

Mike Berman's

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

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

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State of the Nation

30% of registered voters say the country is headed in the right direction.
58% of registered voters say the country is on the wrong track.

	<u>Right direction</u>	<u>Wrong track</u>
Male	34%	54%
Female	25%	58%
Democrats	49%	31%
Republicans	11 %	82%
Independents	26%	57%
Urban	46%	42%
Suburban	24%	62%
Rural	19%	62%

[Econ/YouGov 1/3/23]

In the previous issue of the Washington Watch, on 12/10/22, 32% said it was on the right direction and 59% said it was on the wrong track.

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374 worker strikes started in 2022 – a 39% increase over 2021. The low unemployment rate and worker shortages gave workers more leverage. [Axios Markets 12/19/22]

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The U.S. leads the world in the number of firearm deaths per million people ages 1-19.

U.S. – 56.2 deaths per million
Canada – 6.2
France – 3.1
Australia – 1.6
Germany – 1
U.K – 0.5
Japan – 0.3

The United States has more guns than people. The abundance of guns makes it much easier for anyone to carry out an act of violence with a firearm in America than in any other wealthy country. [U.S. data from 2020, data from other countries from 2019 – CDS; IMHE United Nations.]

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In 19 of the 31 states that track voter registration by party, one of the two major parties is in third place in party registration.

The following are the latest registration statistics in these key states:

- Arizona: Republican 34.67%, Other 34.67%, Democrat 30.66%
 - Nevada: Other 37.70%, Democrat 32.51%, Republican 29.79%
 - New Hampshire: Other 38.17%, Democrat 31.49%, Republican 30.34%
 - North Carolina: Other 36.6%, Democrat 33.73%, Republican 30.01%
- [NBC Meet the Press 12/12/22]

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A recent survey conducted by Ipsos, a global market research company, found that only 65% of respondents reported feeling optimistic that 2023 would be better than 2022 compared with 77% a year earlier. [NYT 1/1/23]

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In 2021, the greater DC Diaper Bank, covering the states of Maryland and Virginia and the District of Columbia, provided assistance to 32,000 families.

	<u>Babies served</u>	<u>Diapers distributed</u>
Maryland	20,439	4,546,040
Virginia	5,328	1,974,645
District of Columbia	<u>15,369</u>	<u>2,964,910</u>
Total	41,136	9,485,595

[Greater DC Diaper Bank]

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Employment

The official BLS seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for December 2022 is 3.5%.

If one considers the total number of unemployed + those marginally attached to the labor force + those working part-time who want full-time work, the unemployment rate is 6.5 % in December and more than the 6.4% it was a year earlier. The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in December 2022 is 62.3%, down from 61.5% in December 2021.

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The Demographics of Unemployment for December 2022

Unemployment by Gender (20 years and older)

Women -2.8% (down from last month)

Men -2.8% (less than last month)

Unemployment by Race

White - 3.0% (down from last month)

Black -5.7% (same as last month)

Hispanic - 4.1% (up from last month)

Asian -2.4% (down from last month)

Unemployment by Education (25 years & over)

Less than high school -5.0% (up from last month)

High School -3.6% (down from last month)

Some college -2.9% (down from last month)

Bachelor's Degree or higher -1.9% (down from last month)

In December 2022, 27 states had unemployment rates below the national average of 3.5%. 23 states, including the District of Columbia, had unemployment rates that were above the national average. 2 states had unemployment rates the same as the national average.

The state/territory with the highest unemployment rate was Nevada at 4.9%.

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This and That

For reasons that I cannot remember, in August 1998, I began keeping track of every restaurant or eating establishment in which I had a meal and have continued to do so for the past 24 years.

As of the end of December 2022, I have dined in at least one restaurant in 8 countries or territories (the United States, the British West Indies, the Netherlands, France, Germany, Denmark, Italy, and England), 21 states, 57 cities, 1 railway station, and 1 airport resulting in at least one meal in 419 different restaurants.

To be sure, there are many restaurants in which I have had far more than a single meal. Many restaurants in which I have had dozens of meals and at least one restaurant in which I have had hundreds of meals – at least to date.

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Harvard University has named its first Black president. Claudine Gay, age 52, a scholar of political behavior will take office on July 1st. [WP 12/15/22]

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Although the United States has the 4th largest Catholic population of any nation, only one-native born American citizen has been sainted: the Philadelphian heiress Katharine Drexel (1858-1955) was canonized by Pope John Paul II in 2000. [NYT 12/25/22]

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2022 was the most expensive midterm on record for TV ad spending. 2020 still wins the award for most TV ads aired.

Traditional advertising (TV and cable) makeup 73% of all ad spending in 2022.

Democrats now have full control of state government in 17 states, while Republicans hold trifectas in 23 states. That leaves just ten states with divided government, the lowest number since 1952. Between 2000 and 2010 there were always 20 or more divided states. [Amy Walter, Cook Political Report 12/23/22]

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Odds and Ends

75% of people in the U.S. never tweet.

72% of Americans help strangers and 42% of us volunteer.

59% of Americans say they picked up a new hobby during the pandemic.

[Axios]

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Here is what the Americans would like the government to work on in the coming year, as of December 2022:

Economy – 31%;

Inflation – 30%;

Immigration – 27%;

Environnent/climate change– 26%;

Gun issues – 19%;
Education/Student debt – 19%;
Health care reform – 17%;
Crime/violence 16%.

Democrats’ top five issues:

Environment/climate change – 40%; Gun issues – 30%; Economy (general);
Inflation – 26%; Education – 25%.

Republicans top five issues:

Immigration – 45%; Inflation – 37%; Economy (general) – 35%;
Crime/violence – 23%; Gas prices/oil/energy costs – 22%.

Independents top five issues:

Inflation – 27%; Economy (general) 26%; Unemployment/jobs – 22%;
Immigration – 20%; Health care reform – 18%.

[AP/NORC 12/5/22]

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The following was created by Gerry Kauvar

My name is Representative George Soros. Let me introduce myself.

I was born in a log cabin on the Fourth of July. I chopped down a cherry tree and threw a dollar across the Potomac River. I rode my horse to warn folks that the British were coming. I drafted the Declaration of Independence, and freed people from servitude. After discovering electricity in a rainstorm. I invented the cotton gin and developed more than 800 plants.

I have perhaps embellished my musical achievement by claiming that I wrote both the music and lyrics of the Star-Spangled Banner. I know it was one or the other.

I was the masked man known as Lone Ranger. Batman too.

I was the inspiration for “I’m a Yankee Doodle Dandy.”

Despite what some scholars believe I did not write any plays falsely attributed to Shakespeare. I did, however, let my pal Hemingway use me as his model in the Great Gatsby.

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President Biden

President Biden is the oldest president in U.S. history. He still has not addressed the question of whether he will run for re-election in 2024. If he were to run, win, and survive the term, he would be 86 years old.

President Biden’s job approval ratings

<u>Date</u>	<u>NBC</u>	<u>WP/ABC</u>	<u>CNN</u>	<u>FOX</u>	<u>QUINNIPIAC</u>
DEC’22	xxx	xxx	48/52	44/56	43/49
NOV’22	44/53	43/53	xxx	xxx	36/55
OCT’22	45/52	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
OCT’22	45/52	43/53	42/58	46/53	37/54
SEPT’22	xxx	xxx	46/54	xxx	xxx
SEPT’22	45/52	39/55	40/53	43/56	41/53
AUG’ 22	42/55	xxx	xxx	41/55	43/53
JULY’22	xxx	xxx	xxx	36/58	33/59
JUNE’22	xxx	xxx	xxx	43/57	35/56
MAY’22	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	38/55
MAY’22	42/54	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx
APR’22	xxx	42/52	41/59	45/53	40/51
APR’22	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	35/55
MAR’22	41/54	xxx	xxx	45/54	38/55
FEB’22	xxx	38/57	42/57	xxx	37/56
JAN’22	44/54	xxx	xxx	47/52	35/54
DEC’21	xxx	xxx	48/52	47/51	xxx
NOV’21	xxx	38/57	48/52	44/54	38/53
OCT’21	45/52	xxx	xxx	xxx	40/51

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As of the end of 2022, the following was Biden’s approval rating based on Real Clear Politics.

	<u>Approval</u>	<u>Disapproval</u>	
Overall	43.4%	52.2%	12/28/22
On the economy	39.3%	57.0 %	12/20/22
On foreign policy	41.5%	51.5%	12/20/22

Gallup now does monthly or semi-monthly surveys of all adults. WW will include a periodic polling summary of Registered and Likely Voters by FiveThirtyEight.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Gallup (All Adults)</u>		<u>FiveThirtyEight (Reg/Likely voters)</u>	
	<u>Approval</u>	<u>Disapproval</u>	<u>Approval</u>	<u>Disapproval</u>
12/2/22	40%	55%	42.9%	53.0%
9/16/22	42%	56%	42.5 %	52.0%
5/22/22	41%	54%	41.1%	54.3%
4/19/22	41%	56%	42.4%	53.1%
3/18/22	42%	54%	42.1%	52.8%
2/17/22	41%	55%	41.4%	53.0%
1/16/22	40%	56%	42.5%	52.1%
12/16/21	43%	51%	43.7%	50.7%
11/16/21	42%	55%	42.8%	51.7%
10/19/21	42%	52%	44.1%	49.9%
9/17/21	43%	53%	45.7%	48.8%
8/17/21	49%	48%	48.5%	45.9%
6/18/21	56%	42%	51.8%	42.4%
5/18/21	54%	40%	52.7%	40.7%

Using Gallup (all adults) as the marker, Biden’s approval rating has fallen by 2 points in the last year and disapproval has grown by 1 point.

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Judges Nominated and Confirmed to Date

As of January 1, 2023, the United States Senate has confirmed 97 federal judges nominated by President Biden. One Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, 28 judges for the United States Courts of Appeals, and 68 judges for the United States District Courts.

There are 45 nominations awaiting Senate action: 10 for the Courts of appeals and 36 for the District Courts. There are 9 vacancies in the U.S. Courts of Appeals, 70 vacancies on the U.S. District Courts, and 2 vacancies in the United States Court of International Trade.

The chart below reflects the number of Article III court judges appointed by every U.S. president since Jimmy Carter.

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Supreme Ct</u>	<u>Appeals Ct</u>	<u>District Ct</u>	<u>Int'l Trade</u>
Biden – 2 years	97	1	28	68	
Trump – 4 years	234	3	54	174	3
Obama – 8 years	325	2	55	268	
GW Bush – 8 years	325	2	62	261	
Clinton – 8 years	373	2	66	305	
GHW Bush – 4 years	192	2	42	148	
Reagan – 8 years	376	4	83	290	
Carter – 4 years	261	0	59	203	

[USCourts/Wikipedia/List of federal judges appointed by Joe Biden]

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There are roughly 4,000 politically appointed positions in the executive branch and independent agencies, including more than 1,200 that require Senate confirmation.

The Washington Post and the Partnership for Public Service are tracking 810 of those 1200 positions.

- 512 people have been confirmed by the Senate
- 80 nominees are being considered by the Senate
- 0 are awaiting formal nomination
- 82 positions have no Biden nominee
- 136 appointees are serving in termed positions or were held over from previous administrations

[WP 12/27/22]

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The following are the favorability ratings for a variety of political leaders based on the Real Clear Politics averages for 12/17/22.

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>
Biden	43.8	51.7
Harris	36.5	52.1
Trump	37.2	56.8
DeSantis	41.2	56.0
Pelosi	34.8	53.6

Schumer	32.7	43.0
McCarthy	23.3	39.3
McConnell	13.7	56.7

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The 117th Congress

Congress

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Approval of the Congress is up roughly 3.8 points from where it was a year ago and disapproval is down 0.6 points.

	<u>Approve</u>	<u>Disapprove</u>
Real Clear Pol. 12/19/22	27.6	62.4%
Real Clear Pol. 11/23/22	23.8%	62.8%
Real Clear Pol. 10/13/22	25.3%	65.8%
Real Clear Pol. 8/30/22	20.6%	67.4%
Real Clear Pol. 6/15/22	21.2%	69.0%
Real Clear Pol. 5/17/22	22.4%	68.0%
Real Clear Pol. 4/16/22	22.2%	67.5%
Real Clear Pol. 3/15/22	21.8%	67.8%
Real Clear Pol. 2/18/22	20.8%	68.32%
Real Clear Pol. 1/17/22	22.4%	66.4%
Real Clear Pol. 12/21/21	23%	65.8%
Real Clear Pol. 11/30/21	22.2%	68.6%

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The Religious Composition of the 118th U.S. Congress

<u>Religion</u>	<u>Number in Congress</u>	<u>% of Congress</u>	<u>% of U.S. adults</u>
Protestant	303	56.7%	40
Catholic	148	27.7	21
Mormon	9	1.7	2
Orthodox Christian	8	1.5	1
Messianic Jewish	1	0.2	<1
Jewish	33	6.2	2
Buddhist	2	0.4	1

Muslim	3	0.6	1
Hindu	2	0.4	1
Unitarian			
Universal	3	0.6	<1
Humanist	1	0.2	<1
Unaffiliated	1	0.02	29
Don't Know			
/Refused	20	3.7	4

[PEW 1/3/23]

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THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Of the more than 120 times since 1789 that the U.S. House has elected a new speaker, there have been only 14 instances in which the process required multiple ballots, according to the Congressional Research Service. Following this Congress' selection process there will have been 15 instances in which the process required multiple ballots. [NYT 12/31/22 and 1/3/23]

It took two months and 133 ballots for the House to elect its speaker in 1856. There were 237 seats in the House in that year.

The last time the House needed more than one ballot to confirm a speaker was 1923. [Axios 1/3/23]

On the 15th ballot, Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) (age 57) was elected Speaker. He was first elected to the House in 2006.

To secure the gavel, McCarthy had to chip away at opposition from a bloc of hardline conservatives in what turned out to be the longest contest in 164 years. To win over critics, McCarthy and his allies made a series of concessions to conservatives.

The struggle that McCarthy faced may serve as a preview of the kind of challenges he will face in trying to unite his members in the future.

The following are a selection of the numerous concessions and promises McCarthy and his supporters made in trying to help him win this election.

(There are reports that there is an additional list of concessions and promises that have not been made public and that won't be made public any time soon. Time will tell.)

- Any member can call for a motion to vacate the Speakers' chair. This would make it easier to trigger a no confidence vote in the speaker. (It still requires a vote.)
- Efforts to raise the debt limit must be paired with spending cuts.
- The 12 appropriations bills must move individually instead of as part of an "omnibus" bill that rolls everything into one bill.
- Members must be given at least 72 hours to review bills before they come to the floor.
- The final election vote required 6 members to answer "present" when they were asked who they would vote for as speaker. This allowed McCarthy to be elected with less than 218 votes.

[WW – In short, to secure his election as Speaker, McCarthy gave away just about everything he could possibly give.]

[WW – C-Span cameras on the floor provided an intimate picture of the goings on.]

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Washington Watch uses the report by David Wasserman of the Cook Political Report for its report on elections in the U.S. House of Representatives. (One seat is open)

Republicans – 221
Democrats – 213

Amid this week's chaos, an occasional TV soundbite has been that House Republicans might not even have won their razor-thin majority without a boost from redistricting. After all, our pre-election estimate was a GOP gain of up to three seats from new maps alone. Instead, 2022's results show redistricting didn't hurt — and even may have even helped — Democrats, another reason Kevin McCarthy has had such difficulty reaching 218 votes.

In December, FiveThirtyEight's Nathaniel Rakich and Elena Mejia wrote an excellent piece hypothesizing how the House outcome might have been different had redistricting not occurred, concluding that the decennial process likely didn't cost Democrats the House.

“Our analysis, using an approach similar to the Cook PVI, arrives at a similar conclusion: Republicans wouldn't have won the House without gerrymanders in Florida, Georgia, Tennessee and Texas. But overall, Democrats fared slightly better than they would have under old maps thanks to their own gerrymanders in Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico and Oregon and a temporary court-drawn map in North Carolina.

“Whereas Republicans focused on locking in as many safe GOP seats as possible (some of which have produced McCarthy detractors), Democrats embarked on a riskier strategy of drawing as many Democratic-leaning seats as possible — and it paid off. Democrats won 24 of the 25 seats they set out to draw for themselves in Illinois, Nevada, New Mexico, and Oregon — including five seats by less than five points.”

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THE SENATE

49 Republicans

48 Democrats

3 Independents

Senator Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona is the 22nd sitting senator since 1890 to switch parties. Her decision does not have an immediate impact on Democrat's control of the Senate. The Senator has not said whether she will run for re-election in 2024. [Inside Elections 12/16/22]

Sinema has also engaged in something else, previously unknown in U.S. Senate circles. She appears to be selling her used clothing and other personal items. Included are a \$215 cycling ensemble, a \$25 trucker hat, a \$150 stainless steel watch, a \$150 fitness tracker ring, an \$80 cycling jersey and a \$500 bicycle travel case. The total list appears to be endless. [Slate 12/15/22]

The U.S. Senate has four caucuses.

The Republican caucus has 49 members.

The regular Democratic caucus has 48 members.

The independent Democrats caucus has 2 members – Sanders and King
The garage sale caucus has 1 member –Sinema

The question of the day is whether the garage sale caucus member will take items that other Senators want to sell and what will be her commission on anything that is sold.

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Having served for 16 years as the Senate GOP leaders Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell is now the longest serving Senate leader ever.

Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), having served in the Senate since 2000, has announced she will not stand for re-election in 2024.

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The 2024 Senate Election

	Democrats	Republicans	Independents
Seats not up in 2024	28	39	0
Seats up in 2024	20	10	3
	Baldwin	Barrasso	King
	Brown	Blackburn	Sanders
	Cantwell	Braun	Sinema
	Cardin	Cramer	
	Carper	Cruz	
	Casey	Fischer	
	Feinstein	Hawley	
	Gillibrand	Romney	
	Heinrich	Scott	
	Hirono	Wicker	
	Kaine		
	Klobuchar		
	Manchin		
	Menendez		
	Murphy		
	Rosen		
	Stabenow		
	Tester		
	Warren		
	Whitehouse		

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2024 Presidential Election

The 2024 Republican National Convention will be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The site of the 2024 Democratic National Convention has not yet been selected. Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, and New York City have submitted bids.

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Only in America – former President Donald Trump has begun selling \$99 digital trading cards in his likeness. The initialing available number sold out the first day they were available. That first day of sales raised \$4.4 million. [The Guardian 12/17/22]

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The following people have indicated or been commonly named as someone thinking about or planning to run for president in 2024. These lists are a result of the mining of a variety of lists published in the last few months.

For the Republican nomination (Several on this list have said they will not run if Trump runs again.):

Donald Trump
Josh Hawley – U.S. Senator
Rick Scott – U.S. Senator
Ted Cruz – U.S. Senator
Tim Scott – U.S. Senator
Marco Rubio – U.S. Senator
Liz Cheney – U.S. Representative - Wyoming
 “I haven’t made a decision about that yet.”
Kristi Noem – Governor of South Dakota
Larry Hogan – Governor of Maryland
Asa Hutchinson – Governor of Arkansas
Greg Abbott – Governor of Texas
Ron DeSantis – Governor of Florida
Mike Pence – Former Vice President
Mike Pompeo – Former Secretary of State
Nikki Haley – Former governor of South Carolina
Chris Christie – Former Governor New Jersey
Glenn Youngkin – Governor of Virginia
Francis Suarez – Mayor of Miami

For the Democratic nomination if Biden does not run (The top 10 from this list, according to the Washington Post on 12/3/22, are the most likely nominees if Biden does not run.):

1. Biden
2. Buttigieg
3. Harris,
4. Polis
5. Klobuchar
6. Newsom
7. Sanders
8. Whitmer
9. Shapiro
- 10.Pritzker.

Gina Raimondo – Secretary of Commerce, former Governor of Rhode Island

Elizabeth Warren – U.S. Senator

Cory Booker – U.S. Senator

Sherrod Brown – U.S. Senator

Michael Bennet – U.S. Senator

Jamie Raskin – U.S. Representative, Maryland

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez – U.S. Representative, New York (She will be 35 years of age on October 13, 2024.)

Roy Cooper – Governor of North Carolina

Andy Beshear – Governor of Kentucky

Phil Murphy – Governor of New Jersey

Tim Walz – Governor of Minnesota

Stacey Abrams – currently running for Governor of Georgia

Mitch Landrieu – former Mayor of New Orleans (now working to implement infrastructure bill)

There are folks who believe that one or more of these individuals will challenge Biden if he decides to run.

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Women Will Get It Done

Women make up 28% of all members of the 118th Congress, the highest percentage in U.S. History and a considerable increase from a decade ago.

A record 128 women are serving in the newly elected House accounting for 29% of the chamber's total. In the Senate, women hold 25 of 100 seats, tying the record number they held in the 116th Congress.

Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) has served in the Senate for 30 years and has been elected Senate President Pro Tempore. She is the first woman to serve in the role.

Congressperson Karen Bass is the first woman and first woman of color to be elected Mayor of Los Angeles, CA.

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WW Recommends Books & Other Things

In this feature of the Washington Watch, WW will primarily recommend books you may find interesting but may also now and then mention a TV program or other things. I welcome your suggestions and your input. What have you been reading or watching that you think WW readers might like?

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G-Man: J. Edgar Hoover and the Making of the American Century by Beverly Gage

A major new biography of J Edgar Hoover that draws from never-before-seen sources to create a groundbreaking portrait of a colossus who dominated half a century of American history and planted the seeds for much of today's conservative political landscape.

We remember him as a bulldog—squat frame, bulging wide-set eyes, fearsome jowls—but in 1924, when he became director of the FBI, he had been the trim, dazzling wunderkind of the administrative state, buzzing with energy and big ideas for reform. He transformed a failing law-enforcement backwater, riddled with scandal, into a modern machine. He believed in the power of the federal government to do great things for the nation and its citizens. He also believed that certain people—many of them communists or racial minorities or both—did not deserve to be included in that American project. Hoover rose to power and then

stayed there, decade after decade, using the tools of state to create a personal fiefdom unrivaled in U.S. history.

Beverly Gage's monumental work explores the full sweep of Hoover's life and career, from his birth in 1895 to a modest Washington civil-service family through his death in 1972. In her nuanced and definitive portrait, Gage shows how Hoover was more than a one-dimensional tyrant and schemer who strong-armed the rest of the country into submission. As FBI director from 1924 through his death in 1972, he was a confidant, counselor, and adversary to eight U.S. presidents, four Republicans and four Democrats. Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson did the most to empower him, yet his closest friend among the eight was fellow anticommunist warrior Richard Nixon. Hoover was not above blackmail and intimidation, but he also embodied conservative values ranging from anticommunism to white supremacy to a crusading and politicized interpretation of Christianity. This garnered him the admiration of millions of Americans. He stayed in office for so long because many people, from the highest reaches of government down to the grassroots, wanted him there and supported what he was doing, thus creating the template that the political right has followed to transform its party.

G-Man places Hoover back where he once stood in American political history—not at the fringes, but at the center—and uses his story to explain the trajectories of governance, policing, race, ideology, political culture, and federal power as they evolved over the course of the 20th century.

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Code Name Blue Wren
The story of America's most Dangerous
Female Spy and
The Sister She Betrayed
Jim Popkin

The incredible true story of Ana Montes, the most damaging female spy in US history, drawing upon never-before-seen material and to be published upon her release from prison, for readers of *Agent Sonya* and *A Woman of No Importance*.

Just days after the 9-11 attacks, a senior Pentagon analyst eased her red Toyota Echo into traffic and headed to work. She never saw the undercover cars tracking her every turn. As she settled into her cubicle on the 6th floor of the Defense Intelligence Agency in Washington, FBI Agents and twitchy DIA officers were hiding in nearby offices. For this was the day that Ana Montes--the US Intelligence

Community superstar who had just won a prestigious fellowship at the CIA--was to be arrested and publicly exposed as a secret agent for Cuba.

Like spies Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen before her, Ana Montes blindsided her colleagues with brazen acts of treason. For nearly 17 years, Montes succeeded in two high-stress jobs. By day, she was one of the government's top Cuba experts, a buttoned-down GS-14 with shockingly easy access to classified documents. By night, she was on the clock for Fidel Castro, listening to coded messages over shortwave radio, passing US secrets to handlers in local restaurants, and slipping into Havana wearing a wig.

Montes didn't just deceive her country. Her betrayal was intensely personal. Her mercurial father was a former US Army Colonel. Her brother and sister-in-law were FBI Special Agents. And her only sister, Lucy, also worked her entire career for the Bureau. The highlight of her distinguished 31 years as a Miami-based language specialist: Helping the FBI flush Cuban spies out of the United States. Little did Lucy or her family know that the greatest Cuban spy of all was sitting right next to them at Thanksgivings, baptisms, and weddings.

In *Code Name Blue Wren*, investigative journalist Jim Popkin weaves the tale of two sisters who chose two very different paths, plus the unsung heroes who had to fight to bring Ana to justice. With exclusive access to a "Secret" CIA behavioral profile of Ana, family memoirs, and Ana's incriminating letters from prison, Popkin reveals the making of a traitor—a woman labelled "one of the most damaging spies in U.S. history" by America's top counter-intelligence official.

After more than two decades in federal prison, Montes will be freed in January 2023. *Code Name Blue Wren* is a thrilling detective tale, an insider's look at the clandestine world of espionage, and an intimate exploration of the dark side of betrayal.

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Lessons in Chemistry
by Bonnie Garmus

Chemist Elizabeth Zott is not your average woman. In fact, Elizabeth Zott would be the first to point out that there is no such thing as an *average* woman. But it's the early 1960s and her all-male team at Hastings Research Institute takes a very unscientific view of equality. Except for one: Calvin Evans; the lonely, brilliant, Nobel-prize nominated grudge-holder who falls in love with—of all things—her

mind. True chemistry results.

But like science, life is unpredictable. Which is why a few years later Elizabeth Zott finds herself not only a single mother, but the reluctant star of America's most beloved cooking show *Supper at Six*. Elizabeth's unusual approach to cooking ("combine one tablespoon acetic acid with a pinch of sodium chloride") proves revolutionary. But as her following grows, not everyone is happy. Because as it turns out, Elizabeth Zott isn't just teaching women to cook. She's daring them to change the status quo.

Laugh-out-loud funny, shrewdly observant, and studded with a dazzling cast of supporting characters, *Lessons in Chemistry* is as original and vibrant as its protagonist.

The Good Life: Lessons from the
World's longest Scientific Study
Of Happiness
Robert Waldinger M.D/Marc Schulz PhD

What makes for a happy life, a fulfilling life? A *good* life? According to the directors of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, the longest scientific study of happiness ever conducted, the answer to these questions may be closer than you realize.

What makes a life fulfilling and meaningful? The simple but surprising answer is: relationships. The stronger our relationships, the more likely we are to live happy, satisfying, and overall healthier lives. In fact, the Harvard Study of Adult Development reveals that the strength of our connections with others can predict the health of both our bodies and our brains as we go through life.

The invaluable insights in this book emerge from the revealing personal stories of hundreds of participants in the Harvard Study as they were followed year after year for their entire adult lives, and this wisdom is bolstered by research findings from this and many other studies. Relationships in all their forms—friendships, romantic partnerships, families, coworkers, tennis partners, book club members, Bible study groups—all contribute to a happier, healthier life. And as *The Good Life* shows us, it's never too late to strengthen the relationships you have, and never too late to build new ones.

Dr. Waldinger's TED Talk about the Harvard Study, "What Makes a Good Life,"

has been viewed more than 42 million times and is one of the ten most-watched TED talks ever. *The Good Life* has been praised by bestselling authors Jay Shetty (“Robert Waldinger and Marc Schulz lead us on an empowering quest towards our greatest need: meaningful human connection”), Angela Duckworth (“In a crowded field of life advice and even life advice based on scientific research, Schulz and Waldinger stand apart”), and happiness expert Laurie Santos (“Waldinger and Schulz are world experts on the counterintuitive things that make life meaningful”).

With warmth, wisdom, and compelling life stories, *The Good Life* shows us how we can make our lives happier and more meaningful through our connections to others

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Restaurants

Mario’s Trattoria
2444 Wisconsin Avenue NW
Washington DC 20007

Debbie, Susan, and I went to Mario’s Trattoria on a Saturday night. Mario’s has been open since January 28, 2022. It replaced the Glover Park location of the Surfside Restaurant which opened in 2008 and closed in 2019.

The restaurant does not take reservations except for groups of 8 or more so we decided to arrive early – 6:00 p.m. Debbie found a parking place on Wisconsin Avenue “feet” from the restaurant.

We need not to have worried. There were not more than two dozen people when we arrived and perhaps another couple dozen when we left around 7:30 p.m. Interestingly, a number of the adults were accompanied by 3 or 4 children making it clear that the restaurant is well received in the neighborhood.

There was a regular flow of folks coming in to pick up bags or boxes of food that had been ordered.

The restaurant seats up to 175 people with an additional 50 seats on the top of the restaurant weather permitting.

To the right as you enter there is a small L-shaped bar with 6 tall chairs – 4 and 2. Continuing into the restaurant there is a work area with various machines used by the servers. Next is the cooking kitchen, open to the guests.

The servers were particularly friendly and helpful. One person who was dressed somewhat differently than the others was clearly in charge. Once we were seated, the manager asked if we preferred to have the TV directly over our heads turned off; we said sure, and he did.

The server assigned to our table delivered current menus and then, while checking in now and then, waited until we let him know we were ready to order.

Susan ordered the House Green Salad and Risotto with fungi – Mélange of wild mushrooms, slow cooked in a homemade stock with Arborio rice.

Debbie did not order a starter and selected Chicken Marsala – pan fried chicken cutlets and mushrooms with pasta in a Marsala wine sauce.

I ordered a Caesar salad – Linguine Carbonara – Fresh pasta tossed with crispy pancetta, eggs yolks, dash of cream and Parmigiana Reggiano – and Tiramisu for dessert.

Susan and Debbie did not order dessert, but our server brought two extra spoons which were used.

Susan and Debbie ordered wine. They did not have mocktails on the menu, so I requested a margarita without alcohol which the manager delivered. Having tried an alcoholic drink without the alcohol, which I have not done before, I am sure I will be doing it again.

From the front door, one can see all the way to the “back door”. Outside that door is a side street and the parking lot of the nearby bank. One of the folks told me the back door was not open while another told me it could be used to reach the parking lot.

Along that rear hallway are two unisex restrooms. As you enter to the left is a floor-based commode.

There are silver metal pipes at waist height that function as handles around the commode. Across from the commode is a white, ceramic washbasin with a tall mirror above. There is also a diaper changing station and an appropriate trash can.

The entire floor is covered with small white decorative tiles and the walls are covered with grey rectangular bricks to just above waist height and painted white above that.

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At least 48 restaurants in D.C. have closed in 2022 according to the Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington. [Axios]

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