

Week ending 11/19/17 - 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 - **28.8%** (no change from last week)

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick - **81.1%** (**+0.7%** from last week)

Senator Pat Toomey - **90.2%** (no change from last week)

Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight website assesses the voting records of our MoCs to provide this index assessment. No Senate votes were scored this week. In the House, the Flood and tax bills (described below) were scored.

Votes of Interest

H.R. 1: Tax Cuts and Jobs Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/115-2017/h637>

This tax bill has received a great deal of press (and you will be seeing much of that coverage below in the media sections for all our MoCs), so I will not recap all that here. To remind you, this is one step in a much longer process. The first phase was back in October, when our legislators passed [H. Con. Res. 71](#), the resolution that dictates \$1.5 trillion in cuts to social safety net programs across the next decade to free up funding to provide tax cuts. This bill, H.R. 1, is the House of Representative's plan for enacting those tax cuts. The bill came to a vote on 11/16/17, and it passed 227-205. All the Democrats and 13 Republicans, mostly from states that have high state and local taxes, voted against the bill. **Fitzpatrick voted YES.** This bill now moves to the Senate, who has created a completely different plan for tax cuts, one that includes the elimination of the Affordable Care Act individual mandate. And if it should pass the Senate, it will then go to conference (which happens to be our Learning about Legislation topic this week) between the two legislative groups, and then back to each house for another vote.

H.R. 2874: 21st Century Flood Reform Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/115-2017/h630>

This bill was a combination of 7 smaller pieces of legislation that will reauthorize the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as well as introduce new initiatives. The topline on this topic is that the NFIP is an important but controversial program where the government provides very inexpensive insurance to homeowners in flood-prone areas where the private market until now, has not entered because of the outsized risks. If you would like a useful primer on this topic, in the wake of the horrific storm season, John Oliver devoted [20 minutes](#) to explaining the system and the flaws in the way it is currently composed. Insurance Journal, an industry-specific publication, [explained the changes](#) to the NFIP introduced into this bill:

Some of the reforms in the House bill seek to encourage more private flood insurers to enter the market; reduce costs from repetitive loss properties, improve flood mapping; cap annual premium increases and surcharges; continue the current practice of grandfathering certain properties from risk-based rates; and require the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which administers the flood program, to share historic flood loss data with private insurers. Another provision would permit WYO [Write Your Own] insurance companies to also sell their own private policies, a practice now prohibited. Other provisions would reduce the reimbursements to the private insurers involved in the WYO program; limit the premium on any residential property to \$10,000 a year regardless of the property value; allow businesses to opt out of the flood insurance requirement after one year; and permit localities to create their own flood maps.

The most concise criticism of the bill came from Rep. Dennis Ross (R-FL), as reported by the [Huffington Post](#). He said, "A federal program that conceals actual risk through artificially low rates is neither compassionate nor responsible." He was not alone, but was joined by a number of other coastal area Republicans, who were afraid that this bill would, as the Huffington Post described, "make flood insurance less affordable for their constituents and threaten the solvency of the NFIP." Despite concerns from within their own party, the bill passed in a 237-189 vote, with primarily Republican support. **Fitzpatrick voted YES.** He was joined by all of the other PA Republicans, except retiring Charlie Dent, who did not vote.

H.R. 4174: Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2017

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr4174/text>

This is the bill that was mentioned last week under “Legislation of Interest.” It is of particular note because it incorporates all of the text of the H.R. 1770/S. 760 OPEN Government Data Act - legislation that would create a “presumption of openness” in relation to taxpayer-funded study, and would prevent administrations from restricting access to data that was politically inconvenient (like climate science). When I updated this last week, I had noted that I was not certain yet of whether the inclusion of all this great text in House Speaker Paul Ryan’s larger bill was a good thing, as it was so voluminous that I couldn’t tell if a poison pill had been hidden in there somewhere.

A lot has happened since last week’s report. On 11/14/17 I spoke to staffers in Rep. Derek Kilmer’s office (D-WA), as he was the author of the original bill. Martha Spieker, the Press Assistant in Rep. Kilmer’s DC office said, “we are supportive of this, it is a part of a larger transparency initiative.” Then, on 11/15/17 the larger bill (H.R. 4174) was brought to the floor for a vote, and it passed via voice vote, which means there is no indication of how each member voted, but it can be presumed that **Fitzpatrick voted YES** as there is no note that there were objections to the voice vote. In the comments on the floor, Rep. Ryan noted, “Blake Farenthold and Derek Kilmer were key drivers of this measure, and they made it stronger by incorporating their Open Government Data Act.” In response to the passage of the bill, Rep. Kilmer commented, “Congress gets more done when it works together, and I am glad the House leadership included my bill, the OPEN Government Data Act in this legislation.” This bill now moves to the Senate.

On the Nomination PN919: David G. Zatezalo, of West Virginia, to be Assistant Secretary of Labor for Mine Safety and Health (MSHA)

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/115-2017/s275>

As is becoming commonplace in this Administration, President Trump nominated a former coal executive to head up the department that oversees mine inspections and investigates mine worker injuries and deaths. David G. Zatezalo worked forty years in the coal industry, before retiring from his position of President and CEO of Rhino Resources, Inc. in 2014. When this nomination was announced, [Huffington Post reported](#) that under Zatezalo’s leadership, Rhino Resources “...butted heads repeatedly with MSHA during the Obama administration. After several documented safety lapses, the agency issued what’s known as a ‘pattern of violations’ warning to one of Rhino’s mines, ordering the company to get its act together or face more penalties. Not long after, a miner was killed at the mine when part of a wall collapsed, leading to \$44,500 in fines. MSHA also took the rare step of issuing an injunction against another Rhino mine when it found out the company’s employees were tipping off miners underground ahead of inspections, in hopes of avoiding penalties.” Because of these concerns, Zatezalo’s own Senator, Joe Manchin (D-WV) would not support his nomination, [saying](#) that “...after reviewing his qualifications and record of safety during his time in the coal industry, I am not convinced that Mr. Zatezalo is suited to oversee the federal agency that implements and enforces mine safety laws and standards.” Despite this notable objection from America’s coal-friendliest Senator, Mr. Zatezalo was confirmed in a 52-46 straight party line vote. **Casey voted NO** and **Toomey voted YES**.

On the Nomination PN558: Steven Gill Bradbury, of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Department of Transportation

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/115-2017/s272>

In another commonplace pattern, the Trump Administration has nominated yet another attorney tied to the Bush-era torture memos to a major position. Steven Gill Bradbury actually authored several memos that defended the use of waterboarding and other torture techniques during his tenure at the Office of Legal Counsel. At his Senate confirmation hearings, the [New York Times reports](#) that Mr. Bradbury spoke of his previous work, observing, “...every opinion I gave for O.L.C. represented my best judgment of what the laws in effect at that time required. I certainly recognize and respect that some of the questions we addressed during my tenure in office raised difficult issues about which reasonable people could disagree.” At the same hearings, Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) noted “You lacked the judgment to stand up and say what is morally right when pressured by the President of the United States, and I’m afraid you would do so again... I cannot oppose this nomination strongly enough.” Mr. Bradbury’s nomination was confirmed in a 50-47 vote. All of the Democrats and Independents voted against the

nominee, and they were joined by Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Rand Paul (R-KY). **Casey voted NO and Toomey voted YES.**

MoC Twitter Action

Senator Bob Casey hot topics: The Senator continues to express his opposition to the GOP tax plan, and has shared many articles (both opinion and analysis) to support the position that this plan will hurt the middle class, while benefiting the richest Americans. He also observed “Senate Rs just voted down my amendment to ensure an open hearing when Republicans reconcile the House and Senate version. I wonder what they’re planning on hiding in that back room behind closed doors...” And on 11/14/17 he published a small tweetstorm, with a detailed mark-up of the then-most-recent version of the GOP bill. Casey tweet(s) of the week, 11/16/17: “@SenateDems keep offering amendments to protect the middle class and the @SenateGOP keep voting them down. Now they claim the hearing has gone on long enough and they want to go home. So much for regular order. “ (included link to video of proceedings - <https://www.finance.senate.gov/hearings/continuation-of-the-open-executive-session-to-consider-an-original-bill-entitled-the-tax-cuts-and-jobs-act4>)

Representative Fitzpatrick hot topics: For the first time in 5 months Rep. Fitzpatrick switched up his pinned tweet! He switched out his “CPA’s advice on tax reform” opinion piece for a Ripon Advance blog piece (an outlet that carries consistently favorable coverage of him) on the National Defense Authorization Act, and his part in getting “PA priorities” into the bill. His only other tweet was his statement on the passage of the tax reform bill.

Fitzpatrick tweet of the week, 11/16/17: “My statement on today’s #taxreform measure: <https://fitzpatrick.house.gov/taxreform>” (only possible choice, his only tweet)

Senator Pat Toomey hot topics: The Senator continues to devote most of his Twitter attention to the GOP tax cut plan. He thanked the House for passing their version, and continues to retweet selected messages from constituents who claim they will be helped by the changes. He also promoted the decision to scrap the ACA Individual Mandate.

Toomey tweet of the week, 11/16/17: retweet for the Senate Republican video clip from his portion of the tax bill hearing, “@SenToomey sets the record straight on #TaxReform: No cuts to Medicaid, no cuts to Medicare, and repeal of the individual mandate.”

THE GOP TAX PLAN PASSES THE HOUSE and stars moving through the Senate, our MoCs respond:

Sen. Bob Casey, 11/16/17: “Higher taxes for many in the middle class, higher premium for PA families all in the service of pleasing the GOP donor class with giveaways to the super-rich and big corporations -The 572,000 people who make more than \$1,000,000/yr get a combined \$39 billion in tax cuts while the 90,000,000 taxpayers who make less than \$50K split \$14 billion. The GOP tax/health care scheme was just passed out of committee: massive giveaways to the super-rich & big corporations, higher taxes for 13.8 million households making under \$200K, higher premiums for PA families, 13 million fewer Americans w/o health care. It must be defeated. We are trying to work with the @SenateGOP to make this bill better but they have yet to approve a single one of our amendments.” (via Twitter)

Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, 11/16/17: “Tax reform has always been about three things: More American jobs. Bigger paychecks for middle class families. Fairer taxes for everyone. Today, the House took the first step toward enacting real tax reform for the first time in decades... and not a moment too soon. For years, wages stood stagnant and our gross domestic product hovered around an anemic 1.6 percent. American families can’t afford to wait to act to grow our economy. With today’s action, this Congress proved it is serious about standing up for middle class families and unleashing the power of the American economy. The positive impact of strong, sustained economic growth has the potential to not only help families make ends meet, but address a number of other pressures we face as a nation. It is my hope that the Senate takes this once-in-a-generation opportunity seriously and returns a reform bill that meets our shared goals and commitments.” (press release via his website)

Sen. Pat Toomey, 11/16/17: "I am very excited about the product we now have. Hardworking families I represent in Pennsylvania are going to benefit from this bill in two ways. First, they're going to owe less to Uncle Sam because this bill will cut their taxes. The second way they will benefit is from the acceleration in economic growth we'll have after making the industrialized world's worst business tax code into one of the best. This bill will spur significant new investment, business expansion, and new business startups, leading to more jobs, higher wages, a better standard of living for more Pennsylvanians. Passage out of committee was a big step towards our goal of enacting pro-growth tax reform, and could not have been achieved without the steadfast leadership and guidance of Chairman Hatch. I look forward to moving this bill to the Senate floor soon so hardworking families get a big tax cut and American businesses are globally competitive once again." (press release via his website)

Casey in the News

Topic One: GOP tax plan

Senator Casey was heavily covered in local and national news outlets for his opposition to the tax bill under consideration in the Senate. The [Bucks County Courier Times](#) quoted Senator Casey, who said, "When I say this bill is a thief in the night, I mean it. That's exactly what it is, ripping health care from people at the same time you're jacking up their taxes." The [Allentown Morning Call](#) focused on the part of the plan that ended the ACA individual mandate. In response to that, Casey said, "In order to finance tax giveaways to the wealthiest and biggest corporations, congressional Republicans are willing to raise taxes on many middle class families, eliminate vital deductions for Pennsylvanians and bring our health care system crashing down. It's wrong and I will fight against it." Central PA's [WITF](#) also carried coverage on that aspect of the plan, and quoted Casey, who noted that when "...people lose their health care, we're all worse off. It's not just that we're diminished as a society. When those people don't have health care... they get their health care in the emergency room, and we all pay for that." The [Centre Daily Times](#) reported on the Senator's issues with the process the GOP was using to shove this plan through. He said, "The process here is almost as objectionable as the substance. When it comes to reforming the tax code and moving around in this process \$9 trillion plus, for the first time in 30 years, that warrants weeks and even months of hearings and review, not Thursday to Thursday." [PA Homepage](#) has video of the Senator who stopped by their studio to discuss a variety of topics. On the tax plan he concluded, "The tax cut for the middle class isn't nearly substantial enough because a lot of revenue is tied up in giving tax cuts to the very wealthy the very top's also a huge amount of revenue to the tune of a trillion and a half given to corporations, which is under the guise of providing help to workers, but I think the trickle down theory has been proven to be very faulty."

Topic Two: Illegal robocalls

The Federal Communications Commission approved new rules related to illegal robocalls. Senator Casey and Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro had sent letters to the FCC on this topic earlier this year, and they were both pleased by these new rules. [Wilkes Barre Times-Leader](#) explained that the bill will "allow phone companies to block certain phone numbers that do not or cannot make outgoing calls." Senator Casey commented on the changes, noting "...these new rules will help prevent scammers and con artists from reaching our loved ones in an effort to steal their hard-earned money." [Fox 43](#) also covered the rule change and the Senator's comments, adding "I am pleased that the FCC has heeded our calls and will give phone companies additional tools to block certain illegal robocalls."

Topic Three: Senator Franken harassment scandal

This week Senator Franken admitted to forcibly kissing and groping a radio personality on a USO tour in 2006, before he was a Senator. [Politico](#) reports that Senator Casey called this behavior "inexcusable conduct" and he noted that there needs to be changes in Congressional policy related to harassment. Casey said, "I think it's important every office have a policy in place like I've had for years now on this issue." The [Pottsville Republican Herald](#) quoted a spokesperson for Senator Casey, who said "Sen. Casey supports an ethics investigation into this matter." They also included a quote from an email from the Senator, who wrote "these allegations are very troubling. No one has the right to touch someone else without their consent. It's inexcusable behavior. Anyone involved in this type of conduct must be held accountable." The [Washington Free Beacon](#) reports that Senator Casey is one amongst a

growing list of lawmakers up for election next year who has given away donations from Senator Franken's political action committee to local charities.

Fitzpatrick in the News

Topic One: Gun control

Mention of Rep. Fitzpatrick's "Closing the Bump-Stock Loophole Act," which would require prospective purchasers of bump stocks and other devices to increase guns' firing rates to register with federal authorities, in a history of gun control published by The Knife, an online publication that purports to quantitatively assess bias in other media.

Topic Two: Sexual harassment

Rep. Fitzpatrick has signed on as a cosponsor of the ME TOO Act to set criteria to address sexual harassment in Congress, for more details, see the Legislation of Interest section (Ripon Advance, online newsletter of centrist Republicans)

Topic three: Taxes

Rep. Fitzpatrick was among the Republican proponents of the tax overhaul bill quoted in an article in the Allentown Morning Call just before the bill passed in the House. The bill would unleash "the power of the American economy," he said in a statement. His statement was also cited in the Intelligencer, which like the Morning Call, also carried quotes from Democrats critical of the plan.

Topic Four: Terrorism

Rep. Fitzpatrick's op-ed in The Hill political blog is cited in a Tampa Bay Times article on House approval of a bill to impose sanctions on countries or individuals providing material support to the militant Islamic group Hamas. The op-ed criticized Qatar for its ability to evade punishment while backing terrorism, and Qatar is among the targets of the legislation. (Same article, syndicated, in The Republic, Columbus, Indiana.)

Topic Five: Veterans

Rep. Fitzpatrick has introduced a bill that would extend federal preferences, known as "set-asides," in transportation and infrastructure contract awards to businesses owned by veterans. (Ripon Advance, centrist Republican online newsletter). Rep. Fitzpatrick participated in the Lower Makefield Veterans Day ceremony (Bucks Local News), the Penridge Central Middle School Veterans Day observance (News-Herald), and the Bristol Township parade (Bucks County Courier Times and LevittownNow.com).

Topic Six: Water pollution

Rep. Fitzpatrick is quoted as calling for amendments to the defense budget to remediate and research toxic chemicals in groundwater as the result of activities on military base and industrial sites (Markets Insider). Fitzpatrick's support for the amendments that are part of a defense spending compromise bill that is advancing in the House (Ripon Advance, online newsletter of centrist Republicans). According to the Intelligencer, a "contingent of local lawmakers" worked to include the funding in the defense authorization act, and while the bill is headed to President Trump for signing, it is not clear whether the funding will actually be authorized through the appropriations process.

Toomey in the News

Topic One: Alabama Senate Race and Roy Moore sexual assault accusations

Multiple news sources continued to quote Senator Toomey this week, after his appearance last week on Meet the Press and his call for Alabama candidate Roy Moore to step aside. The [Huffington Post](#) carried his statement, "You know, this is a terrible situation. Nearly 40-year-old allegation. We'll probably never know for sure exactly what happens. But from my point of view, you know, I have to say, I think the accusations have more credibility than the denial. I think it would be best if Roy would just step aside." [NBC News](#) also quoted the Senator, from another portion of the interview, when he observed, "...many of us are suggesting that the preponderance of the evidence seems to support the accuser and, therefore, many of us, I'll speak for myself, would prefer for Roy to step aside. I think that's a responsible way to approach this." The [Allentown Morning Call](#) also reported on the possibility that the Senate could

refuse to seat Mr. Moore if he did win the special election this December. Senator Toomey's response to that hypothetical situation was that the Senate would "...wrestle with that if and when the time comes."

Topic Two: GOP Tax Bill

This topic appeared in dozens, if not hundreds, of media outlets this week. The [Allentown Morning Call](#) focused on the news that the Senate version of the tax bill would repeal the ACA individual mandate. Senator Toomey told them, "The individual mandate is based on a flawed premise that the federal government should force Americans to buy an overpriced health insurance plan even if they don't want it, and can't afford it. Including the repeal of the tax penalty in our pro-growth tax reform bill gives direct relief to hard-working Pennsylvanians..." [Bloomberg News](#) also reported on the Senator's defense of the individual mandate repeal, quoting the Senator, who said "There are no cuts to Medicaid. There are no cuts to Medicare. Nobody is disqualified from insurance." [NPR](#) carried audio of an interview with Senator Toomey, where he discussed the aspect of the bill where corporate tax cuts are made permanent, but individual cuts would sunset after 10 years. Senator Toomey observed, "Everything in our bill - virtually everything should be permanent. That would be my preference. We unfortunately have constraints, as you know. The Byrd rule basically precludes that. So we've got to deal with that. That's the reason that we have the temporary features for the most part." The [Washington Examiner](#) also focused on Senator Toomey's attention to the way this bill would benefit corporations over individuals. On that topic, Senator Toomey noted, "We're going to take the U.S. business tax code from one of the worst in the world, from the point of view of a potential investor, to one of the best in the world." And to [The Hill](#), the Senator continued to insist that this is a tax plan that will benefit most Americans. He said, "the vast majority of people are going to get a tax cut. And any time you really reform the tax code there will be some outliers that may not get a tax cut. In this reform, any such outliers are likely to be pretty high-income folks who also tend to have significant investment portfolios."

Topic Three: A Controversial Trump EPA nominee

Identical pieces appeared in the [Bucks County Courier Times](#) and Doylestown Intelligencer (which are owned by the same parent company) on the nomination of Michael Dourson to head the chemical safety office of the Environmental Protection Agency. It would only take three Republican NO votes to quash this nomination. Two Senators (Richard Burr and Thom Tillis, both of North Carolina) had already indicated they would not support Mr. Dourson. And official statement from our Senator's office reads, "Senator Toomey and his staff are reviewing materials provided by the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee regarding Mr. Dourson's nomination." At issue is the nominee's involvement in the water contamination issue resulting from firefighting foams used on military bases, a problem that still affects a number of Pennsylvania communities. The Senator's statement about Mr. Dourson added, "Senator Toomey remains concerned about the PFOA issue in Bucks County and Montgomery County and remains dedicated to addressing it."

One-off reporting:

On Russian election meddling - [NBC News](#) reported that the Senator called Vladimir Putin "a dangerous man and a thug." He said he thought that Russia had not been punished adequately for interfering in the 2016 election, adding "I think we have to raise the cost to Putin for the outrageous behavior he's committed."

On Military reporting of Criminal Records - The [Reading Eagle](#) noted that Senator Toomey and Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) worked together to send a letter to Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Elaine Duke asking them to review procedures for reporting of crimes by military personnel to ensure they made it into national databases. The pair referred to the recent Texas church shooting and wrote, "this incident raises the question of whether there are other gaps in the military's criminal records reporting procedures."

Note - I could not find any coverage of the Sen. Franken harassment allegations that included any commentary from Senator Toomey.

Learning about Legislation - Glossary - "Conference"

This week the House of Representatives passed H.R. 1, what has been commonly referred to as "the GOP tax plan." While the House was debating their bill, the Senate announced that they had been working on a tax plan too, and their version contained considerable differences. For example, the House

version of the bill contains a section changes the current deduction for state and local property taxes (SALT), capping that deduction at \$10,000. In what we know of the Senate version that is under debate, the SALT deduction will be eliminated entirely. We also know that the Senate has introduced a provision that would eliminate the "Obamacare" individual mandate that people carry health insurance, whereas that topic is not addressed in the version of H.R. 1 that passed the House. So what happens? If the Senate passes a different version of H.R. 1, the bill will go to conference.

[LexisNexis](#) defines conference as a process where "the leadership in both Chambers appoints conferees to meet in conference. Conferees usually come from the Chamber's committee with jurisdiction over the original bill, although someone who successfully offered a major amendment to the bill also might be appointed a conferee. The conferees negotiate a resolution of the differences in the two versions of the bill, producing a compromise version that must be accepted without change by both Chambers before it can be sent to the President."

That means that House Speaker Paul Ryan, members of the House Ways and Means committee including Chairperson Rodney Frelinghuysen (R-NJ), Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, members of the Senate Budget committee including Chairwoman Sen. Diane Black (R-TX), members of the Senate Finance Committee including Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and possibly Sen. Rob Portman (R-OH) will gather to hash out the differences between the two version. It is also possible that Senators Bob Corker (R-TN) and our own Pat Toomey (R-PA) might be included, as they each represent the two major Republican schools of thought in the finance committee - the deficit hawks and the corporatists. As their negotiations led to the agreement that paved the way for the \$1.5 trillion in cuts to safety net programs, they might be invited to the conference table. Once the Houses come to an agreement, they would return to amended and agreed-to version to the floor of both Houses, and vote on that version before it would go to the President to be signed and enacted. For us, that means there is still time - should we be opposed to the provisions of this proposed tax plan - to protest this bill.

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 -

H.Res. 621: Impeaching Donald J. Trump, President of the United States, of high crimes and misdemeanors

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hres621/text>

This bill was introduced by Rep. Steve Cohen (D-TN), who you may remember from earlier this year, when he introduced the first censure resolution on the President, which included all of his conflicts of interests and ethics violations. The bill currently has 5 co-sponsors, all Democrats. It is pending in the House Judiciary committee, but Rep. Fitzpatrick is not a member of that group. The text of this Bill of Impeachment outlines a case for obstruction of justice, violations of the emoluments clause (both foreign and domestic), and abuse of power. The text of this bill is definitely worth a read - it is interesting to see the claims against the President for which there is incontrovertible proof even in the absence of the results of the Congressional and Mueller investigations. Since we all know that impeachment is a political process, as opposed to a judicial proceeding, it does not have any chance of moving forward in the Republican controlled House, but its mere entry into the Congressional record is a significant step.

H.R. 4396: To amend the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 to reform the procedures provided under such Act for the investigation and resolution of allegations that employing offices of the legislative branch have violated the rights and protections provided to their employees under such Act, including protections against sexual harassment, to require the updating of programs of sexual harassment prevention and response training in employment, to institute biennial employment discrimination climate surveys

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr4396>

This House bill is a companion to Sen. Gillibrand's legislation. It was introduced on 11/15/17 by Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA), and it has bipartisan co-sponsors (3D, 2R) including Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick. It is pending in the House Administration committee. Right now the process for bringing forward a complaint of harassment is deeply flawed, and weighted towards the side of the accused. [Politico explains](#), "Current rules require victims to submit to mediation and counseling before filing a complaint, a process that can stretch on for months while they remain at work with the alleged perpetrator of harassing behavior. Gillibrand is working on her own proposal set for release this week, with Rep. Jackie Speier (D-Calif.) taking the lead in the House, to streamline what harassment victims say is a stressful and difficult system for handling complaints on the Hill." If you support changes to this process that make it less onerous for the victims of harassment and less protective of offenders, please call Rep. Fitzpatrick and thank him for cosponsoring this measure.

H.R. 4434: To enforce current law regarding the National Instant Criminal Background Check System

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr4434/details>

S. 2135: A bill to enforce current law regarding the National Instant Criminal Background Check System

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s2135/details>

This pair of identical bills was introduced by a bipartisan group of legislators (Sen. John Cornyn, R-TX; Sen. Chris Murphy, D-CT; Rep. Henry Cuellar, D-TX; Rep. John Culberson, R-TX; Rep. Elizabeth Etsy, D-CT). The Senate version has 12 other cosponsors (6D, 6R, including Senator Toomey), and the House version has 2 other co-sponsors (1D, 1R). This is the most significant bipartisan piece of gun control legislation to be introduced since the failed Toomey-Manchin bill of 2013. It aims to plug the holes in the national background check system. If gun control is a motivating issue for you, you may want to thank Senator Toomey for co-sponsoring this bill, and call Rep. Fitzpatrick to ask him to cosponsor it.

S. 2159: A bill to require covered harassment and covered discrimination awareness and prevention training for Members, officers, employees, interns, fellows, and detailees of Congress within 30 days of employment and annually thereafter, to require a biennial climate survey of Congress, to amend the enforcement process under the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights for covered harassment and covered discrimination complaints

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s2159>

This bill is a companion of Rep. Speier's House legislation. It was introduced on 11/16/17 by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), and it has 3 co-sponsors, all female Democrats. It is pending in the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs committee, but neither PA Senator is a member of that group. This would mandate regular harassment and discrimination training (and regular re-training) for pretty much everyone in DC, elected officials and staff alike. The text of this bill is not available online yet, but Senator Gillibrand has been discussing it extensively. As reported in [The Hill](#), the Senator has said, "we must ensure that this institution handles complaints to create an environment where staffers can come forward if something happens to them without having to fear that it will ruin their careers." If this is a measure that you support, please contact both of our Senators to let them know this.

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!