

Week ending 10/01/17 - PA-08 MoCTrack Report

Tracking Congress in the Age of Trump

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

Senator Bob Casey - 28.6% (no change from last week)

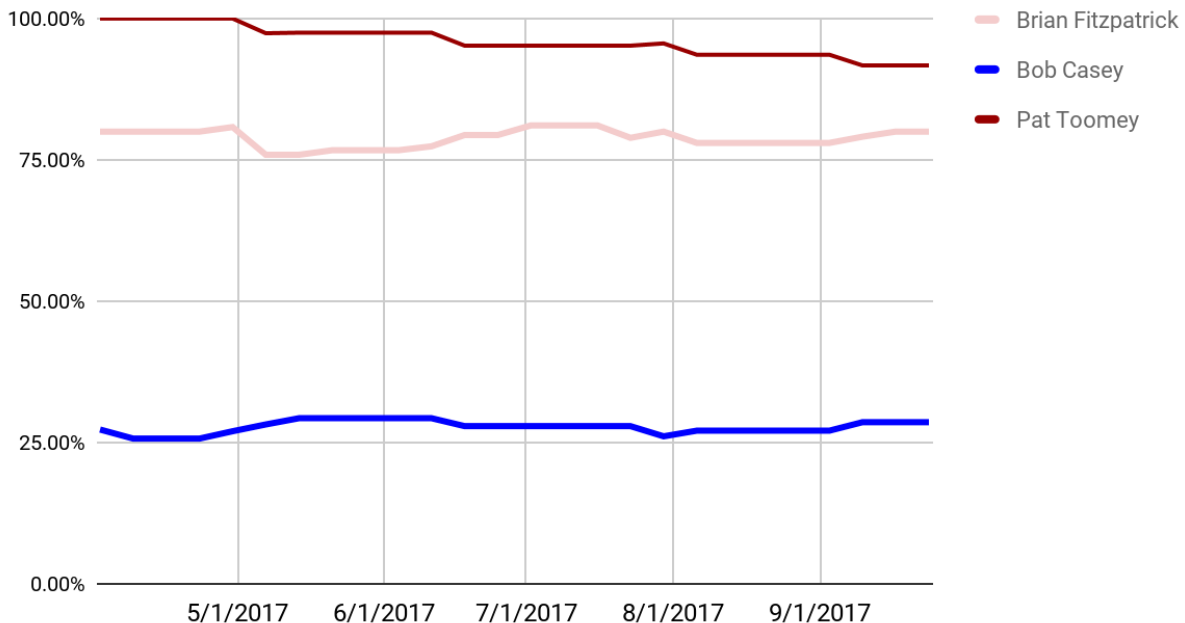
Representative Brian Fitzpatrick - 80.4% (+0.4 from last week)

Senator Pat Toomey - (no change from last week)

Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight website assesses the voting records of our MoCs to provide this index assessment.

See below how our Members of Congress have trended in their agreement with the Trump agenda across the last six months. The higher the line, the closer to full agreement with the President.

Trump Tracker trends - a six month review



MoC Twitter Action

Senator Bob Casey hot topics:

Senator Casey was very active on Twitter last week. The focus of his tweets was healthcare – mainly the Graham/Cassidy bill with over 10 highly critical tweets on that topic. He also tweeted often on the need to help Puerto Rico.

Casey tweet of the week: "[@SenateMajLdr](#) We have bipartisan solutions to health care, call for a vote on [@PattyMurray's](#) and [@SenAlexander's](#) work."

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick hot topics:

The Representative was very quiet on Twitter this week with only 2 retweets. One is on the opioid epidemic and the other on his amendment increasing funding for the Dept. of Homeland Security. Fitzpatrick tweet of the week 9/25/17 "We are all stakeholders in the mission to eradicate this epidemic,"

Senator Pat Toomey hot topics:

Senator Toomey tweeted 8 times about the GOP plans for Tax Reform, touting his statement on the [#TaxReform](#) framework, once on the 2018 fiscal year budget resolution and once on [Puerto Rico](#)'s need for help including the Jones Act waiver.

Toomey tweet of the week: "Reducing business taxes will create jobs and raise wages, expanding opportunity for all Americans. We need [#TaxReform](#) now"

Fitzpatrick in the News

ISSUES and LEGISLATION:

Governing

Newsworks.org (WHYY), 9/25/17, "Four takeaways from a freshman, moderate Republican in Congress under Trump." An interview with Rep. Fitzpatrick that portrays him as "a moderate Republican who makes a point of working with Democrats." The article lists his four takeaways from his first 8 months in office as follows:

- Partisanship is more shocking in person.
- He's not surprised party-line voting isn't working on health care.
- Congress' job is no different with Trump in office.
- If you can't bring people together nationally start by doing it locally.

The Economy

Pottstown Mercury, 9/26/17, "ArcelorMittal shutting down Conshohocken rolling mill; 150 steelworkers to be laid off." The United Steelworkers union blames the planned mill closure and job loss on inaction by the Trump administration on steel imports and says the closure will halt the manufacture of products needed for national security. Rep. Fitzpatrick was among the Pennsylvania senators and congressmen who have received copies of the Steelworkers' letter.

Bucks Local News, 9/28/17, "Fitzpatrick, Sinema introduce 'Made in America Act,' bipartisan legislation supports American manufacturing." Reps. Fitzpatrick and Kyrsten Sinema, an Arizona Democrat, have introduced legislation that would create an "America Star" labeling program, similar to the "Energy Star" program, to enable consumers to identify American-made goods. The article, based on a news release from Fitzpatrick's office, also features favorable comments from two Pennsylvania business leaders, Michael Araten, CEO of KNEX, Hatfield, and former GOP State Senator Rob Wonderling, now CEO of the Greater Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce.

Health Care

Inside Health Policy, specialty online newsletter, 9/26/17, "House E&C Health Subcommittee to hold Right to Try hearing Oct. 3." The subcommittee will hold a hearing on patient access to investigational drugs and unapproved therapies. One source called the hearing "part of an effort to appease Democrats who are skeptical of Right to Try legislation." Rep. Fitzpatrick has said he would push for the legislation.

Political Corruption

Intelligencer, 9/25/17, letter-to-the-editor from Michael Grothman of Newtown, "Waste, fraud and abuse." The writer sardonically suggests that the actions of Rep. Fitzpatrick, Bucks County's self-described "independent voice in Congress," should include not only amending the appropriations bill to help the Department of Homeland Security fight corruption, but also a call for the president to release his tax returns and an investigation of the use of government aircraft by the Treasury Secretary.

New York Post newspaper, 9/27/17, "New bill could close loophole that let Skelos, Silver walk." Rep. Fitzpatrick and Democratic Rep. Tom Suozzi of Long Island have co-sponsored a House bill, the COAL Act, intended to close a loophole in the federal definition of "official act" that allowed two New York State legislators, among others, to be acquitted of corruption charges. Similar article in the 9/28/17, LongIsland.com online newspaper, "Suozzi Proposes Legislation to Close 'Official Acts' Loophole that Resulted in Overturned Political Corruption Convictions." Both articles mention Fitzpatrick's history as a former FBI agent.

The Opioid Crisis

Burlington County Times, 9/26/17, "Bipartisan task force examining federal requirements for prescription drug monitoring." The House Bipartisan Task Force held a meeting. Rep. Fitzpatrick, a leader of the group supports declaring the opioid crisis a public health emergency and establishing a national database.

The Hill political blog, 9/28/17, "White House must formally declare the opioid crisis a national emergency." Editorial outlining the dimensions of the opioid epidemic and policy prescriptions to combat it. Signed by four leaders of the House of Representatives' Bipartisan Heroin Task Force, including Republican vice-chair Fitzpatrick and Democratic vice-chair Donald Norcross of South Jersey, the editorial urges President Trump to declare the crisis a national emergency. Substantially the same editorial appeared in the 9/30/17 issue of the Courier-Post online newspaper as "COMMENTARY: House task force urges Trump to declare opioid emergency."

The Hill political blog, 9/29/17, "Bill would require Pentagon to assess security risks to electric grid." "A bill introduced by a bipartisan group of House lawmakers this week would require the Pentagon to report to Congress on significant security risks to the U.S. electric grid and their impact on the U.S. military. Rep. Fitzpatrick was one of three co-sponsors of the bill. A companion bill has been introduced in the Senate.

Tax Reform

Vox online political blog, 9/30/17, "Trump is proposing big tax hikes on vulnerable House Republicans' constituents. The GOP is getting cold feet already." The newly revealed Republican tax reform framework, among other things, would eliminate the state and local tax deduction (SALT) that is heavily used in affluent, GOP-held swing districts targeted by Democrats, including Southeastern Pennsylvania districts represented by Reps. Fitzpatrick, Costello, and Meehan. Elimination of SALT could also hurt local finances, leading to opposition from local government officials, even Republicans.

Local Interest

Bucks County Courier Times, 9/23/17, "Hometown Heroes memorialized at Freedom Square." Rep. Fitzpatrick was among the speakers honoring Bucks County military personnel fallen since 9/11 at a ceremony relocating the memorial banners in Freedom Square in central Doylestown.

Bucks Local News, 9/25/17, "CHANGE IN COMMAND: American Legion Post 440 in Newtown welcomes new commander." Rep. Fitzpatrick was among those attending the ceremony at the American Legion post, and presented a flag to the post.

SPECIAL SECTION

Statements on Graham-Cassidy Bill being pulled:

US Senator Bob Casey (D-PA)

"While I'm relieved that Senate Republicans are abandoning a vote on the Graham-Cassidy bill, I am a no and was always a no on this irresponsible scheme. This bill would have raised premiums and reduced protections for families while decimating Medicaid. It's time for Republicans in Washington to end this obsession with repeal and engage in bipartisan discussions to improve our health care system. Talks between Senators Patty Murray, a Democrat from Washington, and Lamar Alexander, a Republican from Tennessee, were making substantial progress until the Graham-Cassidy scheme was brought up.

Genuine bipartisan compromise can improve our health care system by increasing competition, focusing on premiums and reducing costs. Neither Democrats nor Republicans will get everything they want, but the health care of millions of Pennsylvania families will be more secure. Congress also needs to take up and pass the bipartisan agreement to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). If repeal is shelved then substantial progress can be made to improve health care for the middle class and all Americans."

US Senator Pat Toomey (R-PA)

No official statement. However, he did offer a quote to Politico in reaction to the bill being pulled that it is better to “focus on taxes right now.”

<http://www.politico.com/story/2017/09/26/obamacare-repeal-failure-republican-senate-243148>

I am not sure if this would be the section or the week to do it but I would also like to bring attention to the elimination of the State and Local Tax Deduction and its impact on our member’s districts:

<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/9/30/16380578/salt-vulnerable-house-republicans>

Learning about Legislation - Types of votes

Voice vote: This is the standard kind of vote used in the Senate, per Senate rules, unless a certain number of Senators present ask for a roll call vote. A voice vote is what it sounds like; people just say “Yea” or “Nay” aloud. It is traditionally used for uncontroversial topics, or for issues that have been pre-negotiated. Whenever you see a unanimous vote, chances are it was a voice vote. S.J. Res. 49, the legislative response to the President’s post-Charlottesville comments, was passed unanimously via voice vote in both houses of Congress.

Roll call vote: This is probably the kind of vote you have in mind when you picture voting in Congress. Each Representative or Senator is called by name, and they have to vote Yea, Nay or Present. Present basically counts as a “no,” but it is a tool used so that a legislator can say “I never voted against <insert popular topic>” even though they didn’t vote for it, either. Whenever you see a vote tally, you know it was a roll call vote.

Votes on voting?: Standard procedure would have a set period of time put aside so that both proponents and opponents of a given bill can debate before the either house of Congress votes on the bill. However, if an issue does not need the allotted time for debate, a member can ask that the “rules be suspended,” so that a vote can be called immediately. Two-thirds of Congresspeople present (for the House), or all of the Senators present (for the Senate) have to vote in favor of suspending the rules, and then a final vote can be held. So yes, the Congress does often vote on whether or not they are ready to take a vote

Votes of Interest

H.R. 3823 – Disaster Tax Relief and Airport and Airway Extension Act of 2017

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr3823>

Aviation Funding, Flood Insurance

A bill that would fund federal aviation programs through March 2018, provide temporary tax breaks to help hurricane victims, extend several specialized medical programs, and expand the role of private insurance companies in the National Flood Insurance Program. The House passed on Sept 28th by a vote of 264-155. A yes vote was to pass HR 3823. Costello, Meehan, **Fitzpatrick**, Dent, Smucker voted YES. Brady, Evans, Boyle voted NO.

Aid to Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands

A Democratic bid to add unspecified disaster aid for Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands to HR 3823. This would be in addition to the bill’s temporary tax breaks to help those American territories recover from recent hurricanes. FEMA says it has adequate funding for current recovery efforts there. A YES vote on this Democratic bid was to add hurricane aid to the bill. Costello, Meehan, **Fitzpatrick**, Dent, Smucker voted NO. Brady, Evans, Boyle voted YES.

Legislation of Interest

H.R. 3810: To establish the Commission to Verify Iranian Nuclear Compliance

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr3810>

On the campaign trail, then-candidate Trump had a lot to say about how bad he found the Iran nuclear deal. As President, he backed that opinion with negative speech about the deal while at the United Nations, and made threats about the United States backing out, accusing the Iranians of not living up to their end of the agreement. The 2015 deal was not simply between the United States and Iran - the United Kingdom, Russia, France, and China—plus Germany and the European Union are party to this nuclear oversight framework. In light of the President's unverified claims that Iran is somehow not doing their part, Rep. Gerald Connelly (D-VA) has introduced this bill. It has a Republican co-sponsor, Rep. Francis Rooney of Florida. This bill is pending in the House Foreign Affairs committee, where Rep. Fitzpatrick is a member. If stifling nuclear proliferation is a concern of your, you might want to call Rep. Fitzpatrick on this one, and ask him to co-sponsor this bill.

If you are interested in following all of the voting action in Congress there are a number of phone apps that come in handy. One of our fearless leaders, Connie Gruen, recommends the Countable app. It is available for both Apple and Android phones. You can sign up at Countable.us to get instant notification when our legislators vote, as well as details on each measure, pros and cons, status, and links to take action.

For those of you who are more computer- versus phone- oriented, I recommend Govtrack.us - the website enables you to add individual bills that interest you to a docket, so you can easily see the status of all your items in one place. They can also provide daily or weekly digest emails (your choice) to track the action of any legislator, committee, bill or vote. If not for [Govtrack](http://Govtrack.us), I would not be able to compile this report.

This report brought to you by the PA-08 MoCTrack team...

Gail Friedman
Gary Garb
Marcy Garb
Will Kampfman
Kierstyn Piotrowski Zolfo

We are seeking additional assistance. Our Congresspeople are always busy and there is always more for us to cover - tasks big and small to fit any level of time commitment. Can you help us out? Please email KierstynPZ@gmail.com and put "MoCTrack Help" in the subject. Thanks!