

Week ending 06/11/2017 - PA-08 MoCTrack Report

Tracking Congress in the Age of Trump - 06/11/17

The lower the number, the more the legislator is in opposition to the Trump agenda.

Senator Bob Casey - **29.3%** (no change from last week)

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick - **77.4%** (**+0.7%** from last week)

Senator Pat Toomey - **97.5%** (no change from last week)

Rep. Fitzpatrick's change is due to his vote on H.R. 10, the Financial Choice Act of 2017. See more about this below, in Votes of Interest.

MoC Twitter Action

Senator Bob Casey hot topics:

- 1) the AHCA - the Senator continues his relentless attack on the proposed healthcare bill. This week he participated in a forum where people voiced their concerns about how they would be affected by the changes in healthcare coverage/funding, and he faced Secretary Price and pointed out the "deliberately misleading" statements the Secretary has made about the Medicaid cuts contained in the bill. (38 tweets)
 - 2) H.R. 10 and the dismantling of Dodd-Frank - He noted with dismay the results of the House vote on H.R. 10, and deplored the potential gutting of the COnsumer Financial Protection Bureau, and all of the protections that Dodd-Frank had put into place. (4 tweets)
 - 3) Infrastructure - In response to the Administration's "Infrastructure week," the Senator highlighted some local planned infrastructure projects for which funding was cut by Trump. (4 tweets)
- The Senator also tweeted links to an interview he did about Comey's pre-hearing statement and an article in support of Planned Parenthood funding.

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick hot topics:

- 1) Veterans issues - in addition to commemorating the anniversary of D-Day, the Representative approved of the recent announcements about upcoming modernization of the VA healthcare records system (4 tweets)
- 2) Tax reform - He made an announcement about the Problem Solvers Caucus and their tax reform proposals, and he linked to a floor speech and a press release on that same topic. (3 tweets)
- 3) Water safety issues - He regularly tweets about the problem of PFOAs in local water, caused by a particular fire-fighting foam used on military bases. There was a reveal, this week, of information indicating the Department of Defense had some knowledge of this problem dating back to 2001. The Representative, along with several colleagues, are pressing the Pentagon to release files about this situation. (2 tweets)

Senator Pat Toomey hot topics:

- 1) Veterans issues - The Senator tweeted out his support of the VA Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act. (1 tweet)
- 2) Judicial appointments - He notes his support of the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals nomination of Stephanos Bibas (1 tweet)
- 3) Economic Development - He met with the Penn State president to discuss a statewide economic development initiative (1 tweet)

Votes of Interest

H. Res. 354 - Condemning the violence against peaceful protesters outside the Turkish Ambassador's residence on May 16, 2017, and calling for the perpetrators to be brought to justice and measures to be taken to prevent similar incidents in the future

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hres354/text>

I first reported on this resolution a few weeks ago. It was introduced by Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA). By the time it came to a vote on the floor of the House, it had gained 45 cosponsors - 26 Democrats and 19 Republicans. Despite numerous requests, Representative Fitzpatrick would not join the ranks of the co-

sponsors, even though at least 15 of his fellow members of the Foreign Affairs committee had done so. The Representative did, however, vote for this resolution - it passed the House unanimously. Because it is a simple resolution, that is the end of its legislative path. Having the Legislative Branch come out in support of First Amendment freedoms, like the right of assembly, is a positive step in an environment where the Executive Branch seems dead set on ignoring those rights.

H.R. 10 - The Financial Choice Act of 2017

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr10/text>

Don't let the positive name fool you. This bill could just have easily been named the "Repeal of Dodd-Frank Act" or the "Neutering of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Act." This bill is going to reverse a number of protections put into place to ensure that we could not have a repeat of the financial collapses that led to the Great Recession. It would make the CFPB get the permission of Congress before they could introduce any enforcement actions against a financial institution. And it would move funding of the CFPB to Congress, which would enable them to defund it at will. Representative Fitzpatrick voted for this bill.

As best I can tell, H.R. 10 is going to land in the Senate Committee for Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs. Senator Toomey is not only a member of this committee, but he is the chairman of the sub-committee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Protection. So this bill fits right into his area of specialization. If anyone need to hear from his constituents about this pro-corporatist, anti-consumer piece of legislation, it is Senator Toomey.

H.R. 657 - Follow the Rules Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr657/text>

This is a bill that passed the House (with Rep. Fitzpatrick voting for it) several weeks ago. It is a bill that has positive implications for the bureaucracy during the Trump era. The Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA) generally provides protections for federal employees who make disclosures evidencing illegal or improper government activities. But a court recently found that as currently written, the existing law only protects employees who won't break the law. This bill would change the existing law to extend whistleblower protections for federal employees who refuse to violate rules and regulations. In the current bureaucratic environment where word is leaking from agencies that the Trump Administration is moving to redirect career staffers to make changes, protections like this bill could stymie the Trumpist agenda. The bill came before the Senate, and it passed by Unanimous Consent. Now it needs to go before the President to be enacted.

Legislation of Interest

S. 1217 - Representation Fairness Restoration Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s1217/text>

This bill was introduced by Rep. John Isakson (R-CA) and it has 11 Republican cosponsors. The bill is pending in the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and pensions, where Senator Casey is a member. Several months ago a bill passed through the House that would restrict the ability for there to be class action lawsuits by changing the rules by which a "class" could be declared - it said that only people who had a similar scope and value of damage could be considered the same class. That would adversely affect the ability of regular people who has been wronged to face down big corporations in court. THIS bill is like a companion to the one I just described, in that it uses a very similar tactic to limit the ability of people to engage in collective bargaining. Much like the other bill, this one would only allow people with near-identical job responsibilities and salaries to bargain collectively with employers. This would dramatically affect the power of unions, and it is yet another piece of pro-corporatist legislation introduced into this Congress.

H.R. 2798 - To prohibit access by the Government of the Russian Federation to certain Russian-owned diplomatic facilities and properties located in the States of Maryland and New York

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr2798>

This bill was introduced by Rep. Bill Pascrell (D-NJ). It does not yet have any cosponsors and it is pending in the House Foreign Affairs Committee, where Rep. Fitzpatrick is a member. Before President Obama left office, his Administration took steps to punish Russia for their hacking and their interference in the 2016 election. A number of diplomats were expelled from the country, and the US government seized two Russian-owned compounds in Long Island and Maryland. To learn more about this, see the New York Times article at https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2017/06/09/world/europe/09reuters-russia-usa.html?_r=0. The Trump administration has been in talks to return these facilities to Russian control. This bill would keep Trump from enacting his pro-Russia agenda in this instance.

H.J. Res. 105 - Condemning the deadly attack on May 26, 2017, in Portland, Oregon, expressing deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims, and supporting community efforts to overcome hatred, bigotry, and violence

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hjres105/text>

This bill was introduced by Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) and it has 4 cosponsors (3D, 1R). It is pending in the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, and we do not have local representation in that group. In light of the ever-increasing incidence of bigotry and hatred in this post-election era, we should support the Legislative Branch in their efforts to promote tolerance.