to Seylou's location in Shaw on the first day of its official opening on November 30th. The hours for that day and the next were from 1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

By the time I got there around 1:20 p.m. the line was out the door. I was about 8th in line although it was clear that a number of folks had already made purchases including an old friend I ran into on the street who had already purchased a large bag of breads.

I managed to purchase 4 large round breads, 2 long baguettes, a couple of croissants and a couple of scones. Debbie and I cut the breads and baguettes in half and delivered them to friends in our apartment building. We saved one full loaf of bread and half a baguette for ourselves as well as the croissants and scones.

I returned to the bakery the next day at about 2:20 p.m. after its 1:00 p.m. opening. By the time I got there all the breads were gone and all that was left were some croissants, scones and cookies so I passed rather than wait in line.

The third time I went to the bakery it had started opening at 8:00 a.m. In late morning all that was available were some croissants and scones and cookies. There was no one ahead of me in line this time. I bought 4 regular and 4 chocolate croissants.

While the bakery and café now open at 8:00 a.m. in the morning, I had not paid attention to the sign that indicated that the breads were not available until 1:00 p.m.

Debbie and I decided to experiment with the bread and half banquette we had saved for ourselves. First we cut the round bread in half. One half we put in the freezer in a plastic bag. We cut the other half into two pieces.

One piece and the half baguette remained fresh for a day or two as we and some guests worked away at it. The other quarter loaf that we left on the counter began to get stale on the exposed side after it had been there for a few days. However, when we cut a thin slice off the exposed side the balance of the bread was as fresh as when we bought it. We did this a couple of times.

The half loaf of bread that we had frozen we took out 10 days later and once thawed it seemed as fresh as when we bought it. We subsequently froze a couple of the croissants I purchased at a different time. They did not come out of their frozen state as well as the bread.

The various breads and baked goods are not inexpensive. Two of the breads are available as whole breads (\$11 or \$12) or half breads (\$6). Two other breads are only sold whole and go for \$11 or \$9.50.

There are a series of other items ranging from croissants, to scones to canelés to cookies to brownies and éclairs ranging in price from \$3.50 to \$5.25. Certain goods are only available in the morning and others only available in the afternoon. The website is very clear as to availabilities and price. There are a series of coffees and teas available in the café.

For people who receive nutrition assistance benefits, the bakery offers 50% off bread purchases. Their unsold bread is donated to Bread for the City which provides food to folks living near the poverty line.

Having now done a variety of taste tests, I plan to make further excursions into Shaw to load up on a regular basis.

The bakery is closed on Monday & Tuesday and open Wednesday – Sunday from 8 am – 4 pm.

Mike

Suite 825
325 7th St, NW
Washington, DC 20004
202- 728-1100
mberman@dubersteingroup.com