

*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

32% of adult voters say the country is headed in the right direction. 57% of adult voters say the country is on the wrong track. [Econ/YouGov 5/2/23]

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India's population is projected to surpass China's sometime this year, if it hasn't already done so. India's population is expected to reach 1,429 billion by the end of the year. China will fall to the second largest population with 1,426 billion people. Comparatively, the United States is expected to reach 340 million people. [WSJ 4/15-16/2023]

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Republicans and Independents are increasingly worried about the safety of money they have deposited in banks. Democrats are less worried than they have been in more than a decade.

	% Very/Moderately worried		
	<u>Sep 2008</u>	<u>Dec 2008</u>	<u>Apr 2023</u>
Republicans	34%	42%	55%
Independents	44%	36%	51%
Democrats	55%	45%	36%

[Gallup]

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In 1923, the U.S Supreme Court issued 157 rulings by May 1st in a term that started the previous fall. On the same date a century later, the current justices, have disposed of only 15 cases. The court has decided fewer cases at this point of the term than at any time in the last hundred years. [NBC News 4/30/23]

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## Gun Deaths in the United States

More Americans died of gun-related injuries in 2021 than in any year on record.

In 2021, 48,830 people died from gun-related injuries in the U.S. including murders, suicides, and other less common types of gun related deaths tracked by the CDC.

Suicides accounted for more than half of U.S. gun deaths in 2021.

Suicides	54%
Murders	43%
Other	3% (accidental 549, law enforcement 537, Undetermined 458)

The 48,830 gun deaths in 2021 represent a 23% increase since 2019. Murders increased by 45% between 2019 and 2021. Gun suicides rose by 10% in that same period.

The states with the highest rates of gun related deaths were Mississippi, Louisiana, New Mexico, Alabama, and Wyoming. The states with the lowest rates include Massachusetts, Hawaii, New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island.

The states with the highest number of gun murder rates are the District of Columbia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, and New Mexico. [PRC 4/26/23]

More than 1,000 incidents involving firearms have shaken America's schools since 2018. A dramatic increase over any period since 1970. 273 people were killed or wounded on school grounds in 303 gun-related incidents in 2022.

Guns are the leading cause of death for U.S. children in 2021. Accounting for 19% of childhood deaths in 2021. 98% of K-12 schools report drilling students on lockdown procedures in the 2019-2020 school years. [Axios AM 5/20/23]

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In almost half of opposite-sex marriages in the U.S., women are now earning the same as their husbands – or out earning them by an average of \$53,000. Spouses are earning the same income in nearly one-third, of opposite sex marriages, a significant jump from just 11% in 1972. In egalitarian marriages, women's earnings are almost identical. In 2022, the median earnings for wives in such marriages was \$60,000, while husbands earned \$62,000. [CNBC 4/20/23]

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Over the last 19 years (2004-2023) the announced political affiliation of U.S. adults has changed rather dramatically.

	Political affiliation of U.S. Adults	
	<u>2004</u>	<u>2023</u>
Independents	31%	49%
Republicans	33%	25%

Democrats 35% 25%

[Axios 4/17/23]

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62% believe artificial intelligence will have a major impact on jobholders overall in the next 20 years.

Impact on each group:

	<u>Major</u>	<u>Minor</u>
Workers generally	62%	21%
The U.S. economy	56%	22%
Them, personally	28%	36%

Expected outcome for each group:

	<u>Will help more than hurt</u>	<u>Equally help and hurt</u>	<u>Hurt more than help</u>
Workers generally	13	32	32
The U.S. economy	19	34	20
Them, personally	16	30	15

Americans oppose allowing employers to use AI to...

	<u>Oppose</u>	<u>Favor</u>
Make final hiring decisions	71%	7%
Review job applications	41%	26%

[PEW12/18/22]

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People spent 21% more at restaurants in 2022 and that figure rose to 29.5%. [Axios PM 4/21/23]

Americans now spend more on legal weed than on chocolate: Sales of marijuana from dispensaries topped \$30 billion in the last year compared to \$18 billion on chocolate. [Daily Mail, UK 4/21/23]

In 2022, vinyl record sales surpassed CDs for the first time since 1987. [RIAA 4/21/2023]

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Of the 49% of Americans who listened to a podcast in the last year, a sizeable portion are acting on the information they consume. Because of a podcast,

- 60% watched a movie.
- 36% made a lifestyle change.
- 59% of Americans picked up a new hobby during the pandemic.

[Axios Finish Line 4/18/23]

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## Employment

The official BLS seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for April 2023 is 3.4%.

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 6.6% in April 2023, less than the 7.0% it was a year earlier.

The Labor Force Participation rate (LFPR) in April 2023 is 62.6% higher than the 62.2% in April 2022.

### The Demographics of Unemployment for April 2023

#### Unemployment by Gender (20 years and older)

Women –2.8% (down from last month)

Men –2.9% (down from last month)

#### Unemployment by Race

White – 3.1% (down from last month)

Black – 4.7% (down from last month)

Hispanic –4.4% (down from last month)

Asian –2.8% (same from last month)

#### Unemployment by Education (25 years & over)

Less than high school –5.4% (up from last month)

High School –3.9% (down from last month)

Some college –2.9 % (down from last month)

Bachelor’s Degree or higher –1.9 % (down from last month)

In March 2023, 25 states had unemployment rates below the national average of 3.4 %. 24 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 5.5%.

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### **This and That**

Apple introduced a service allowing book publishers to use human-sounding A.I. narrators, which could displace hundreds of voice actors who make a living performing audiobooks. [NYT 4/29/23]

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Over a few decades in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, more visitors reportedly paid the 25-cent admission fee to P.T. Barnum’s American Museum in Lower Manhattan than there were people in the United States. [NYT 4/30/23]

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There are roughly 4.7 million long-term care workers in the U.S. – around 26 million. 650,000 work in residential care facilities, 470,000 work in nursing homes, and close to 1,000,000 work in other settings like hospitals.

An overwhelming majority of voters, 78%, are either current, past, or future family caregivers; that’s nearly 4 in 5 voters. More than 70% of voters across the political spectrum say they would be more likely to support a candidate who backed proposals to support family caregivers. [AARP 4/18/23 – 5/8/23]

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### **Odds and Ends**

What is an anagram? A word, phrase, or name formed by rearranging the letters of another, such as “cinema” from “iceman.”

The Eyes, when you rearrange the letters, becomes THEY SEE

George Bush – He BUGS GORE

The Morse Code, when you rearrange the letters, becomes HERE COME DOTS

Dormitory – DIRTY ROOM

## Slot Machines – CASH LOST IN ME

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If one minority is degraded, we are all affected, for we all belong to some minority. [Albert Lasker July 1942 – Thanks to Joel Jankowsky]

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In 2024 will see the running of the 150<sup>th</sup> Kentucky Derby making it the longest held sporting event in U.S. history.

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The following was created by Gerry Kauvar.

### **CANDIDATE BLIGHT**

Vivek Ramaswamy  
Never fails to alarm me.  
More than either Trump or Biden  
Who are both over-ripened.  
More than even Nikki Haley,  
Who seems to become less relevant daily.  
More than blowhard Ron DeSantis,  
A predator, a braying mantis.  
Or Mike Pence slow of speed  
And perpetually weak-kneed.  
Luckily, we're spared Pompeo,  
A narcissistic hot potato.  
And we're well rid of Glenn Youngkin,  
Whose hasty actions have quickly sunk him.  
Surely there's no vaccination remedy,  
For the candidacy of Robert Kennedy.

Though the whole field has become quite swampy  
The most dangerous to elect is Ramaswamy.

### **YOU BET**

Americans have made wagering on sports a lucrative business-every  
Pitch or play or kick or shot. Casino gambling is profitable to the  
Owners though not to most punters. Animals and vehicles race.  
Lotteries about the American dream.

Let's cash in. How about we focus on political futures: so and so will  
 Win the race, so and so will be indicted, found guilty or innocent, jailed  
 Or pardoned, will or will not serve a full term, and so on. We could  
 Makes odds on Supreme Court decisions too.

We could also make book on where the next pandemic will originate  
 Or mass killing will take place. Lots of action in both. Train derailments  
 Too and rocket launches, drug trials, police shootings/police shot.

Seems like a money maker unless it's run by the government.

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### President Biden

President Biden is the oldest president in U.S. history. He has announced  
 that he is running 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>
APR '23	41/54	37/56	xxx	44/55	xxx
MAR'23	xxx	xxx	xxx	xxx	38/57
MAR'23	xxx	xxx	xxx	44/56	xxx
FEB'23	xxx	43/53	xxx	xxx	40/55
JAN'23	46/50	40/53	46/54	45/54	38/53
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

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As of 5/16/23, the following was Biden's approval rating based on Real Clear Politics.

	<u>Approval</u>	<u>Disapproval</u>
Overall	41.6%	53.7%
On the economy	37.9%	58.0 %
On foreign policy	41.6%	55.0%

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>
4/25/23	37%	59%	42.1%	53.6%
3/23/23	40%	56%	42.7%	52.8%
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%

Using Gallup (all adults) as the marker, Biden's approval rating and disapproval ratings have each fallen by 3 points in the last year.

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Biden has held fewer news conferences per year than any president since Reagan. And fewer interviews during his first two years in office than any president in an even longer period of time:

News conferences in first two years

Clinton	83
G. H.W. Bush	67
Obama	46
Trump	39
G.W. Bush	39
Biden	21
Reagan	14

Interviews in first two years

Obama	275
Trump	202
Clinton	132
Reagan	106
G.H.W. Bush	96
G.W. Bush	89
Biden	54

[NYTimes 4/26/2023]

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**Judges Nominated and Confirmed to Date**

As of May 17, 2023, the United States Senate has confirmed 117 federal judges nominated by President Biden: one Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, 33 judges for the United States Courts of Appeals, and 93 judges for the United States District Courts.

There are 34 nominations awaiting Senate action: 6 for the Courts of Appeals and 28 for the District Courts. There are 8 vacancies in the U.S. Courts of Appeals, 64 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	127	1	33	93	
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 811 of those 1200 positions.

- 515 people have been confirmed by the Senate.
- 93 nominees are being considered by the Senate.
- 5 are awaiting formal nomination.
- 91 positions have no Biden nominee.
- 107 appointees are serving in termed positions or were held over from previous administrations. [WP 5/17/23]

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The following are the favorability ratings for a variety of political leaders based on the Real Clear Politics averages for 5/17/23.

	<u>Favorable</u>	<u>Unfavorable</u>
DeSantis	43.5%	42.0%
Biden	42.4	53.2
Trump	42.0	53.0
Harris	39.3	54.5
McCarthy	35.7	37.0
Schumer	30.3	38.8
Jeffries	28.8	28.8
McConnell	22.5	52.5

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The 118<sup>th</sup> Congress

### **Congress**

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Approval of the Congress is up roughly 4.6 points from where it was a year ago and disapproval is down 2.5 points.

Approve      Disapprove

Real Clear Pol. 5/16/23	27.0%	65.5%
Real Clear Pol. 3/28/23	26.4%	65.2%
Real Clear Pol. 2/14/22	24.4%	65.4%
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%	68.3%
Real Clear Pol. 1/17/22	22.4%	66.4%

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### THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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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.)

Solid Republican	192	Solid Democrat	173
Likely GOP	11	Likely Dem	17
Lean GOP	8	Lean Dem	12
GOP Tossup	10	Dem Tossup	12
Total	221	Total	214

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### THE SENATE

49 Republicans  
48 Democrats  
3 Independents

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### The 2024 Senate Election

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Independents</u>
Seats not up in 2024	28	39	0

Seats up in 2024	23		9
	15	CA-Open	IN-Open
		Murphy	Hawley
		Carper	Wicker
		Hirono	Cramer
		Warren	Fischer
		MD-Open	Ricketts
		King (I)	Blackburn
		Klobuchar	Romney
		Menendez	Barrasso
		Heinrich	
		Gillibrand	
		Whitehouse	
		Kaine	
		Sanders (I)	
		Cantwell	
Likely	0		2
			Scott (SC)
			Cruz
Lean	5		
		MI-Open	
		Tester	
		Rosen	
		Casey	
		Baldwin	
Toss Up	3		
		Sinema (I)	
		OH – D	
		Manchin	

Manchin is trailing Gov. Jim Justice by 43% to 29%. Sinema is consistently polling in third place in early public polling in 3-way matchups against leading Republicans and Rep. Ruben Gallego (D-AZ). [Axios Sneak Peak 5/7/23]

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### 2024 Presidential Election

For the first time, the Republican National Convention will be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Chicago has been selected as the site of the 2024 Democratic National Convention. This will be the 12<sup>th</sup> time that Chicago has been the site of the Democratic National Convention: 1864, 1884, 1892, 1896, 1932, 1940, 1944, 1952, 1956, 1968, 1996, 2024.

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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. This list is a result of the mining of a variety of lists published in the last few months.

For the Republican nomination:

The following have announced their candidacies or are expected to announce their candidacies.

Donald Trump – Former President of the United States  
Ron DeSantis – Governor of Florida  
Nikki Haley – Former governor of South Carolina  
Vivek Ramaswamy – Entrepreneur and author  
Asa Hutchinson – Former Governor of Arkansas  
Tim Scott – U.S. Senator from South Carolina  
Larry Elder

Others who may decide to run.

Kristi Noem – Governor of South Dakota  
Chris Sununu – Governor of New Hampshire  
Chris Christie – Former Governor of New Jersey  
Brian Kemp – Governor of Georgia  
Mike Pence – Former Vice President  
Glenn Youngkin – Governor of Virginia

Republicans who have said they are not running in 2024:

Rick Scott – U.S. Senator  
Josh Hawley – U.S. Senator  
Tom Cotton – U.S. Senator  
Larry Hogan – former Governor of Maryland  
Mike Pompeo – Former Secretary of State

Trump has a strong lead among potential rivals.

Trump 61%  
Ron DeSantis 18%  
Mike Pence 6%  
Liz Cheney 2.0%  
Greg Abbott 1.0%  
Nikki Haley 4.0%  
Christie 1.6%  
Kristi Noem 1.4%  
Ramaswamy 1.0%  
Tim Scott 1.0%  
Asa Hutchison 1.0%

[Morning Consult 5/16/23]

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For the Democratic nomination:

Joe Biden - President of the United States

Marianne Williamson - Author, lecturer, and activist and 2020 Democratic candidate for president.

Michael Robert F Kennedy, Jr. - This Kennedy is one of the most prominent anti-vaxxers in the world and a Nazi Cavorter. He has angered several members of his own family.

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Views of Biden vs Trump

Trump 44%  
Biden 38%  
Undecided 18

When undecided respondents are asked how they lean, Trump's lead grows:

Trump 49%  
Biden 42%  
Neither/not vote 8%

More say Trump did a better job handling the economy than Biden has so far:

Donald Trump when he was President 54%  
Joe Biden 36%

Far more Americans say Trump is in good physical health, mentally sharp.

More say Biden is honest and trustworthy.

Trump	33
Biden	42

Mental sharpness it takes to serve effectively as president.

Trump	54
Biden	32

In good enough physical health to serve effectively as president.

Trump	64
Biden	33

[WP/ABC 5/3/23]

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### **Women Will Get It Done**

Maj. Gen. Jeannie M. Leavitt is the Department of the Air Force Chief of Safety, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Arlington, Virginia, and Commander, Air Force Safety Center, Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico. She develops, executes, and evaluates all Air and Space Forces' aviation, ground, weapons, space and system mishap prevention and nuclear surety programs to preserve combat capability. Additionally, she directs research to promote safety awareness and mishap prevention, oversees mishap investigations, evaluates corrective actions, and ensures implementation. Finally, she manages, develops, and directs all safety and risk management courses.

Maj. Gen. Leavitt entered the Air Force in 1992 after earning her bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering from the University of Texas and her master's degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics from Stanford University. She earned her commission as a distinguished graduate of the Air Force ROTC program. Maj. Gen. Leavitt has served in a variety of flying, staff, and command assignments, and has commanded at the flight, squadron, and wing level. She is a graduate and former instructor of the U.S. Air Force Weapons School and is a command pilot with more than 3,000 hours. Her operational experiences include operations Southern Watch, Northern Watch, Iraqi Freedom, and Enduring Freedom.

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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 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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### The Yellow Pad: Making Better Decisions in an Uncertain World Robert E Rubin

Robert Rubin, former secretary of the Treasury and co-chairman of Goldman Sachs, shares thoughts on decision-making developed over more than six decades in markets, business, government, and politics, and offers readers an astute and original guide for navigating uncertain times

In 1958, as a college sophomore, Robert Rubin took a class that changed his life. The class was introduction to philosophy, and the professor, Raphael Demos, instilled in his students an idea that was simple yet profound: There is no such thing as certainty. For Rubin, this led to a critically important question: How can we make sound decisions in a fundamentally uncertain world?

While serving in some of the most significant roles in markets, business, and government, Rubin has grappled with that question. Time and again, when faced with a high-stakes decision, he turned to his most trusted tool: a simple yellow legal pad. Rubin's yellow pad (or more recently, his iPad) became an expression of a larger decision-making philosophy that has both lasted and shaped a lifetime. In *The Yellow Pad*, Rubin lays out that philosophy with depth and detail, and presents a compelling intellectual framework for confronting some of the most difficult issues we face today.

*The Yellow Pad* contains a former Treasury secretary's approach to economic policymaking. A former Goldman Sachs senior partner's approach to personal investing and understanding risk. A former director of the National Economic Council's approach to managing people in both private- and public-sector organizations. And much more. Yet despite his lifetime of experiences, Rubin remains refreshingly open-minded, interested in exploring ideas rather than promoting ideologies. With its combination of wisdom and relevance, *The Yellow*

*Pad* is an essential guide for anyone looking to make better decisions in life, work, and public policy.

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Luke Russert:  
The Biography of Luke Russert  
Luke Russert

An Emmy award winning American broadcast news correspondent, who worked for NBC News from 2008 to 2016. His reporting was seen on NBC Nightly News, TODAY, NBCNews site, and MSNBC. He also was a guest anchor on various MSNBC programs, including Andrea Mitchell Reports and Way Too Early. In May 2023, after seven years away from media, Russert's travel memoir, "Look For Me There" about his three-and-a-half year journey through six continents and sixty-five plus countries is slated for publication.

What was it like growing up as the son of Tim Russert, one of the most respected journalists in the country, how did Luke cope with the devastating loss of his father, what role did his faith play in helping him through that difficult time, and why exactly did he resign from NBC?

This biography is a must-read, for it tells the intensely human story of a truly exceptional man who is changing the world the way nobody else can

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The Joy of Politics:  
Surviving Cancer, A Campaign, a Pandemic,  
an Insurrection, and Life's Unexpected Curveballs  
Amy Klobuchar

An intimate and revelatory memoir—on personal challenges, political turmoil, and the state of American democracy—from one of the most effective voices in politics, Amy Klobuchar.

During the past few years, as our country has faced unprecedented challenges, Senator Klobuchar has been in the room where it happens—on the Senate floor for critical votes during the pandemic, at the debate podium during one of the most critical presidential elections in US history, and in the Capitol on January 6, 2021, when insurrectionists stormed the building, interrupting the certification of the electoral college. It was well past midnight when Klobuchar stood beside then-

Vice President Pence to officially certify President Biden's victory.

In her candid, honest, and at times bitingly funny memoir, the pragmatic senator shares insider stories from these historic moments, while also inviting readers into her personal life. An underdog in the 2020 Democratic presidential primary campaign, she built surprising early momentum--only to suspend her candidacy in order to support Joe Biden. Within weeks of returning to work in the Senate, the sudden onslaught of COVID-19 hit her family directly. Her husband got very sick and spent a week in the hospital on oxygen and a month in isolation. Klobuchar shares her experience facing a cancer diagnosis while watching her beloved father succumb to Alzheimer's. She recounts the dramatic narrative of January 6 and how close we came to losing our democracy. And, with her signature humor, she reveals what it's like to work with some of her more...well, interesting...colleagues.

At the crux of these stories is a narrative of resilience – of personal resilience and the resilience of a nation – and, improbably joy.

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### Taking Care

The Story of Nursing and its Power to Change Our World  
Sarah Digregorio

“DiGregorio’s storytelling is pitch-perfect; narrative and nursing, she understands, come from the same place and both are concerned with a deep understanding of character and plot...This is a brilliant book, and DiGregorio is a beautiful writer. *Taking Care* deserves to be on the reading list for nursing and medical schools, and on the bedside table of all politicians.” - *New York Times Book Review*

In this sweeping cultural history of nursing from the Stone Age to the present, the critically acclaimed author of *Early* pays homage to the profession and makes an urgent call for change.

Nurses have always been vital to human existence. A nurse was likely there when you were born and a nurse might well be there when you die. Familiar in hospitals and doctors’ offices, these dedicated health professionals can also be found in schools, prisons, and people’s homes; at summer camps; on cruise ships, and even at NASA. Yet despite being celebrated during the Covid-19 epidemic, nurses are often undermined and undervalued in ways that reflect misogyny and racism, and that extend to their working conditions—and affect the care available to everyone. But the potential power of nursing to create a healthier, more just world endures.

The story of nursing is complicated. It is woven into war, plague, religion, the economy, and our individual lives in myriad ways. In *Taking Care*, journalist Sarah DiGregorio chronicles the lives of nurses past and tells the stories of those today—caregivers at the vital intersection of health care and community who are actively changing the world, often invisibly. An absorbing and empathetic work that combines storytelling with nuanced reporting, *Taking Care* examines how we have always tried to care for each other—the incredible ways we have succeeded and the ways in which we have failed. Fascinating, empowering, and significant, it is a call for change and a love letter to the nurses of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

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Soul Boom  
Why We Need a Spiritual Revolutions  
Rainn Wilson

Comedic actor, producer, and writer Rainn Wilson, cofounder of the media company SoulPancake, explores the problem-solving benefits that spirituality gives us to create solutions for an increasingly challenging world.

The trauma that our struggling species has experienced in recent years—because of both the pandemic and societal tensions that threaten to overwhelm us—is not going away anytime soon. Existing political and economic systems are not enough to bring the change that the world needs. In this book, Rainn Wilson explores the possibility and hope for a spiritual revolution, a “Soul Boom,” to find a healing transformation on both a personal and global level

For Wilson, this is a serious and essential pursuit, but he brings great humor and his own unique perspective to the conversation. He feels that, culturally, we’ve discounted spirituality—faith and the sacred—and we need profound healing and a unifying understanding of the world that the great spiritual traditions provide. Wilson’s approach to spirituality—the non-physical, eternal aspects of ourselves—is relatable and applies to people of all beliefs, even the skeptics. Filled with genuine insight—not to mention enlightening *Kung Fu* and *Star Trek* references—*Soul Boom* delves into ancient wisdom to seek out practical, transformative answers to life’s biggest questions.

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The Daddy Diaries  
Andy Cohen

*New York Times* bestselling author Andy Cohen goes from bottle service to baby bottles in a hilarious, heartwarming, and name-dropping account of the most important year of his life.

Andy Cohen has taken on the most important job of his life—father— and boy (and girl!) does he have a lot to say about it!

One of Andy Cohen’s most momentous years starts off with a hangover the morning after an *epic* New Year’s Eve broadcast. But Andy doesn’t have time to dwell on the drama, as his role as media mogul is now matched with the responsibilities, joys, and growing pains of parenthood.

This fast-paced, mile-a-minute look behind the scenes of living the so-called glamorous life in Manhattan now takes firm aim at life at home. With a three-year-old son, Ben, and a daughter, Lucy, born in May, stories of late-night parties are replaced by early mornings with Ben, drama at the playground, and the musings of a single dad trying to navigate having it all. All this is set against the backdrop of constant *Housewives* drama, hijinks behind the scenes at *Watch What Happens Live*, a revolving door of famous faces, and a worried mother (and newly minted grandmother) in St. Louis.

Buckle up, bottle up, and get ready for a laugh-out-loud and surprisingly poignant look at the ways in which family changes everything and the superficial gets very real. Watch what happens!

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## **Restaurants**

Opal  
5534 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Washington DC 20015  
202-570-0289

Debbie and I went to Opal with Florence and Peter.

Opal is the newest project by restaurateurs Chef Colin McClimans and Danilo Simic. This is the team that opened the restaurant, Nina May.

The restaurant has been open for 6 months.

The floor of the restaurant is elevated 3-4 feet from front to back. The front is the primary entrance and has a ramp. The back entrance has 4 stairs.

There is no railing on the ramp in front, but part of the structure can be used as a railing as one walks up (or is rolled up) the ramp. There is an area with dining tables next to the ramp.

There is seating for 75 to 100 people on the main floor and another 75 people on the second floor. The second-floor seating was not in use on this day.

There is a rack with various decorative items that separates the front of the restaurant from the rest of the restaurant.

On the back side of the rack there is an L-shaped, 12-person bar. It turns out that I knew one of the two people seated at the bar.

A container of wood fired bread – olive oil, seasoned butter, was delivered to the table.

Debbie and Florence ordered Opal Sangria – wine, fresh seasonal fruits, ginger ale.

Peter ordered Gin Loves Grapefruit – gin, citrus thyme syrup, fresh grapefruit, lemon.

The menu offers a section of non-alcoholic drinks. I chose the 0% Espresso Martini – cold brew, agave, orange essence.

Our server was Tim. He was particularly friendly. Born in Mongolia, he came to the United States at an early age. He had been working in the restaurant for 2 months. He had been operating some kind of business from home but didn't enjoy being home all the time with his two dogs.

Florence and Debbie started with clams with saffron spaghetti – garlic, chili flakes, parsley.

Florence followed with baked mid-Atlantic Rockfish with tomato butter shaved fennel and spring onions. Debbie had Steak au poivre, striploin, frites, and salad.

Peter started with gem lettuce salad – focaccia croutons, tete de Maine, anchovy vinaigrette and had the steak au poivre.

I started with Rainbow Carrots – smoked, whipped feta, dill pickles followed by Rockfish like Florence.

Peter and I shared a dessert (Florence and Debbie declined), Tiramisu soft ice cream – vanilla mascarpone, coffee-soaked lady fingers, coco dust.

Once past the seated area of the restaurant there is a long corridor that runs the length of the restaurant, past the kitchen to the back door. That door opens to the alley behind the restaurant across from the parking lot where Debbie parked.

There is no sign on the back door, whereas a number of the backsides of Connecticut avenue stores do have signs.

Near the end of the corridor, there are two gender neutral “Toilettes.”

Each of these “toilettes” is designed to be used by one person at a time.

There is a floor-based white ceramic commode next to a white ceramic wash basin on top of a cabinet with a door handle – headed by a long mirror. Next to it, a waste basket.

There are long tan tiles on the floor and tan walls. There appears to be a window next to the commode with green foliage outside the window, like the large green wall in Nina May.

48 restaurants closed in the District of Columbia in 2022.

*Mike*

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