

Mike Berman's

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**The Bump, Bounce or Slight advantage goes to...
The Conventions and the Aftermath
The Reality Is
A Faulty Comparison
A Fact Checker's Delight
A Private Restroom/Gluten Free/Witches Grapes**

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56 days until the election

October 3, 2012	1st Presidential Debate – Denver, CO
October 11, 2012	Vice Presidential Debate – Danville, KY
October 16, 2012	2nd Presidential Debate – Hempstead, NY
October 22, 2012	3rd Presidential Debate – Boca Raton, FL
November 6, 2012	Election Day

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President Obama seems to have won the convention contest. In the most recent Gallup tracking poll (7 days – end 9/8) he leads Mitt Romney 49% to 44% among registered voters. Two full days after the Republican convention Romney trailed by one point.

In addition, Obama's job approval rating has crossed the 50% line in Gallup for the first time since May 2011. Most recently, Gallup shows 52% approval/42% disapproval.

A caveat: Gallup is currently reporting the notions of registered voters. In a CNN/ORC survey taken from 8/21-9/3, registered voters gave Obama a 7 point lead at 52% to 45%. In the same survey, likely voters had the race at 48% to 48%.

The next three weeks will be an intense period of campaigning and prepping, leading up to the first debate on October 3rd.

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In August, WW suggested that Romney had three opportunities to change the dynamic of the campaign: the announcement of his running mate, his speech at the convention, and the first Presidential debate.

The first two of those three opportunities have come and gone, and Romney has not succeeded in changing the dynamic of the race. If anything, at least for the moment, the race has moved against him.

WW continues to believe that the selection of Ryan was a positive move, if only in that it made the most conservative elements of the Republican Party more comfortable with Romney. And Ryan will be an effective campaigner in the last two months of the campaign.

The second opportunity to change the dynamic, the convention, has also come and gone, and that did not do the job.

38% of those who saw Romney's speech rated it excellent/good. This is the lowest score by far of any acceptance speech since Gallup began asking the question in 1996. The previous low was McCain, at 47% in 2008.

43% of those who saw Obama's speech rated it excellent/good. This is the lowest rating for a Democratic acceptance speech going back at least to 2000.

By 40% to 38% Americans say they are more likely/less likely to vote for Romney because of the Republican convention. This is the weakest response for either of the Party's conventions going back to 1984. The previous low was the 41% to 38% score after the 2004 Republican convention. The response to the Democratic convention was only slightly better, with 43% saying they are more likely to vote for Obama because of the convention. The number who said they are less likely to vote for Obama because of the convention matched that of the Republican convention at 38%.

The race was essentially even before Ryan came on the scene and it is essentially even following the Republican convention. Neither event has given the Romney candidacy a bump. [All numbers below are Gallup.]

	<u>Obama</u>	<u>Romney</u>
8/3/2012	47%	45%
8/8/2012	47	45
8/9/2012	46	46
8/10/2012	46	46
8/11/2012		Paul Ryan announced as Romney's V.P. running mate
8/12/2012	46	46
8/13/2012	45	<u>47</u>
8/20/2012	45	47
8/22/2012	46	46
8/25/2012	46	46
8/27-30/2012		Republican convention
8/31/2012	<u>47</u>	46
9/1/2012	47	46
9/2/2012	47	46
9/3-6/2012		Democratic convention
9/5/2012	47	46
8/31-9/6/12	48	45
9/1-7/12	49	45
9/2-8/12	49	44

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In the 15 elections since 1952, the candidate who leads in the last Gallup before the first convention has been elected President. The exceptions were in 1988, 1992 and 2004.

As shown above, in the last two Gallup surveys before the Republican convention, the 2012 race was even.

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The audiences for each night of the Democratic convention exceeded those of the companion evening of the Republican convention.

Audiences for the Republican and Democratic conventions

2012

<u>Day</u>	<u>Republican</u>		<u>Democratic</u>	
	<u>Viewers</u>	<u>Rating*</u>	<u>Viewers</u>	<u>Rating</u>
Tuesday	22,300,000	14.7	26,200,000	17.3
Wednesday	21,900,000	14.7	25,100,000	16.7
Thursday	30,300,000	19.3		

Former President Bill Clinton’s speech on Wednesday night drew an audience (25.1 million viewers) that exceeded the audience for the season-opening National Football League game (it averaged 23.9 million viewers, but just under 20 million for the 10-11 p.m. hour). (NBC covered the football game instead of the convention.)

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About 51% of people said they viewed a “great deal” or “some” of the Republican convention on TV. This was the lowest number making this claim since the 1996 GOP convention, when 45% said they watched parts of that convention. 55% said they viewed a “great deal” or “some” of the Democratic convention. This was equal to the number who viewed the 2000 Democratic convention, but less than any others in recent times.

Considering that there has been no change in the race, Romney, Ryan and Ann Romney did what they needed to do to avoid the convention having a negative impact on the race. Clint’s Eastwood’s “spasm” during the prime hour shortly before Romney’s speech was an aberration. It has garnered a lot of media attention, but is not likely to affect many, if any, votes. To the extent it was one of the causes for the impact of the convention to be so modest it did help to cause an opportunity to be lost.

Because the first night of the Republican convention was canceled as a result of the hurricane, Ann Romney, who would have been the headliner on Monday, was moved to a position preceding Governor Chris Christie. The two speeches did not sync.

It remains unclear why the Romney video, which was quite good, was not used as the lead-in to his speech.

Notable, but again not likely to affect many votes, a number of the prominent public officials who spoke during the prime time hour at the Republican convention seemed to spend more time directly or indirectly extolling themselves, rather than promoting Romney and his cause. Could it be they saw this as an “audition” for some future race.

Because the Democratic convention was scheduled for only 3 days from the outset, its programs seemed to hang together better than the “adjusted” GOP convention. The program had three headliners who did the job they needed to do on successive nights: Michelle Obama on Tuesday, former President Bill Clinton on Wednesday, and President Obama on Thursday.

It remains unclear whether the conventions actually have any long term impact on the race. Increasing numbers of people suggest that these events are no longer worth the dollars and effort that are required.

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The less than mutual relationship between the White House and the Democratic House and Senate caucuses continues in this campaign season. The Obama campaign committee is not working with the campaigns of members of Congress as the President moves around the country. The Obama campaign has also declined to provide any funds to be used by the Democratic House and Senate Campaign Committees.

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The Conventions Are Over The Reality is...

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported on Friday that unemployment in August was 8.1%. This is lower than the 8.3% reported for July.

But the reality of unemployment is better described by adding the numbers above to those who are working part-time, but want full-time, and those who are described by the BLS as “marginally attached”, people who have looked for a job in the last 12 months, but not during the last four weeks.

Adding the underemployed to the unemployed, using BLS, the unemployed/underemployed rate is 14.5%. Add in the “marginally attached” and the number rises to 16.6%.

The BLS basic unemployment data tracks with the 8.1% August unemployment number posted by Gallup last week, down from 8.2% in July. Gallup’s underemployment number, combining unemployed and underemployed , remained steady at 17.1%

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17.9 million households in the United States did not have enough food at all times last year. This is a record. It represents 14.9% of U.S. households and more than 50 million people. Nearly 9 million children lived in these so-called food-insecure households last year.

So far in 2012, 46.4 million Americans are enrolled in the food stamp program. This is up from 26.3 million in 2007. [WP 9/7/12]

Gallup also recently reported a survey of households that asked if, at any time during the past 12 months, they “did not have enough money to buy the food they or their families needed.” The following is the list of the 10 States which had the greatest number of families facing this problem during that time period.

	<u>% Not enough money for food</u>
Mississippi	24.9%
Alabama	22.9%
Delaware	22.1%
Georgia	21.6%
Nevada	21.5%
Arkansas	21.5%
Oklahoma	21.4%
Tennessee	21.3%
West Virginia	20.9%
Louisiana	20.7%

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In the August 16-20 NBC/WSJ survey, respondents were asked a number of questions that have become part of the 2012 Presidential campaign. Two of those questions have to do with Romney's tax returns and Medicare.

Respondents were asked whether what they have heard about Romney's tax returns and whether what he paid in taxes has made them feel more positive or negative toward him.

6% said they were more positive and, while the size of the sample is quite small, 90% of those folks are voting for Romney. 36% say they are more negative, and they are voting for Obama by 89% to 6%.

However, when it comes to Medicare, the responses and voting are not as dramatic. Those surveyed were asked whether Medicare needed a complete overhaul/ major changes or, alternatively, whether it needed minor modifications/ is okay the way it is. Of the 42% of respondents who said it needed a complete overhaul/ major changes, they are voting for Romney by 53% to 39%. Conversely, those who think the system is okay or simply needs minor changes are voting for Obama by 57% to 36%.

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Faulty Comparisons

It is always a dicey proposition to compare one major campaign, Presidential or otherwise, against another, especially when they are 32 years apart.

The current rage seems to be to compare Carter/Reagan in 1980 to Obama/Romney in 2012. WW keeps hearing from a variety of sources that in August of 1980 Carter was well ahead of Reagan. That is not accurate. Here are some facts and survey data that describe why the comparison is faulty.

First, the Republican convention ended on July 17, 1980 and the Democratic convention on August 14th. This year the GOP convened from August 27-31 and the Democrats from September 3-7.

Second, in 1980 there was an Independent candidate named John Anderson. While he never had a chance of being elected, Anderson drew a fair amount of support throughout the campaign.

Third, in 1980 the incumbent President had to ward off a serious primary challenge.

Fourth, the total spending by all candidates for President in 1980 was \$93,000,000 (\$271,500,000 in 2012 dollars). Under the then-existing campaign finance law, Carter and Reagan were each limited to spending \$29 million (\$85 million in 2012 dollars) in the general election. In the case of Reagan this period ran from July 17 to November 4th.

Through June 30, 2012, Obama and Romney together had already spent \$346.2 million. That does not take into account spending by the other candidates seeking the Republican nomination.

Fifth, Super PACs did not exist in 1980 and tax code 501(c) (4) organizations were not used as spending vehicles in election campaigns.

Sixth, CNN, FOX News, MSNBC, etc. did not exist. There was no publicly accessible internet, no email, no Facebook, no Twitter, no cell phones. There was no Google or Firefox.

Here, for 1980, is the tale of the Gallup “tape,” plus a few other surveys taken during a period when Gallup was apparently not polling.

	<u>Reagan</u>	<u>Carter</u>	<u>Anderson</u>
7/17/80	Republican Convention		
8/4/80	45	39	14
8/14/80	Democratic Convention		
8/17/80	39	38	14
9/15/80	39	39	14
9/21/80	1 st Debate – Reagan/Anderson & empty chair for Carter who declined to participate		
9/26/80	40	35	9 [NYT/CBS]
10/20/80	38	39	9 [NYT/CBS]
10/27/80	39	45	9
10/28/80	2 nd Debate – Reagan/Carter		
11/2/80	46	43	7
11/4/80	Election Day		
	50.7	40.9	6.6

Going forward, if you decide to match the 1980 race with today's, keep in mind that the election is two days later in 2012 than it was in 1980, i.e., September 8, 1980 is equivalent to September 10, 2012 in terms of number of days before the election. On September 10th there will be 56 days until the election.

Another comparison being made is Bush/Kerry in 2004. That will be laid out in the next Watch.

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The current Presidential campaign is turning out to be a “fact checker’s delight.” Both campaigns are shading the truth in one way or another and, in some cases, outright disregarding it. And, when some of the misstatements are isolated, one has to wonder why some folks feel a need to stretch the truth, when the truth will do just fine.

Focusing on the newest candidate on the scene, here are a couple of “misstatements” made by Paul Ryan, the Republican nominee for Vice President. It was not enough for Ryan to include in his comments to a reporter that he had run a 26.2 mile marathon. He added that he had finished the race “under three, high twos, I had a two-hour and fifty something.” It turns out that he did run a single marathon, in Duluth, Minnesota, and finished in 4 hours, 1 minute and 25 seconds.

Notably, at least two Republican Vice Presidential candidate marathoners beat Ryan’s time record, Sarah Palin - 3:59 and George W. Bush - 3:44.

Here are two examples of each of the candidates at least “shading” the truth in their statements, as pointed out by Glenn Kessler, the Fact Checker at the Washington Post. [Kessler awards up to four Pinocchios in assessing statements that he finds to be modestly or significantly false.]

From Obama: “I’m also going to ask anybody making over \$250,000 a year to go back to the tax rates they were paying under Bill Clinton.”

From Romney: “President Obama gutted welfare reform. My plan for a stronger middle class will put work back in welfare.”

From Obama: “Governor Romney brags about his private-sector experience, but it was mostly investing in companies, some of which were called ‘pioneers’ of outsourcing. I don’t want to be a pioneer of outsourcing. I want to insource.”

From Romney: “Obama went around the world and apologized for America. ... Do you want a President who will never, ever apologize for the greatest nation on earth?”

According to one of the Romney campaign pollsters, “We are not going to let our campaign be dictated by fact checkers.” At least they are being straight forward about their disdain for accuracy.

Slightly more Americans think that Obama is attacking Romney unfairly (44%) as think that Romney is attacking Obama unfairly (40%). Not surprisingly, Romney supporters are more likely to think that Obama is attacking unfairly (71%) than Obama supporters who think that Romney is attacking Obama unfairly (60%). [Gallup 8/12]

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A Private Restroom of Note

Ordinarily WW does not write about restrooms in private homes. This is worthy of an exception.

Debbie and I were having dinner at the home of one of Debbie’s friends. The hosts of the evening, having seen or heard about my restroom obsession, suggested I visit the visitor restroom on the main floor of their home.

It is of the ordinary size for that type of restroom, with a modern white ceramic commode and a white ceramic wash basin.

From the ceiling hangs an antique, funky green glass chandelier.

There is a mirror in a large arty frame over the washbasin.

The walls to waist height are covered with tumbled marble tile in a variety of muted colors, mostly in hues of grey and related colors. The walls from waist to ceiling and the ceiling are covered in a dark copper metallic/plummy paint.

The other walls of this room are the main attraction. There are three large framed, white-matted, “tasteful line drawings.”

Each drawing is of a not-dressed woman. One is a side view of a woman standing up, looking over her right shoulder. The second is of a woman lying on her right side, resting on her arm, with her back shown to the bathroom user, watching an organ player. The third is a frontal expression of a woman from shoulders to waist.

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Gluten Free

One or more Washington Watch readers prefer gluten free foods.

The Four Seasons restaurant now has a quite delicious gluten free muffin.

The site below, set up by Karen Broussard, should help, especially when traveling.

Glutenfreetravel.com

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Have you heard of “witches” grapes? We had not until this past Sunday, when at breakfast at the Four Seasons we were offered a bowlful to try. They are shaped more like the end section of your thumb than like an ordinary grape. They are seedless and very good.

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