

Week ending 10/22/17 - 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 - **28.0%** (-0.6% from last week)

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick - **81.3%** (no change from last week)

Senator Pat Toomey - **91.8%** (+0.1% from last week)

Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight website assesses the voting records of our MoCs to provide this index assessment. The number for our Representative is static because there were no votes (scored or otherwise) in the House this week. The Senators' scores moved due to their votes on the Fiscal year 2018 budget resolution.

Votes of Interest

H.Con.Res. 71: Establishing the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2018 and setting forth the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2019 through 2027

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hconres71/text>

This is the budget resolution that we covered in the 10/08/17 [MoCTrack Votes](#) when it was in the House, and Fitzpatrick joined a group of 18 Republicans to vote against it. It had passed the House 216-209.

This week the concurrent resolution was in the Senate. The New York Times described the significance of this vote succinctly in their [10/19/17 article](#), when they noted "the Senate took a significant step toward rewriting the tax code on Thursday night with the passage of a budget blueprint that would protect a \$1.5 trillion tax cut from a Democratic filibuster. The budget resolution could also pave the way for opening up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil exploration by ensuring drilling legislation can pass with only Republican votes." This resolution passed 51-49, and **Casey voted NO** and **Toomey voted YES**. This now goes back to the House so they can approve of the changes the Senate made.

In the run-up to the final vote, there were a number of amendments that were voted upon. I think that the amendments, which aren't often covered in the press, provide interesting insights into the thought processes and internal alliances of our elected officials. Here are some of the more interesting amendments and the voting results:

- [S. Amdt 1301](#) was the vote that pertains to oil and gas exploration in the Arctic. The way the amendment was written the NOs are voting for drilling in the arctic and the YESes are voting to stop energy extraction. It failed 48-52, **Casey voted YES and Toomey voted NO**. That may look like a party line vote, but it is not. Senator Collins (R-ME) voted with the Democrats and Independents, while Senator Manchin (D-WV) voted with the GOP.
- [S. Amdt. 1119](#) was introduced by Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) at it would have taken \$1 trillion of the tax cuts that were being proposed in the main part of the resolution by making cuts to Medicaid and restore that Medicaid funding by reducing tax breaks for the wealthy. This amendment failed 47-51, on a straight party line vote. **Casey voted YES and Toomey voted NO**
- [S. Amdt. 1150](#) was a more moderate version of Bernie Sanders amendment. It was introduced by Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) and proposed restoring about \$500 billion of the cuts to Medicaid by "closing special interest tax loopholes." This amendment also failed 47-51, also on a straight party line vote. **Casey voted YES and Toomey voted NO**
- [S. Amdt. 1404](#) came from Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) and its title was "To ensure that all Americans receive a tax cut, keeping more of their hard earned money, and enjoy the benefit of tax reform." Despite that sentiment, which seems to follow the Republican party line, this measure failed, with a vote of 93-7. **Casey and Toomey both voted NO**.
- [S. Amdt. 1277](#) also came from Senator Paul, and it was yet another attempt to replace the Affordable Care Act. This time it would have been done through budget reconciliation instructions. This amendment failed, via a 66-33 vote. This vote provides an interesting glimpse into Senator Toomey's priorities. Despite his insistence that Obamacare needs to be repealed,

he did not vote for this amendment. It is clear that tax reform is significantly more important to him than anything dealing with healthcare. **Casey and Toomey both voted NO.**

- [S. Amdt. 1249](#) came from Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) and would have prohibited voting on bills without receiving a Congressional Budget Office (CBO) score. This is an interesting one, because in previous sessions of Congress, it was the Republicans who wanted the CBO to score bills before voting (see Senator Rob Portman, R-OH, and his S. 749 in the 114th Congress as an example). But this amendment failed 48-51, **Casey voted YES** and **Toomey voted NO.** The party outliers were Senator Collins (R-ME) voted with the Democrats and Independents, and Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) who did not vote.
- [S. Amdt. 1178](#) came from Senator Jeff Flake (R-AZ) and was titled “to make the American tax system simpler and fairer.” That is a sentiment that pretty much everyone could agree with, and it passed 98-0. **Casey and Toomey both voted YES.** The two Senators who did not vote were Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ) and Senator Thad Cochran (D-MI).

MoC Twitter Action

Senator Bob Casey hot topics: The Senator split his attention this week between President Trump’s sabotage of the ACA and the tax reform vote. He focused on the premium hike caused by the President’s decision to cease the payments (referred to as “cost-sharing reductions”) to insurers to cover costs for low income insurance recipients.

Casey tweet of the week, 10/21/17: “Well @iamjohnoliver, I thought the Scranton train would be bigger, but it’s a fine addition to the Electric City. cc @WNEP” with picture of himself in front of the big train set John Oliver bought for a Scranton TV station. If you haven’t followed this laugh-riot of a story, watch this three minute-ish John Oliver [video](#) to get up to speed.

Representative Fitzpatrick hot topics: Most of the Representative’s tweets this week were in support of his own legislation. The RESTORE Act (HR 4079) is a response to the amazing investigative journalism piece that came out of 60 Minutes/Washington Post having to do with Congress’s efforts last year to defang the DEA’s ability to address the opioid epidemic. He also promoted the SOAR Act (HR 4071), which would provide funding for small start-up businesses.

Fitzpatrick tweet of the week, 10/17/17: “Fitzpatrick, Sinema to Introduce Legislation Restoring DEA’s Authority to Combat Opioid Epidemic” with link to his own [press release](#)

Senator Pat Toomey hot topics: The Senator was very active on Twitter this week. Most of his efforts were in support of tax reform. But he also took time to retweet a bit from Gabby Gifford in support of stricter background checks (“we must work to keep guns away from criminals, terrorists, & the dangerously mentally ill”), and he also kept up his efforts to undermine the ACA by sharing a statement of fellow Senator Tom Cotton about the individual mandate, and information about their bill, the Mandate Relief Act of 2017.

Toomey tweet of the week, 10/15/17: Retweet of a 10/13 @GOPSenFinance item, ““We’re going to make American workers and American business able to compete with anyone in the world.” –@SenToomey #TaxReform”

The Senate tax vote - our Senators comment

Bob Casey: “The Senate just passed a GOP budget that cuts vital programs for the middle class to finance massive tax cuts for the wealthy. I voted no. This GOP budget will cut Medicare and Medicaid to finance a tax plan that gives 80% of the cuts to the top 1% by 2027.” 10/19/17, via Twitter. This was followed by a further explanation, “Today, I was in Conshohocken, PA to call out the GOP tax plan, which places a double tax on Pennsylvania families. It’s a bad deal. The GOP tax plan eliminates the state and local tax deduction (SALT). This deduction prevents double taxation of the same income. Eliminating SALT would hammer Pennsylvania families in order to finance a tax plan in which 80% goes to the top

1%. Here's a rundown of how counties in Southeastern PA would be impacted by the elimination of SALT. Thank you @NACoTweets for data. <it links to an infographic that shows Bucks County households average a \$13,199 deduction via SALT> Trickle-down economics has always failed the middle class. Most recently, it failed in Kansas." 10/20/17, via Twitter

Pat Toomey: "The budget resolution passed tonight by the Senate provides Congress with the tools needed to enact pro-growth tax reform. There are two primary goals of tax reform - providing tax relief for middle-income hardworking Americans and creating incentives to maximize economic growth. The next step will be for the House and Senate to come together on a common budget resolution quickly so the tax writing committees can begin considering the details of the tax plan. I am confident we will deliver pro-growth tax reform that will lead to higher wages and a better standard of living for all Americans." 10/19/17, via Twitter

What's going on with the ACA *this* week?

A little bit of background - on 10/12/17 President Trump announced that he was cutting off the "Cost Sharing Reduction" payments, the reimbursements to insurance companies that pay for services to low-income health care recipients via the Affordable Care Act. In the days following this announcement, many industry experts said that this decision would likely end up costing the federal government about 20 times more than the CSRs themselves in increased healthcare subsidy payments to qualifying Marketplace users. Insurance companies indicated this the decision would likely cause premiums to go up at least 20% for 2018-2019 plans.

On 10/17/17 Senators Lamar Alexander (R-TN) and Patty Murray (D-WA) announced that they had reached a deal to stabilize the insurance markets. It would continue the subsidies to insurance companies, but would allow states the ability to approve plans for insurance buyers that did not meet the minimum coverage standards under the ACA.

Across the rest of the week, President Trump changed his position on the plan at least three times. At first, when asked about it at a press conference he said he supported it, calling the deal "a very good solution." Then, later that night at a speech to the Heritage Foundation, he said "While I commend the bipartisan work done by Senators Alexander and Murray — and I do commend it — I continue to believe Congress must find a solution to the Obamacare mess instead of providing bailouts to insurance companies." Two days later, [CNN reports](#), Trump "...again muddied the waters Thursday afternoon, saying he still wants a long-term reform of the national health care system, but didn't explicitly oppose a short-term measure proposed by Alexander and Murray."

As of this weekend, the plan has 24 co-sponsors in the Senate, including Senator John McCain (R-AZ), as well as authors of a previous healthcare plan, Senators Lindsay Graham (R-SC) and Bill Cassidy (R-LA). But even with that support, the bill faces an uphill battle. Senator Majority Leader McConnell has been tepid about the plan, which means it is not guaranteed to even make it to the floor. And even if it passed the Senate, it faces vocal opposition in the House.

If you would like to review the current draft of the Bipartisan Health care Stabilization Act, it can be found [here](#). Updates on this effort will no doubt be in future MoCTrack Reports.

Casey in the News

Topic One: Fallout from the Washington Post/60 minutes opioid scandal article

A number of national media outlets reported on the materials covered in the piece about how Congress passed a law that defanged the DEA right in the middle of the opioid epidemic. Rep. Tom Marino (R-PA) was the sponsor of that bill, and he had been President Trump's pick for new the "Drug Czar." He withdrew his name from contention in the aftermath of this article. On 10/17/17 the Sunbury Daily Item carried comments from Senator Casey about the bill in question. "This legislation should be repealed immediately and DEA's authority to hold drug distributors to tough standards should be restored. Special

interests in Washington conspired to draft legislative language that appeared innocuous and technical yet was anything but.”

Topic Two: Trump’s decision to stop ACA payments to insurance companies

On 10/16/17 Channel 69 of Allentown carried Senator Casey’s response to Trump’s decision, noting that premiums would increase as a result of the President’s action. “These premium increases are the direct result of President Trump’s sabotage of our health care system,” Casey said. “Congress should be working in a bipartisan way to improve our health care system, yet congressional Republicans refuse to serve as an independent check and balance on President Trump’s sabotage.” A 10/17/17 Think Progress piece cited the same Casey quote and added supporting evidence to back Casey’s claim, noting that “...acting Pennsylvania Insurance Commissioner Jessica Altman traced the unexpected rate 30.6 percent increase directly back to President Trump’s decision to cut off the cost-sharing reduction (CSR) payments insurers use to subsidize coverage for low-income people.”

Topic Three: Tax Reform

On 10/18/17 multiple PA news outlets covered the Senator’s visit to the White House to discuss tax reform with President Trump. The Morning Call reported that “Casey brought with him several letters from constituents who, like him, are skeptical of the GOP outline for overhauling the federal tax code, as well as questions about whether that plan actually will aid middle-class Americans as President Donald Trump and other Republicans have pledged.” The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette quoted the Senator, who observed “If you put on one side of a page all of the statements made by the president and other Republican leaders about their desire to have a middle-class tax cut and then on the other side of the paper you have their proposal, it’s totally misaligned. There’s really no connection between the rhetoric of wanting to give a middle-class tax cut and the proposal.” The Times of Beaver County reported on what Casey said regarding tax cuts for the rich, “Casey said that the top 1 percent would get a tax cut of \$146,000 in 2018 while the elite one-tenth of 1 percent would see a cut of nearly \$750,000.” The CBS station out of Pittsburgh carried video with comments from the Senator, who said “[the President] said he agreed with me that the middle class should get a big tax cut and the rich should not get a tax cut. In essence, he said that over and over again. But the problem we have with what the president has said and what the Republicans have said is that the rhetoric does not align with the proposal they have right now.” Allentown’s Channel 69 also carried video, with the Senator summing up his position succinctly, “the proposal in its current form is a give away to the rich.”

Fitzpatrick in the News

Topic One: Gun control

Bills to ban or regulate “bump stock” attachments like the one used in the Las Vegas massacre gained traction as an immediate and limited response to the tragedy. Reportedly, Rep. Fitzpatrick is working with Democratic Rep. Dina Titus of Las Vegas on a bill that would highly regulate the attachments, which enable semi-automatic weapons to fire faster. Asked for the Philadelphia Inquirer’s four-question survey on gun proposals whether he supports a ban on high-capacity magazines, Fitzpatrick replied, “Common-sense restrictions should be addressed.”

Topic Two: Student debt

Press coverage from California newspapers centered on Fitzpatrick’s pairing with Rep. John Garamendi of that state to introduce a bill to reduce student loan debt through refinancing.

Topic Three: Fallout from the Washington Post/60 minutes opioid scandal article

The 10/17/17 Keene Sentinel (out of New Hampshire) reported that this matter was going to be investigated and “...across Capitol Hill, congressional Democrats and at least one Republican, Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, Pa., announced plans to address the investigation’s findings.” A Virginia outlet, Prince William Living, reported on the introduction of the RESTORE Act, Fitzpatrick’s bill to repeal last year’s legislation that was so detrimental to the DEA. The Representative was quoted, “As the opioid epidemic continues to ravage communities across our nation – including those throughout Bucks and Montgomery counties – we need to be stepping up efforts to combat this crisis on all fronts, not tying one hand behind the back of

those in law enforcement working to stem the tide. This legislation is about righting a wrong and upholding our commitment to keep our constituents safe. Moving forward, we must remember that any response to this challenge must treat the whole person, not just the addiction. We must continue to support law enforcement efforts while focusing on the underlying issues driving people to seek opioids and working to increase the accessibility and affordability for prevention, education, treatment, and recovery of this disease.”

Topic Four: Campaign 2018

The 2018 congressional race has begun to take shape, as outlined this week in the news and opinion columns of the state’s mainstream political blog, PoliticsPA. Navy veteran and Chalfont native Rachel Reddick announced this week she would mount a Democratic challenger to Brian Fitzpatrick, saying that “Washington isn’t delivering for Bucks County families,” and pointing to Fitzpatrick’s 80 percent support for the Trump-backed legislative agenda. “We welcome her to Pennsylvania and wish her well in her new residence,” said a Fitzpatrick spokesman. Meanwhile, to Fitzpatrick’s right, Marine veteran and former county prosecutor Dean Malik announced at the Irish Rover tavern in Langhorne his third try to garner the Republican nomination in the 8th District, charging that Fitzpatrick has not been a reliable Trump ally. On Wednesday, the Courier Times reported that Mr. Malik has been joined by another primary contender, former Yardley Borough council member Valerie Mihalek. The article also reports that Ms. Mihalek worked for Rep. Fitzpatrick’s brother as a Congressional deputy district director.

Toomey in the News

Topic One: Tax reform

In the early part of the week, most reporting was on a meeting between President Trump and several lawmakers, including Senator Toomey. The Morning Call carried a 10/18/17 article that quoted the Senator, who said “[people] are going to see that we are going to change the rules so it is simpler and so that a middle-income family pays less in taxes. If that’s not true, we won’t even have Republican votes for it.” That same day the Times Online of Beaver also quoted Senator Toomey who described his goals for tax reform, noting it “...absolutely has to provide tax relief for hardworking Americans, middle income, lower income, people of modest means, many of whom live paycheck to paycheck. There has to be a direct benefit for those Pennsylvanians, those Arkansans, people all across America.” Later in the week the coverage centered on the passage of the resolution (described above, in Votes of Interest) that paves the way for tax reform. The Bloomberg News coverage was indicative of the tone of other national outlets. It noted on 10/19/17 , “On taxes, the compromise would keep the Senate’s plan to allow tax cuts that add up to \$1.5 trillion to the deficit, before including the effects of economic growth, according to the aide. The House budget had required tax changes not to lose revenue.” Politico reported that President Trump had suggested a bipartisan working group for tax reform, and carried Senator Toomey’s response to this. He said “It’s always helpful to have a broad discussion. But we’re also not going to change our schedule. We’re going to get this done.”

Topic Two: Fallout from the Washington Post/60 minutes opioid scandal article

Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV) introduced new legislation to repeal the damaging act passed by the last session of Congress. Senator Manchin spoke to CBS News chief congressional correspondent Nancy Cordes and “told Cordes that he hopes his GOP colleagues from hard hit states -- like Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio and Sen. Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania -- will be with him on this.” The Morning Call reported on Rep. Marino’s withdrawal from contention for the position of Drug Czar in the aftermath of the news reports. They quoted Senator Toomey in their reporting, who said “Now there may be problems with the bill and if so, we should fix it, but some of the charges seem to be a bit gratuitous at this point.” On 10/17/17 online outlet The Hill carried additional comments from the Senator, who said, “I’m a little surprised that it passed unanimously in both houses, was signed by President Obama and got no opposition from the DEA at the time. That’s not the way controversial legislation usually ends up, but hey, if there’s problems, then we ought to revisit them.”

Topic Three: the ACA individual mandate

Senators Toomey and Tom Cotton (R-AR) introduced legislation to end the individual mandate portion of the Affordable Care Act. Fox News carried a piece co-authored by the two senators on 10/17/17. In it,

they allege “The mandate is simply a tax on Americans who can’t afford insurance. This is a moral outrage, and the public agrees.” Allentown channel 69 News carried video from the Senator’s announcement of the bill that same day.

Learning about Legislation - The Best Congress Money Can Buy: Tracking Donations to Our MoCs

If you haven’t read the Washington Post/60 Minutes collaboration from last Sunday about how the last Congress passed a bill that thwarted the DEA’s ability to combat the opioid crisis, you really should - it is a masterful piece of investigative journalism. I know it has been cited a lot in this week’s report, but the ripples from this are spreading out across all of Washington right now. One of the many revelations in that article was just how much money a small number of pharmaceutical warehousing/distribution corporations spent on our Congresspeople in support of this legislation. From [the article](#):

“Political action committees representing the industry contributed at least \$1.5 million to the 23 lawmakers who sponsored or co-sponsored four versions of the bill, including nearly \$100,000 to Marino and \$177,000 to Hatch. Overall, the drug industry spent **\$102 million lobbying Congress on the bill** and other legislation between 2014 and 2016, according to lobbying reports.”

With those kind of expenditures getting tossed around out there, it is important to know who is spending money on our own Members of Congress, so that we can use a critical eye when we review the legislation that they are sponsoring. Below, I’ve shared the websites I use to research information about the campaign donations to our MoCs.

The Federal Election Commission - <https://www.fec.gov/>

This is the government’s official portal for tracking and reporting campaign donations. It contains a lot of useful and educational articles on campaign finance laws and regulations. It lets you search by candidates, the official committees for each candidate, individual contributions and political action committees. It allows you to export the data you have searched to Excel spreadsheets, so that you can sort and filter it as you please. If, however, you like to look at infographics or other charts to absorb information, this site can be lacking.

Open Secrets - <https://www.opensecrets.org/>

This website uses/provides much the same information as the FEC site, but it has some added features. It allows you to view donations by industry. It also has a much more user-friendly interface. For example, after typing in my MoC’s name, it only took me three mouse-clicks to get to the list of 312 “Ideological/Single Issue” PACs who contributed funds to him. (Who would have thought that Brian Fitzpatrick would have received \$2,000 from the Texas Republicans United PAC for the 2018 race?) It also has a list of legislation the MoC has sponsored along with a link to the organizations who are lobbying that issue. Like the FEC site, you can download your search results into Excel for data sorting.

Follow the Money - <https://www.followthemoney.org/>

This site uses a bit more in the infographics department, for those who like to view data that way. It offers many of the same features as Open Secrets - donations by industry, lists of donors, etc. However, I have found that their information about sponsored legislation is not as up to date as Open Secrets.

I hope you find these sites useful!

Are there questions that you have about how Congress works, about elections, about voting... or anything to do with government processes? I am looking for topics for future “Learning about Legislation” topics, so please - email me your questions at KierstynPZ@gmail.com - I can’t promise that I already know the answer, but I will research the issue and share my findings with our readers in a future segment.

Legislation of Interest -

S.Res. 211: A resolution condemning the violence and persecution in Chechnya

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/sres211/text>

There are an ever-increasing number of reports coming out of Chechnya that homosexuals are being detained, tortured and killed. Our own Senator Toomey has insisted on keeping this tragedy in the public eye, and tweets about it with some regularity. He wrote this resolution, and it now has 45 co-sponsors (31D, 13R, 1I) including Senator Casey. Last week the status of this bill moved to "Ordered Reported," which means that it has been referred out of committee and will move to the full Senate - if Senator McConnell decides to do so.

S. 1970: Medicare-X Choice Act of 2017

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s1970>

This bill was introduced this week by Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO). It has 6 co-sponsors, all Democrats, including Senators Kamala Harris (D-CA), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Tim Kaine (D-VA). It is pending in the Senate Finance committee, where both Senators Toomey and Casey are members. This is a bill that would provide healthcare for all Americans - but it does so in a different manner than the bill introduced by Bernie Sanders last month. Sarah Kliff on Vox (who is one of the best healthcare policy journalists out there, she pretty much got me through all of the ACA wranglings this past year) wrote an explainer piece on the Medicare-X plan, [here](#). Instead of completely dismantling the US health insurance industry (which the Sanders plan would do), this Medicare-X plan would create a "public option." Americans could stay with their existing, employer-provided insurance, or they could buy into Medicare-X. This public plan would not be the same as the current medicare offered to 65+ Americans, in that it would cover things pertinent to younger americans, like pediatric and maternity care. Sarah Kliff describes the proposed roll-out as follows, "Bennet and Kaine envision the Medicare X plan growing slowly. In 2020, it would become available only in counties with one or zero health plans selling on the Obamacare marketplace. In 2023, it would open to the entire country and, in 2024, allow small businesses to enroll too." Back when the Sanders plan came out, Senator Casey was asked about it. At the time, he said that he would prefer to see something similar to Medicare for all. It is entirely possible that he is considering sponsoring this bill. If you support this plan, you should let him know that!

H.R. 4079: RESTORE Act of 2017 - To repeal Public Law 114-145 to ensure that the Drug Enforcement Administration has the authority to carry out needed enforcement actions for drug diversion control investigations and operations to combat the opioid epidemic

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr4079/text>

This bill relates to the [shocking bit of investigative reporting](#) that came out of CBS News and the Washington Post from October 15th that inspired our "Learning about Legislation" section this week. Last session, Congress voted (by unanimous consent) for a new piece of legislation that was pharmaceutical industry sponsored to remove a tool that the DEA was using to intercept fraudulent/illegal orders and suppliers of opioids (like a pharmacy selling 1,000,000 opiate pills a year when the average was 74,000). On October 19th, this bill was introduced, and it would repeal the bad law that helped feed the opioid epidemic. It was introduced by PA-08's own Representative Fitzpatrick, and it has 5 co-sponsors (3D, 2R). This is an important piece of legislation, and the Washington Post article I linked to above will explain in full why it will help address the opioid crisis. Since this bill was clearly composed in response to that amazing piece of journalism, you might choose to call Mr. Fitzpatrick's office to thank him for sponsoring this bill, but be sure to add that he should make a statement in support of the importance of investigative journalism, but for which this situation would never have been revealed.

H.R. 4071: SOAR Act - To amend the Small Business Act to create a program to provide funding for organizations that support startup businesses in formation and early growth stages by providing entrepreneurs with resources and services to produce viable businesses

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr4071/text>

S. 1969: SOAR Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s1969/text>

This bill was introduced by Rep. Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-DE) and it is co-sponsored by Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, who has been promoting it heavily. An identical version was introduced in the Senate by Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ). The Senator described the bill as follows, "Innovation is the secret sauce that has fueled the American economy since our country's inception. Unfortunately, capital and resources to support that innovation is increasingly only going to a small handful of cities. Our bill would help address this problem by identifying and cultivating startup entrepreneurs in underserved areas and providing them with the support and resources they need to grow and succeed." Representative Fitzpatrick added, "We know growth accelerators work at stimulating investment and job creation but too often those gains are concentrated and leave American workers and entrepreneurs in rural, suburban, and urban areas behind. Working with Congresswoman Blunt Rochester, we've come up with a measure to support growth in underserved communities – wherever they are – by empowering entrepreneurs with essential services like experienced leadership, office space, access to financing opportunities, and structured mentorship. Together we can plant the seeds of nationwide growth." In the House, this bill is pending in the Small Business Committee, where Rep. Fitzpatrick is a member. It is also in the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, but neither PA Senator is a member there. If this is a goal that you support, you may wish to contact either Toomey to co-sponsor it, since they are members of the Finance Committee, which is tangentially related to 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...

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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!