

Week ending 01/07/18 - PA-08 MoCTrack Report

Happy New Year! Welcome back! Congress is back in session. Below you will find the latest on what our Members of Congress have been up to - new legislation, recent votes, tweets, media coverage, and all of the action that impacts their constituents.

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%** (-1.0% from last report)

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick - **81.4%** (+1.0% from last report)

Senator Pat Toomey - **90.7%** (+0.3% from last report)

Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight website assesses the voting records of our MoCs to provide this index assessment. All of the votes scored were from before the holiday recess: one House vote on the conference committee's version of the tax plan, House and Senate votes on the final tax plan, and House and Senate votes on the short term government funding bill.

Votes of Interest

H.R. 1: An Act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to titles II and V of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2018

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr1/summary>

This is the GOP Tax plan. I realize that this probably feels like ancient history at this point, but let's recap the action that took place between the last MoCTrack report, when both Houses agreed to send the bill to conference, and this one.

On 12/19/17 the conference version of the bill was brought to the floor of the House. This is the second time the House voted on the GOP tax plan. It passed the House in a [227-203 vote](#) - **Fitzpatrick voted YES**.

The Conference version of the bill then went to the Senate on 12/20/17. At this point the [Senate Parliamentarian](#) mandated that several changes must be made if the bill were to meet the standards for passing under Reconciliation rules, which allows it to pass with a simple filibuster-proof majority instead of a [supermajority](#). First, she mandated that they must change the name of the bill, which had been "the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act." [The Hill](#) explained the other two changes, noting that of the provisions that needed to be removed "...one would allow 529 college savings plans to be expanded to be used for home-schooling expenses. The other offending provision was part of the criteria used to determine what colleges qualify for a new excise tax." The Senate then voted on the bill as changed by the Parliamentarian, and it passed with a vote of [51-48](#). **Casey voted NO** and **Toomey voted YES**.

Later on 12/20/17 the version of the bill as amended by the Senate Parliamentarian returned to the House for a third and final vote. It passed in a [224-201 vote](#), and **Fitzpatrick voted YES** for a third time.

President Trump signed it into law two days later, on 12/22/17. That delay between passage and enactment was caused by the negotiations around the other major item that was passed in the week before the holiday recess....

H.R. 1370: Continuing Appropriations Act, Department of Defense Missile Defeat and Defense Enhancements Appropriations Act, CHIP and Public Health Funding Extension Act, 2018

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr1370>

This is a short term spending bill (or Continuing Resolution, which you can learn more about in the Learning About Legislation section of this week's report) that was passed to avert a government shutdown over the holidays and to address several other looming year-end deadlines. In the past we have discussed a tricky bit of legislative business where Congress takes a bill that has already passed and then adds all sorts of changes to the bill so that it can be used as 'a vehicle' for an entirely different topic. We last discussed this when a bill about bankruptcy judges was hijacked to include a bunch of

disaster spending. That same legislative technique was used again here, when a bill originally about training programs at the Department of Homeland Security was suddenly converted into a bill about funding the government and several other issues.

Issues included in the newly reframed legislation are:

- Suspension of PAYGO rules that would have caused mandatory cuts to social safety net programs like Medicare when the GOP Tax Plan (HR 1) goes into effect for 2018, needed because of the amount that bill will add to the deficit
- Funding for the Childhood Health Insurance Program (CHIP) through March 2018
- Funding for the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014
- Funding to keep the government open at current spending levels (also known as a continuing resolution) through 01/19/18
- Reauthorization of portions of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act

The original version of this bill (back when it was simply about Homeland Security training) passed the House in May, and then passed the Senate in a changed form in November, both times by voice vote - but the House had yet to re-pass that changed version. Instead, the Rules Committee in the House met on 12/21/17 and updated the text to contain all of the new continuing resolution content. That went to the floor of the House and passed in a [231-188 vote](#) and **Fitzpatrick voted YES**. It then went to the Senate for a vote 2 hours later, where it passed in a [66-32 vote](#). **Casey voted NO** and **Toomey voted YES**. The bill then went to the President. He signed this into law BEFORE he signed the GOP Tax Bill, thus ensuring that the PAYGO rules were suspended before he signed the deficit-increasing tax plan into law.

For those interested, Senator Casey explained his NO vote on this continuing resolution via Twitter: "It's outrageous that Republicans in Congress are rushing to go home for Christmas instead of fully reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program and addressing other vital priorities. Rs who run Congress had all the time in the world to cut taxes for the super-rich and big corporations & now are urgently skipping town before families who rely on CHIP have peace of mind in knowing that their kids' health care will continue beyond a matter of weeks. Instead of passing a bill, which stiffs kids, our law enforcement officers and fails to protect the Dreamers, members of Congress should stay in town and address these issues."

MoC Twitter Action

Senator Bob Casey hot topics: Senator Casey continued to push for CHIP funding via his Twitter account. He also criticized President Trump for his incendiary tweets regarding North Korea. He shared a report from the Aging Committee on how 'the myth of widespread voter fraud & suppressive state laws disenfranchise seniors & people w/disabilities.' And he shared several pictures and tweets from the 102nd Pennsylvania Farm Show.

Casey tweet of the week, 01/03/17: "The Administration's 'commission on election integrity' was always a scheme to suppress certain groups of Americans from exercising their right to vote. Good riddance" (with link to AP article titled "White House blames disbanding of controversial election fraud commission on states' refusal to provide voter information")

Representative Fitzpatrick hot topics: The Representative has only tweeted once since Christmas, a retweet of an article from the Bristol Times about the October passage of the INTERDICT Act that he sponsored.

Fitzpatrick tweet of the week, 01/02/18: "@TheBristolTimes - 'As communities across my district & across our nation continue to deal with the crisis of opioid abuse and addiction, it's hard to imagine a synthetic drug up to 50 times stronger than heroin' - @RepBrianFitz"

Senator Pat Toomey hot topics: Senator Toomey responded to the announcement of the retirement of Senator Orrin Hatch with kind words about his colleague. He continues to push the GOP tax plan, following Senate Majority Leader McConnell's initiative to improve the public image of the bill in advance of the 2018 election.

Toomey tweet of the week, 01/05/18: "It's been just two weeks since @POTUS signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act and already over one million Americans will have more money in their pocket because of #TaxReform. See the link above." (with link to an Americans for Tax Reform press release)

Honorable mention, lawmaker

From @TeamPelosi, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, 01/05/18: "They're not the only ones. #GOPTaxScam" (shared with an [article](#) - Comcast fired 500 despite claiming tax cut would create thousands of jobs - As Comcast pushed for tax cut, fired employees had to sign NDAs to get severance)

Honorable mention, journalist

From @JoeNBC, Joe Scarborough, 01/05/18: "Institutions that have held up so far against Trump's autocratic impulses may soon face more sustained and dangerous attacks than at anytime this past year. Trump and his sycophants are moving into panic mode."

Honorable mention, PARODY account

From @LynBrianFitz, 12/27/17: "So all those puppet republicans who vote straight party line for things like massive tax cuts for super rich people are in trouble LOL haha, oh wait, I voted for that 3 Times? #2018." (with link to article from The Hill titled "NEW POLL: Dems leads GOP by nearly 10 points on generic 2018 ballot ")

A very busy January - CHIP, DACA and a looming government shutdown

Right before the Congress left Washington for the holidays they passed a bill that would fund the government through 01/19/18. While the Republicans may control both houses of Congress, they usually need some level of Democratic support to pass these funding bills, because members of the Republican Freedom Caucus often withhold support for funding (or raising the debt ceiling) in their push for a smaller government. The price that most Democrats are citing as the cost for their vote would be a long term authorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP, which expires in March) and a long term solution for the Dreamers, as their future in this country is endangered after President Trump announced the end of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) program, also set for March.

For those of you who would like to read a great analysis of the potential political fallout of a government shutdown, please read this [Time](#) article. If you don't have time, here's the takeaway:

...anyone sitting in the Oval Office during a government shutdown tends to fare poorly when their party faces voters next during national elections, especially when they are midterms, according to a TIME analysis of the 18 government shutdowns that have taken place since modern budgeting rules went in place. In fact, a government shutdown heading into a midterm election makes the losses facing the party in power twice as deep in the House — a harrowing threat for the current GOP majority that already appears to be in peril this fall.

The logic of that aside, President Trump has tweeted that the government needed "a good shutdown" - whatever that means. [Politico](#) reported on the President's demands for reauthorizing DACA, which include, "\$18 billion of funding for a "border wall system" over a decade...\$5.7 billion over a five-year period for new technology to secure the border, such as drones and sensors; \$1.025 billion over five years for improving and building new roads; and \$8.5 billion over seven years for additional security personnel." In response to this, Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL), a leader in the negotiations to protect the Dreamers, replied "President Trump has said he may need a good government shutdown to get his wall. With this demand, he seems to be heading in that direction. It's outrageous that the White House would undercut months of bipartisan efforts by again trying to put its entire wish list of hardline anti-immigrant bills — plus an additional \$18 billion in wall funding — on the backs of these young people." With that tone to the negotiations, the ten days are sure to be volatile.

Casey in the News

Topic One: Department of Justice change in Cannabis policy

On 01/04/18 the Justice Department announced that they would no longer follow an Obama-era policy of non-interference regarding marijuana in states that had voted for legalization of either medical or

recreational usage. [Business Insider](#) reported on Senator Casey's reaction, "Pennsylvania's Democratic U.S. Senator, Bob Casey, said many children were among those in the state being prescribed medical marijuana for serious illnesses, adding the Justice Department's announcement caused 'serious concerns.'" The [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#) carried an additional comment from the Senator, who opined, "Bureaucrats in Washington should not interfere with the medical care these patients are receiving."

Topic Two: Response to President Trump's North Korea Twitter provocation

[Spokane National Public Radio](#) carried audio and a transcript of a discussion by foreign policy experts on North Korea and President Trump's response to the issue. Ari Shapiro, the host, was quoted describing the situation, "In the last day, President Trump has tweeted about Pakistan, Israel and the Palestinians, Iran and, perhaps most provocatively, North Korea. In that tweet, he said, quote, 'North Korean leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the nuclear button is on his desk at all times. Will someone from his depleted and food-starved regime please inform him that I, too, have a nuclear button, but it is a much bigger and more powerful one than his, and my button works.' In response, Senator Bob Casey - a Democrat from Pennsylvania - tweeted (reading) this is exactly the kind of reckless behavior I was hoping we would avoid in 2018. Please, Mr. President, no more diplomacy via Twitter."

Topic Three: CHIP funding, social safety net concerns

[Philadelphia CBS 1060](#) carried audio of Senator Casey discussing the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and the delays in Congressional funding of the program. He said, "The majority party in Washington — they control the executive branch, they control the legislative branch — they had a bill sitting right in front of them, the Kids Act, because it would reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program for five years. So what did we get? Not five years, no certainty for families. But, oh, yes, corporations got their tax break. Because Republicans in Washington were obsessed with giving rich people more money and giving corporations a big tax cut, the Children's Health Insurance Program got sidelined by the special interests, got pushed to the back of the room by the powerful in Washington." He also expressed concerns about funding for other social safety net programs, "You know what their next big project is? Quote, entitlement reform, unquote."

Fitzpatrick in the News

Topic One: 2018 Election chatter

Note - it is not the intention of this report to provide complete coverage of 2018 election news. However, as it was a slow Fitzpatrick news week, and with a newly announced challenger to Rep. Fitzpatrick, it seemed acceptable to bend the rules this once..

[WITF](#), the public broadcasting group out of Central PA carried a 01/04/18 article titled "Pa. will likely be ground zero in November congressional elections." They observed, "the minority party is also targeting GOP congressmen Ryan Costello, Pat Meehan, and Brian Fitzpatrick. They represent the 6th, 7th, and 8th districts respectively--all of which are rated Republican-leaning seats, but are considered somewhat vulnerable." The [New Hope Free Press](#) carried the following announcement on 01/05/18, "Progressive activist Steve Bacher will kick off his campaign to unseat Brian Fitzpatrick... He will face Rachel Reddick and a rumored third candidate in the Democratic Primary Election being held May 15." [Doylestown Patch](#) carried a fuller biography of Mr. Bacher, noting "the 55-year-old has a 30-year career of public service in the higher education, nonprofit and government sectors. Bacher served for seven years as the first Director of Digital Marketing for Bucks County Community College, for five years as the first Executive Director of Cape May's Center for Community Arts, and four years as Managing Director of Vortex Repertory Company in Austin, Texas, which he co-founded. He also served as an Intergovernmental Relations Officer at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in Washington, D.C. during the Clinton-Gore Administration, and as a grant writer for the City of Jersey City. Bacher was a grant writer and Director of Administrative Systems for Adoption and Foster Care Services at The Children's Aid Society, and writes grants as a consultant for Camp No Limits." [WHYY](#) carried a detailed piece on the upcoming race by Dave Davies, titled "Democrats rise to take on Republican Rep. Fitzpatrick in Bucks County". In that piece it was noted that joining Rachel Reddick was a newly announced Democratic candidate for the PA-08 seat, Steve Bacher, a "co-founder of two environmental organizations: The Bucks County chapter of 350.org, which advocates for 100 percent renewable energy, and Bucks Environmental Action Group, a coalition which battles against fracking and pipeline construction." It also indicates that a

third Democratic candidate may be announcing soon, “Scott Wallace is a wealthy progressive with a pedigree dating back to the New Deal. His grandfather, Henry Wallace served as vice president under Franklin Delano Roosevelt and ran an independent candidacy for president in 1948 under the banner of the Progressive Party.” The WHYY piece noted, “Through a spokesman, Fitzpatrick declined comment on the Democratic field.”

Topic Two: Dog and puppy protection legislation

Rep. Fitzpatrick and Rep. Charlie Crist (D-FL) joined forces this week to introduce a pair of bills to enhance animal protections. [Florida Politics](#) describes them, “the Puppy Protection Act, which creates stronger standards for veterinary care, housing, breeding practices, and specific standards for socialization and placement of retired breeding dogs...[and] the WOOF! Act, which would prohibit the USDA from issuing commercial breeding licenses to individuals or shell companies directly connected to dealers of dogs who have had their licenses suspended or revoked.” The article then goes on to quote Representative Fitzpatrick, who said, “It’s crucial we stand up for animals — both as individuals and as a society. That means strengthening important regulations under the Animal Welfare Act to meet this goal. As a member of the Congressional Animal Protection Caucus, I’m committed to ensuring our government is doing its part to promote animal welfare.” The piece then quoted ASPCA president and CEO Matt Bershadker, who observed, “The bills introduced by Representatives Fitzpatrick and Crist would significantly improve the lives of hundreds of thousands of dogs kept in inhumane conditions by federally licensed commercial breeders.”

Topic Three: GOP Tax Plan

Rep. Fitzpatrick was a guest on [WPNV 1440 AM](#) on 01/05/18 and he spoke about the GOP Tax Plan. He told them “I am extremely, extremely confident that the economy going to continuously respond positively. We were growing it less than two percent for a very long period of time. The 1st two quarters and I believe the results will show the 3rd quarter that not only have we exceeded two percent, we will have exceeded three percent in all three quarters. Some can argue that’s a coincidence, I would argue that the markets expected us to do everything we said we were going to do.”

Toomey in the News

Topic One: Implications of the retirement of Senator Orrin Hatch

On 01/02/18 83 year-old Utah Republican Senator Orrin Hatch announced that he would not run for re-election this year. Hatch is currently the Chairman of the influential Senate Finance Committee. The industry journal [American Banker](#) spun out the potential shifts in leadership that would come with Hatch’s departure. They observed that the current head of the Senate Banking Committee, Idaho Senator Mike Crapo, might want to trade up to head Finance. Senator Pat Toomey is a member of both those committees, and the journal observed, “If Crapo gives up the Banking Committee gavel next year and the GOP holds the Senate in midterm elections, Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., would stand in line potentially to become chairman of the banking panel. Sens. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., and Bob Corker, R-Tenn., have both served on the banking panel longer than Toomey, but Shelby — a past chairman — is termed out and Corker announced earlier this year that he also plans to step down from the Senate.” The piece further assessed our Senator’s positions on issues affecting the banking world, noting “Toomey has supported rolling back parts of the Dodd-Frank Act in the past, including eliminating Title II, which established the ‘orderly liquidation authority’ allowing regulators to unwind a failed megabank in a manner meant to avoid a systemic collapse. Toomey has introduced legislation that would replace the current resolution with a specialized bankruptcy process to handle the failure of a large bank.” An Iowa paper, the [Daily Nonpareil](#), conjectured that their own Senator Chuck Grassley could end up chairing Finance if he gave up the chairmanship of the Judiciary Committee. But they also observed, “If Grassley stayed put, the Finance gavel would probably fall to the next in line behind him: Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho... [and] A move by Crapo would probably leave the Banking gavel in the hands of Sen. Pat Toomey, R-Pa., the second-ranking Republican on the committee. That would be welcome news for some business interests on Wall Street and beyond, and the possibility had K Street buzzing Tuesday.”

Topic Two: Department of Justice change in Cannabis policy

On 01/04/18 the Justice Department announced that they would no longer follow an Obama-era policy of

non-interference regarding marijuana in states that had voted for legalization of either medical or recreational usage. The [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) reported “a spokeswoman for Sen. Pat Toomey (R., Pa.) said that his staff was reviewing the legal implications but that the senator ‘continues to believe that the federal government should help facilitate research into marijuana for legitimate medical purposes.’”

Topic Three: Toomey visits Hatboro manufacturing plant

On 01/05/18 Senator Toomey visited the M&S Precision Grinding Inc. on County Line Road in Hatboro. At the event, he spoke out in support of the GOP’s Tax Plan. The [Bucks County Courier Times](#) reports that the Senator said, “Some of our opponents decided to mischaracterize the bill, and some of those were outrageously inaccurate. Over 90 percent of all people in this state are getting a tax cut. People are going to see their withholdings have gone down and take home pay has gone up. That’s going to start to happen in late February and March.” [WFMZ 69](#) from Allentown also reported on this visit. They carried video of Toomey during the event. They included comments the Senator made about potential spending cuts. He observed, “Going forward, it is not possible to put us on a sustainable fiscal path unless we get the growth in federal spending down to a manageable amount...That’s the hardest thing in Washington to do is to get politicians to agree to cut spending. So, I don’t know what the prognosis looks like for that.”

Learning about Legislation - Continuing Resolution

The [Senate website](#) defines a continuing resolution (or CR) as legislation “to provide budget authority for Federal agencies and programs to continue in operation until the regular appropriations acts are enacted.” That is a fancy way of saying that both houses of Congress cannot agree on a future budget plan, but they both agree that they do not want to government to shut down. An [archived version of the Obama White House website](#) explains, “In 2013, the government shut down for 16 days – forcing employees to be furloughed, national parks to close, childcare and other services for military families to shutter, and loans to small businesses to stall. In fact, the last government shutdown cost our government billions of dollars in lost productivity and revenue.” Thus, to avoid such an event, Congress passes a resolution that continues government spending at its existing levels for a designated period of time.

Back in September President Trump surprised a lot of people by facilitating a three month CR with the cooperation of House Minority Leader Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Schumer. Then, in early December the Congress passed a two week CR. However, they were unable to come to any funding agreement right before the holiday because the leadership of both houses were occupied by passing the GOP tax plan. Thus, right before the holiday recess that Congress passed a short term CR that will expire on 01/19/18.

Legislation of Interest

S. 2259: Access to Birth Control Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s2259/text>

This bill was introduced by Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) and it has 19 co-sponsors (18D, 1I). It is pending in the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, where Senator Casey is a member. This bill would ensure that all pharmacies are obligated to provide FDA approved birth control to women. It specifically notes that pharmacies must not “interfere with or obstruct the delivery of services relating to a request for contraception or a medication related to contraception” and that “employees do not intentionally misrepresent or deceive customers about the availability of contraception.” It goes on to provide for fining pharmacists or facility-owners that are not in compliance with the obligations set out in the bill. If unconstrained access to birth control and issues related to women’s reproductive freedom are a concern to you, you may wish to contact Senator Casey’s office to request that he co-sponsor this legislation and agree to assisting it move through his committee.

S. 2261: Secure Elections Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s2261/text>

This bill was introduced by Sen. James Lankford (R-OK) and it has 5 bipartisan cosponsors (3D, 2R). It is currently pending in the Senate Rules and Administration Committee, where Pennsylvania does not have

any members. GovTrack observes that this bill would “eliminate paperless voting machines, which experts say are the most vulnerable to hacking and tampering. It would also expand the use of post-election audits, which are currently rare and usually only used in event of a recount.” Many states are already moving away from paperless voting machines, but some states that are cash-strapped might have issues doing so. This bill would provide grants through the Department of Homeland Security to hasten the process of replacing paperless voting machines. Upon introducing this bill, Senator Lankford observed, “Safe and free elections run by individual states are at the core of our national identity. We were born as a nation because patriots stood up against foreign tyranny. It is imperative that we strengthen our election systems and give the states the tools they need to protect themselves and the integrity of voters against the possibility of foreign interference. In this new digital age, we should ensure the states have the resources they need to protect our election infrastructure.” Despite neither PA Senator having a presence in the committee where this is under consideration, the bipartisan sponsorship of this bill means that it has a better than average chance of forward motion, especially since the ranking member of the committee is a cosponsor. If this is an issue that motivates you, please consider contacting both of our Senators to express your support for its aims, and request that they consider cosponsorship.

S.J.Res. 51: A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States relative to limiting the number of terms that a Member of Congress may serve

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/sjres51/text>

This joint resolution was introduced by Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA) and it does not yet have any cosponsors. It is pending in the Senate Judiciary Committee, but neither Senators Casey nor Toomey are members there. This is a proposal for a Constitutional Amendment that would limit Representatives in the House to 9 two-year terms and Senators to 3 six-year terms. This may be of interest to Pennsylvania voters, as Sen. Pat Toomey is a believer in [term limits](#), as is Rep. [Brian Fitzpatrick](#) who introduced his own legislation related to term limits when he started his term. It will be interesting to see if these legislators stand with this new effort to pass term limits, or if they are only making politically expedient statements when they pledge to support this issue, but not others’ legislation to that effect.

Updates on legislation related to #MeToo

Back in December [H.R. 4396: ME TOO Congress Act](#) was introduced - it would require annual training related to harassment, eliminate the ‘mandatory mediation’ process, and give interns the same protections as full time staff. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick was an early cosponsor of this bill. In the weeks since then, three additional bills have been introduced in the House to deal with other specific issues relating to the swelling harassment concerns. Representative Fitzpatrick has not cosponsored any of these new bills. If you are motivated or impacted by this movement, you may wish to contact your representative about this trio of bills.

H.R. 4705: Me Too Congressional Ethics Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr4705/text>

This bill was introduced by Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL) and it has 2 Democratic cosponsors, both women. It is pending in the House Rules and House Administration Committees, but Rep. Fitzpatrick is not a member of either group. This bill would amend the 1995 Congressional Accountability Act to ensure that any decision related to an allegation of harassment would be automatically referred to the House Ethics Committees. It mandates that the Ethics Committee perform its own investigation, and also makes provisions for the anonymity of the accuser.

H.R. 4729: Ending Secrecy About Workplace Sexual Harassment Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr4729/text>

This bill was introduced by Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) and it has 12 cosponsors, all Democrats, with 7 men and 5 women. This bill would require “annual reporting by employers of the number of settlements with employees regarding claims of discrimination on the basis of sex, including verbal and physical sexual harassment.” This reporting would be made to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). It also protects employees against retaliation should they inquire about their company’s compliance with this regulation. It protects confidentiality of the victim, but does not permit that confidentiality to keep the company from reporting the incident. The bill also instructs the EEOC to make

an annual report to Congress on the collected information, and the Government Accountability Office to “conduct a comprehensive study of discrimination on the basis of sex, including verbal and physical sexual harassment involving Federal employees” and create recommendations to improve “employer accountability and transparency.”

H.R. 4734: Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Harassment Act of 2017

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr4734/text>

This bill was introduced by Rep. Cheri Bustos (D-IL), and it has 3 cosponsors (2R, 1D), all women. It is pending in the House Judiciary Committee, but Rep. Fitzpatrick is not a member of that group. This bill would prohibit employers - not just Congress, but around the country - from forcing employees into arbitration in cases of sexual harassment. It states “no predispute arbitration agreement shall be valid or enforceable if it requires arbitration of a sex discrimination dispute,” so that means it would cancel out any existing rules that any employer might have about this topic.

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 the Lower Bucks Indivisible 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, 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!