

Week ending 07/16/2017 - PA-08 MoCTrack Report

Tracking Congress in the Age of Trump - 07/16/17

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

Senator Bob Casey - **27.9%** (no change from last week)

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick - **81.1%** (no change from last week)

Senator Pat Toomey - **97.4%** (no change from last week)

While Congress is back in session, neither house took votes that were scored on the FiveThirtyEight Trump Tracker.

MoC Twitter Action

Senator Bob Casey hot topics:

1) BRCA/AHCA - The senator perseveres in his campaign against the GOP's healthcare bill. This week he focused on individual stories from constituents who will be affected, he provided images of excerpts from the new draft with clear explanations of what they mean, and he cited statistics on the numbers of Pennsylvanians (disabled children, working families, older people) who will lose coverage under the new law. (77 tweets)

2) Opioid crisis - He joined other members of his caucus for a meeting with fathers who lost sons to opioid addiction and retweeted articles about how the changes to the draft could not possibly do enough to assist the crisis when tallied against the damage that will be done via cuts to Medicaid. (4 tweets)

3) Food security - the Senator met with groups fighting hunger, noting that poverty feeds radicalization, and food security is vital to national security. (4 tweets)

The Senator did tweet on July 12th to support the Net Neutrality Day of Action.

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick hot topics:

1) Civility - July 12th was the national Day of Civility. The Congressman tweeted out comments about the golden rule, and encouraging civility in others. (5 tweets)

2) Water safety issues - He retweeted two articles about the PFOA/military base firefighting foam situation that has contaminated local water, and applauded the passage of the 2018 defense spending bill in the House, which included a provision that addresses the water contamination issue. (3 tweets)

3) Government Reform - He retweeted (on two days) a thank you from the No Labels organization, who praised the representative for his support of the "No Budget, No Pay" initiative, which would stop the Congress from getting paychecks in years that they do not pass a budget. (2 tweets)

Senator Pat Toomey hot topics:

1) BRCA/AHCA - The Senator promoted the new draft of the healthcare bill, and provided new myth/fact memes about the tax burden that the ACA puts on the middle class. He also noted that Medicaid must be reformed to be sustainable. (6 tweets)

2) North Korea - he is working with Senator VanHollen (D-MD) to draft tougher sanctions on North Korea in response to their ICBM launch. (1 tweet)

3) John McCain - He wished his colleague well after his recent surgery. (1 tweet)

In a bit of levity, both Senators tweeted about the July 12th Keystone Cup, a decades-old tradition of having a ball game between the two PA Senators and their staff members. Casey's team is called "Penn is Mightier" and Toomey's is "Hit it Toomey." The GOP team won, 23-11. Senator Casey tweeted out several pictures from the event.

Two views: our Senators respond to the newest BRCA/AHCA draft

"The @SenateGOP just released a new draft of their health care bill. Somehow this version is even more extreme. Arguably the most damaging change is the inclusion of the Cruz-Lee plan to create a two tier insurance market. This would allow insurance companies to sell plans that don't meet the ACA's coverage requirements...1.5 million Americans could face HIGHER premiums WITH weakened protections. Page 148 sec 204 keeps the age tax from previous versions. This lets insurers charge older Americans five times more for the same coverage. Cruz-Lee would allow insurers to sell plans so bad

that they won't count as creditable coverage. So this new draft is terrible for anyone who is sick, has been sick, or will be sick." - Senator Bob Casey, excerpts from 07/12/17 tweetstorm

"The revised draft Senate health care bill prevents Obamacare's imminent collapse and retains essential reforms putting Medicaid on a sustainable path preventing a future fiscal crisis. Fighting the scourge of opioid and heroin abuse remains a top priority of mine, and this draft directs another \$45 billion to treat addiction. Additional changes to increase competition and choice in the individual insurance market will help to make coverage more affordable and accessible for the thousands of Pennsylvanians who have seen their premiums skyrocket under Obamacare. While I support this draft in its current form, it is not perfect. I am disappointed that the commitment to repeal all of Obamacare's taxes was abandoned. In the coming days, I will thoroughly examine this draft and welcome the thoughts of my colleagues, constituents, and advocacy groups who hope to make constructive progress on this issue." - Senator Pat Toomey, full 07/13/17 statement

Votes of Interest

H.R. 2200 - Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2017

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr2200/text>

This bill was introduced by Rep. Christopher Smith (R-NJ) and it has 29 co-sponsors (16D, 13R). It is a reauthorization of legislation from 2000. In the words of the Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking, "The [act] is a critical tool for combatting modern slavery, providing a comprehensive federal response focused on protecting trafficking survivors, prosecuting perpetrators, and, particularly in this legislation, preventing future exploitation." In a rare moment of House bipartisanship, **this bill passed unanimously**. If you are so inclined, you may wish to thank Rep Fitzpatrick for his vote on this legislation.

H.R. 2810 - National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr2810/text>

This is the annual defense spending bill. In the words of Govtrack "The federal budget process occurs in two stages: appropriations and authorizations. This is an authorization bill, which directs how federal funds should or should not be used. (It does not set overall spending limits, however, which are the subject of appropriations bills.)" This bill passed 344-81, and **Fitzpatrick voted YES**. Of particular note for our area, it contains an authorization related to research/remediation of the PFOA water contamination situation that Rep. Fitzpatrick has pursued since the start of his term.

H.R. 23 and H.R. 1654 - Water Management bills

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr23/text>

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr1654/text>

These are two bills related to water management. As I am not a civil or hydraulic engineer, I must admit that I don't understand a great deal about them. What I do know is that while both bills passed the House, **Fitzpatrick voted NO on both**. These votes went against the majority of Republicans in both cases. I have called his office several times, and sent an email, to request clarification on his rationale for withholding support from these two bills. I will update you once I have more information.

Legislation of Interest

H.R. 3191 - To prohibit the use of Federal funds to establish, support, or otherwise promote a joint cybersecurity initiative with Russia

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr3191>

This bill was introduced by Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-PA) and has 9 co-sponsors (all D). It is pending in the House Foreign Affairs Committee, where Brian Fitzpatrick is a member. This bill was composed in response to President Trump's recent meeting with Vladimir Putin, after which he tweeted that Putin

denied meddling in the election, as was interested in creating a joint task force on cybersecurity. In response to that, even Republican lawmakers scoffed and made many comments with a 'fox in the henhouse' flavor. This bill is the legislative response to Trump's absurd suggestion.

H.R. 3288 - To require the President to provide frequent press briefings covering the official business of the President to the White House press corps

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr3228>

This bill was introduced by Rep. James Himes (D-CT) and it does not yet have any co-sponsors. It is pending in the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. Rep. Fitzpatrick is not a member of that committee. One of the most challenging parts of the Trump administration is just how many norms are being discarded. There is not a lot of recourse, as these are just custom and not enforced by law. The daily White House press briefing is one of those norms that has been discarded in recent months. First cameras were banned from some briefings. Then members of the press corps were refused entry. These actions are a part of the larger assault upon the media by the President and his administration. If the executive branch undermining the media, our vehicle for government accountability, is of concern to you, a call to Rep. Fitzpatrick requesting that he co-sponsor this legislation is in order.

S. 1546 - A bill to amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act to provide greater flexibility in offering health insurance coverage across State lines

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s1546>

This bill was introduced by Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA) and it has 3 cosponsors (2D, 1I). It is pending in the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee where Sen. Casey is a member. Since this bill was introduced by three of the more conservative Democrats in the Senate along with the more moderate Independent (Sen. King of Maine), this appears to be the olive branch offered to the more moderate Republicans of the Senate who are wavering on the BCRA/AHCA package (Obamacare repeal and replace) being pushed by Senate Leader McConnell. The Democrats are attempting to get Republicans to join them in fixing the ACA instead of gutting it, and lowering the hard state borders between plans could be a very enticing carrot to lure over some GOP defectors. There are major concerns with such a plan - many fear that changing rules about plans across borders will cause all the insurance companies to flee to whichever state creates the most lenient rules. But it does provide an "off-ramp" for the senators who are leery of supporting McConnell's plans, but can't abide by doing nothing to fix the ACA. This is sure to be controversial. But if you want the moderate Senators to work with Democrats to fix the ACA, you may wish to let Sen. Casey know that, and tell Sen. Toomey you want him to take part as well.

S. 1547 - A bill to nullify the effect of the recent Executive order that establishes an "election integrity" commission, which will be used and is designed to support policies that will suppress the vote in minority and poor communities across the United States.

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s1547>

This bill was introduced by Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) and it has 31 co-sponsors (all D) including our own Sen. Casey. It is pending in the Senate Rules and Administration Committee, where we do not have any members. The president's "Election Integrity" commission is a deeply disturbing political invention. It is packed with Trump supporters, including Vice President Pence and Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, a man who made his career on making voting harder and pursuing mostly unsuccessful voter fraud cases in his state. There are many people who believe the unstated goal of this commission is to provide information to support Trump's outrageous claims that 3 to 5 million people voted illegally in the 2016 election. If you are opposed to this commission, support the legislator who feels the same way, call Sen. Casey and thank him for co-sponsoring this legislation. And let Sen. Toomey know you support it as well.