

Week ending 01/14/18 - 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 — **28.1%** (-0.5% from last report)

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick — **82.0%** (+0.6% from last report)

Senator Pat Toomey — **90.9%** (+0.2% from last report)

Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight website assesses the voting records of our MoCs to provide this index assessment. Two votes were scored this week, both relating to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA).

Votes of Interest

S. 139: FISA Amendments Reauthorization Act of 2017

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s139>

FISA stands for Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. These rules allow our intelligence agencies to collect information from foreign sources, but also permit them to collect (without warrants) and keep some information on Americans as well. This program is highly controversial, and the support breakdown does not fall along party lines. If you would like to read a quick explainer on the program, [CNN Politics](#) compiled one this week. Before the bill came to a vote, Rep. Justin Amash (R-MI) offered an amendment that would replace the entire text of the FISA Reauthorization with the text of the USA Rights bill, a bipartisan effort to reform the "secretive warrantless spy program" (as the authors describe it). The Amash amendment failed in a 183-233 vote, and **Fitzpatrick voted NO**. The unamended FISA reauthorization itself then came to the table. It was reauthorized by a vote of 256-164 on 01/11/18. **Fitzpatrick voted YES** to reauthorize the bill. This bill now moves on to the Senate. They have already voted to proceed on it, and a final vote is expected on 01/16/18.

To illustrate the point that this subject did not break down party lines, 125 Democrats and 58 Republicans voted YES on the Amash amendment, and 55 Democrats and 178 Republicans voted NO. When it came to reauthorizing the bill itself, 65 Democrats and 191 Republicans voted YES, while 119 Democrats and 45 Republicans voted NO.

Other votes

The Senate voted on several judicial confirmations this week, but none of them were controversial.

- Walter David Counts III was confirmed as a United States District Judge for the Western District of Texas in a [96-0 vote](#).
- Michael Lawrence Brown was confirmed as a United States District Judge for the Northern District of Georgia in a [92-0 vote](#).
- Thomas Lee Robinson Parker was confirmed as a United States District Judge for the Western District of Tennessee in a [98-0 vote](#).

This was a rare week of unanimity (at least on judicial confirmations) in the Senate.

MoC Twitter Action

Senator Bob Casey hot topics: The Senator was back in stride, with several juicy tweetstorms and a lot of interesting links. Early in the week he went on a tear about the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). He shared how much money the six biggest banks in America stand to gain this year from the GOP Tax Bill, noting that those tax breaks would pay for CHIP reauthorization 16 times over. He voiced his support for addressing the opioid epidemic, and pushed for passage of his bill to provide \$45 billion in funding to programs to help solve the problem. Casey also stonewalled three Health and Human Services nominees in order to get information about a Trump/Freedom Caucus plan to dismantle Obamacare (for more on this, see the *Casey in the News* section below). The Senator tweeted out several articles and links about this effort.

Casey tweet of the week, 01/10/18: “The Trump Admin made a slimy deal w/ extreme Congressional Rs to sabotage the ACA. They refused to release the secret deal. Read here how I made them do it.” (Shared with a link to a [Politico article](#) titled “Trump’s secret plan to scrap Obamacare”)

Representative Fitzpatrick hot topics: Excluding local topics (congratulating an Eagle Scout and the like), the Representative spent most of his Twitter efforts on updates on his own legislation. He shared that his INTERDICT Act had been signed into law by President Trump, and his Screening & Vetting Passenger Exchange Act passed the House. He also shared news about Walmart’s tax-plan-based decision to raise wages, apparently before news came out of their shuttering 63 Sam’s Club locations, which made for a saucy comments thread from heckling constituents.

Fitzpatrick tweet of the week, 01/10/18: a retweet of “@BucksLocalNews: Bucks County Congressman spends Christmas with the troops in Afghanistan; extends thanks and unequivocal support from the homefront “ (with a link to an article from [Bucks Local News](#) with the same title as the tweet text)

Senator Pat Toomey hot topics: The Senator continues to push the PR initiative to lift the popularity of the GOP tax plan, sharing stories of companies who increased pay and bonuses to workers because of the bill. He also shared statements related to the opioid crisis and human trafficking. He clipped a video of himself at the PA farm show, holding a child next to some chained livestock.

Toomey tweet of the week, 01/09/18: “Pork-barrel spending on ‘Bridges to Nowhere’ leads taxpayers to nowhere good. Hope House GOP preserves earmark ban” share with a link to a [Politico article](#) titled “House GOP mulls lifting a ban on earmarks”)

Honorable mention, lawmaker

From @John Kasich, Ohio governor and former GOP presidential candidate, 01/12/18: “The President’s comments were absurd and deserve to be condemned. But don’t let them distract from the important issues at hand. There are 800,000 Dreamers worried if tomorrow will be their last day in America. They need our help.”

Honorable mention, journalist

From @DavidAFrench, senior writer at the National Review, 01/12/18: “Trump doesn’t deserve the benefit of the doubt. Can a conservative credibly look an immigrant from one of the “sh*thole” countries or children of immigrants and tell them that the president judges them fairly and without bias?”

Honorable mention, PARODY account

From @LynBrianFitz, 01/08/18: “I’m just trying to tell everyone about how much more independent my completely silent voice is in comparison to yours. Like seriously, you can’t be pinned to a side if you say nothing to the voters of PA-08 right? #yougotwhatyouvotedfor #idontcareaboutyou @IndivisibleBUX”

Our MoCs respond to The President’s racist, expletive-laced comments... and an update on government shutdown negotiations:

In negotiations related to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program and other immigration-related issues, the president reportedly referred to El Salvador, Haiti and African nations as “shithole countries.” In the wake of this controversy, each of our members of congress had a response.

“The President’s remarks were wrong, hateful and divisive. Unfortunately, this kind of poisonous rhetoric is part of a pattern from President Trump that dates back decades, occurred during the campaign and continues to this day. There is no place in our nation for attacks on large groups of people based on their race, religion or country of origin, especially from the President of the United States. America is better than this and President Trump should be too.” — Senator Bob Casey, 01/12/18 via Twitter

“I completely concur with my colleague, @RepMiaLove. Unacceptable.” — Representative Brian Fitzpatrick, 01/12/18 via Twitter, shared with link to a [statement](#) from Rep. Mia Love (R-UT)

"I hope the President retracts the suggestion, attributed to him yesterday, that America should not want immigrants from countries which he was accused of describing disparagingly. There are great people—many of whom would make great Americans—in every country on the face of the earth. The criterion for immigration should be the character of the individual, not the circumstances, however dire, of their native land." — Senator Pat Toomey, 01/12/18 via Twitter

Meanwhile, the DACA, TPS and immigration negotiations hang in the balance while everyone fumes over the President's vulgar, racist words. According to the hosts of the podcast "Pod Save America," a large number of House members are trying to come to a deal where the Dreamers get a path to citizenship, and the Republicans will accept increased border security in return. The president will call that "a wall," but it isn't really. However, some Democrats won't accept any deal that isn't "clean" — just focused on DACA. On the other hand, some Republicans, particularly the Freedom Caucus, won't accept any changes to immigration policy or additional government spending. This bill is not subject to reconciliations rules, so the Senate will need the full 60 votes to avoid a filibuster. That means that at least 9 Democrats in the Senate have to agree to whatever comes out of the House. To further complicate matters, the negotiation details have been sent to White House for approval, and someone there — probably Stephen Miller, the policy advisor — keeps adding poison pill changes.

No deal has been agreed to as of the writing of this report, and the government still runs out of money on 01/19/18 - this coming Friday.

Casey in the News

Topic One: Casey forces Administration to release plans on dismantling Obamacare

Dozens of local and national news outlets carried the story of Senator Casey's actions to force disclosures from the Trump Administration regarding its plans to dismantle Obamacare. [Politico](#) explains our senator's actions, noting that, "Early last year as an Obamacare repeal bill was flailing in the House, top Trump administration officials showed select House conservatives a secret road map of how they planned to gut the health law using executive authority. The March 23 document, which had not been public until now, reveals that while the effort to scrap Obamacare often looked chaotic, top officials had actually developed an elaborate plan to undermine the law — regardless of whether Congress repealed it...Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.) obtained the one-page document from the Trump administration last month after blocking three of the administration's health nominees to get it...Casey obtained the document last month after he placed a legislative hold on three HHS nominees — Robert Charrow for general counsel, Matthew Bassett for assistant secretary of legislation and Brett Giroir for assistant secretary for health. The holds effectively froze the nominations from being brought to the Senate floor for a confirmation vote. Casey said he issued the holds after months of fruitless back-and-forth between his office and HHS in an attempt to obtain the document."

The [Allentown Morning Call](#) quoted the senator on why he took this assertive action. Casey said, "from day one, the Trump administration has had a maniacal obsession to try to decimate the Affordable Care Act. It's horrific that government officials are taking steps to erect barriers to prevent people from getting coverage."

The [New York Daily News](#) reported that Casey referred to this plan as "sabotage" and said that the document he obtained, "...details how the Administration plotted secretly behind closed doors with Congressional Republicans on regulatory changes to undermine the ACA."

[The Hill](#) observed that this revelation might affect the confirmation of Alex Azar, the Trump Administration nominee for Secretary of Health and Human Services (who would replace Tom Price, who resigned after the private plane usage scandal). That piece quoted a Casey spokesperson, who said, "While Sen. Casey has not announced how he will vote on Mr. Azar, he has serious concerns that the next HHS Secretary could continue this pattern of sabotage."

Topic Two: Social Safety Net programs endangered

Senator Casey attended the PA Farm Show, where he spoke about concerns for the health of the social safety net and nutrition programs under the current administration. [WNPV 1440 AM](#) reported that the Senator said, “Those cuts will impact everyone in the state and the country, because when you cut nutrition, you not only hurt the people who are the recipients of it, some beneficiaries on the SNAP program for example, but hurt the economy of the country when you do that. It’s a great bang for the buck, When you spend a dollar on the SNAP Program you get a buck seventy back.”

Topic Three: Coastal drilling objections

An Oregon news outlet, the [News Guard](#), reported on a letter sent from several dozen senators to Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, objecting to Trump Administration plans to open up almost all coastal waters to offshore drilling and oil exploration. An excerpt from that letter reads, “This draft proposal is an ill-advised effort to circumvent public and scientific input, and we object to sacrificing public trust, community safety, and economic security for the interests of the oil industry. We urge you to abandon this effort and maintain the protections outlined in the current 2017–2022 plan.” Senator Bob Casey co-signed the letter.

Topic Four: Net Neutrality

Last month the Federal Communications Commission voted (3-2) to end net neutrality policies. In the past weeks, many lawmakers have joined onto a plan by Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA) to use the Congressional Review Act to repeal the FCC’s decision. The industry blog [Apple Insider](#) listed the lawmakers who have joined this effort. Senator Casey was included on that list this week, as was the first Republican, Sen. Susan Collins (ME).

Fitzpatrick in the News

Topic One: INTERDICT Act signed into law

The President signed Rep. Fitzpatrick’s INTERDICT Act into law this week. [WNPV 1440 AM](#) explains that, “The International Narcotics Trafficking Emergency Response by Detecting Incoming Contraband with Technology Act was crafted to stop the proliferation of illicit drugs from Mexico and China. The new law provides an allocation of 15 million dollars to Customs and Border patrol to increase the department’s equipment and personnel. The planned improvements include additional portable chemical screening devices available at ports of entry and mail and express consignment facilities, plus additional fixed chemical screening devices available in agency laboratories. The department will also have more scientists, personnel and facilities available to interpret screening test results from the field.” Our [local CBS station](#) carried some audio of Rep. Fitzpatrick explaining why border control of Fentanyl is so important to addressing the opioid epidemic. Fitzpatrick contends that “the distributors are in China and they’re the source of the precursor chemicals used to manufacture the drug, but according to the DEA, Mexico’s the primary source for the trafficking into the United States, mainly along the southwest border.” The [Bucks County Courier Times](#) quoted Rep. Fitzpatrick as saying, “In 2016, more than 42,000 Americans died from an opioid overdose, with nearly half being directly attributed to fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. Halting the proliferation of these illicit drugs from Mexico and China is a crucial step in addressing our nation’s opioid epidemic.”

Topic Two: Passenger screening bill passes the House

Two conservative blogs highlighted the passage of a House bill on passenger screening. [Homeland Preparedness News](#) notes that the legislation would direct the Department of Homeland Security “to draft best practices for using biographic traveler information and information about reservations and itineraries for counterterrorism screening.” The blog quoted our representative as saying that, “as an FBI supervisory special agent, I saw firsthand the dangers that terrorism poses to our friends, our families, and our communities, especially when traveling.” The [Ripon Advance](#) also covered the House vote on this bill, noting that it “...would provide support to certain countries, including VWP countries, to start applying the shared best practices, according to the bill’s summary. For example, DHS would have permission under the bill to assist European Union (EU) member states working to implement a 2016 EU anti-terrorism directive to use passenger name record data.” They also quoted Rep. Fitzpatrick, who said, “I also saw my colleagues in the bureau and across our nation’s security and intelligence agencies

hampered in their mission by a lack of information sharing between the United States and our allies, and when other countries abided by less stringent security and vetting protocols.”

Topic Three: FISA reauthorization

[ABC News 10](#) out of Albany, New York, reported on the then-upcoming FISA reauthorization and the efforts to amend it with the USA Rights bill (see above, in Votes of Interest, for more info). The article quotes Rep. Fitzpatrick, citing his experience as an FBI agent. He said that he did not feel reforms were needed to FISA, adding, “Section 702 is a critical tool that the intelligence community uses properly to target a non-U.S. person outside of the United States that is vital to US security.”

Topic Four: Online gambling ban efforts

Four Republican lawmakers, including Rep. Fitzpatrick, sent a letter to Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein on 12/19/17 asking that the 2011 Wire Act decision be overturned. The online gambling industry blog [Gambling Compliance](#) explains, “four Republican congressmen are asking the U.S. Department of Justice to discard its controversial 2011 memo which has led to the legalization of internet gambling in four states.” The gambling advocacy blog, [Legal US Pokersites](#), provides further context, explaining, “this move would effectively prohibit states from offering online poker and casino games while giving Congress a chance to ban online gaming.” That piece also carried a copy of the letter, which reads in part, “a decision of this import, and one which carries such law enforcement risks as this does, should only be made after a full and public debate in Congress. As such, we urge the OLC Opinion be withdrawn to stop the spread of online casinos across the country in order to give Congress the opportunity to work with your department, as well as state and local law enforcement, to establish a clear federal policy.”

Readers of MoCTrack may remember a series of articles from the past summer on this issue. One of those [pieces](#) proposed that Rep. Fitzpatrick took a strong stance on this issue because of the support of Republican mega-donor Sheldon Adelson, who has a brick-and-mortar casino near PA-08, and who stands to see positive financial impacts if online gambling were prohibited.

Topic Five: Fitzpatrick’s holiday trip to Afghanistan

[Bucks Local News](#) carried a piece about Rep. Fitzpatrick’s overseas trip during the holiday recess. A slideshow of pictures from the trip accompanies the text. The article notes that Fitzpatrick had been deployed to Iraq in 2007 as an Al-Qaeda Interrogator, and he observed, “To go back to the region a decade later as a member of Congress was really something special because I got to thank the troops for all they are doing in Afghanistan ... and extend the love and unequivocal support that the people back at home have for them.” He also added, “to have the decision-makers, the policy-makers show up and ask us questions and care about what our responses were and allow our answers to factor into the decisions that they were making on the House floor, was very impactful to us because we had a voice. I never forgot that feeling and being able to go back 10 years later to the day and be on the other side of that table and be the one posing the questions to the troops about how they are doing, what is working and what isn’t and what support they need from us, it was really a special moment... As we enter a new phase in the War on Terror, it is crucial that Congress continue to work with our military and civilian partners to keep our homeland safe and to defeat the threat of terrorism; this mission will play an important part in shaping this strategy.”

Toomey in the News

Topic One: Bill to aid victims of child pornography

Sen. Toomey is one of the bipartisan cosponsors of legislation to provide financial restitution to victims of child pornography. The bill passed out of committee this week. The [Catholic News Agency](#) explains how the bill would work: “Unlike a bill passed over two decades ago which requires restitution for victims of sexual abuse, this new bill seeks healing for recurring damages of child pornography victims, which may worsen due to the explicit material being shared on the internet... Under the bill, victims of child pornography trafficking would receive from each defendant between \$3,000 and one percent of their total losses as restitution. Victims of child pornography production could receive a single compensatory payment of \$35,000. Perpetrators would be fined up to \$17,000 for possession, \$35,000 for distribution, and \$50,000 for production crimes.” Sen. Toomey told [WFMZ Channel 69](#) that, “Sexual abuse and

exploitation of children are indefensible and heinous crimes. The Amy, Vicky, and Andy Child Pornography Victim Assistance Act gives victims improved access to restitution from the sick individuals who produce, distribute, and possess this exploitative filth.”

Topic Two: Trump’s slurs regarding immigration

[CBS 3](#) out of Philadelphia carried a compendium of local politicians’ comments on the President slur. They reported, “Sen. Pat Toomey distanced himself from the remarks, saying in a statement he hopes the president retracts the suggestion, attributed to him, that America should not want immigrants from countries which he was accused of describing disparagingly.” [WFMZ 69](#) of Allentown had much the same content, but they quoted directly from the Senator’s tweet, “I hope the President retracts the suggestion, attributed to him yesterday, that America should not want immigrants from countries which he was accused of describing disparagingly.”

Learning about Legislation - In honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Excerpts from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “[Letter from Birmingham Jail](#),” composed April 16, 1963:

“I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial ‘outside agitator’ idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds...”

“You may well ask: ‘Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, and so forth? Isn’t negotiation a better path?’ You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent-resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word ‘tension.’ I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and halftruths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood...”

“How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of Harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust...Let us consider a more concrete example of just and unjust laws. An unjust law is a code that a numerical or power majority group compels a minority group to obey but does not make binding on itself. This is difference made legal. By the same token, a just law is a code that a majority compels a minority to follow and that it is willing to follow itself. This is sameness made legal...”

I would encourage everyone to read [Letter from Birmingham Jail](#) in its entirety if they have not done so already. The segments I excerpted above seem particularly relevant as we head towards the Women’s Marches and into this election year. But the full version of the letter has a lot to say about Dr. King’s disappointment in white moderates, and as I read it, I cannot help but feel a great deal of his writing is just as applicable today when one considers how bifurcated our political realm has become. Take some time

as we celebrate the life and work of Dr. King and to review his work. This [website](#) has a lot of audio of his speeches, should you wish to listen. -KPZ

New Legislation of Interest

S. 2298: A bill to prohibit oil and gas leasing on the Outer Continental Shelf off the coast of New England

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s2298>

This bill was introduced on 01/11/18 by Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI). It has 9 co-sponsors (7D, 1I, 1R) comprised of the entire Senate delegations of Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. The bill is pending in the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, but neither PA senator is a member of that group. This bill was composed in response to the Trump Administration's announcement that all coastal waters would be open to oil exploration and drilling, followed shortly thereafter by word that Florida would be exempt from this edict. Note that the President's favorite home is in Florida and the state has a Republican governor who is running for a seat in the Senate this year.

S. 2289: A bill to create an Office of Cybersecurity at the Federal Trade Commission for supervision of data security at consumer reporting agencies, to require the promulgation of regulations establishing standards for effective cybersecurity at consumer reporting agencies, to impose penalties on credit reporting agencies for cybersecurity breaches that put sensitive consumer data at risk

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s2289>

This bill was introduced on 01/10/18 by Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and it has 1 Democrat cosponsor (Sen. Mark Warner, VA). It is pending in the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee, of which both Senators Casey and Toomey are members. There has been a growing push by several legislators to increase cybersecurity precautions across all facets of government. Sen. Warren has been particularly outspoken on this topic in the wake of the Equifax hack in 2017, which compromised a vast amount of consumer data. This legislation is an attempt to create government oversight of data protection in credit reporting agencies, and to prevent the type of cover-up that Equifax attempted last year. If this is an issue that motivates you, please contact either or both of our Senators and ask them to co-sponsor this legislation.

H.R. 4779: To protect States and individuals in States that have laws which permit the use of cannabis

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr4779/text>

This bill was introduced by Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) on 01/11/18. It has 4 co-sponsors (3D, 1R) all from states that have legalized marijuana in some form or another. Another title for this bill is the Restraining Excessive Federal Enforcement & Regulations of Cannabis Act. The bill was submitted in response to last week's announcement by the Justice Department under Attorney General Jeff Sessions that the Obama-era policy of not enforcing federal marijuana laws in states where it had been legalized would be reversed. The reversal would free federal prosecutors to pursue legal cases against marijuana providers and distributors even if the state had voted for legalization. Incidentally, in his confirmation hearings, Jeff Sessions explicitly said he would NOT take this step. This bill was composed in a way that would prohibit law enforcement from using federal funding to "detain, prosecute, sentence, or initiate civil proceedings" against any organization that was following its own state's laws regarding marijuana. It also frees financial institutions to work with the cannabis-related industry, an issue that has been a problem for new businesses because state and federal laws are in conflict. This bill is pending in three committees (House Energy and Commerce, House Financial Services, and House Judiciary), but Rep. Fitzpatrick is not a member of any of those groups. If marijuana legalization or "states' rights" are issues that motivate you, please contact Rep. Fitzpatrick to let him know that.

H.R. 4782: To provide additional disaster recovery assistance for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr4782/text>

This bill was introduced by Rep. Stacey Plaskett (D-Virgin Islands) and it has 3 Democratic co-sponsors from Florida and New York. It is pending in 9 different committees, but Rep Fitzpatrick is not a member of any of them. As its name implies, it is an attempt to get more funding to areas devastated last summer by hurricanes. But, in addition to providing funding, this bill seeks to modernize the islands' energy infrastructure of the islands as well. It provides grants for clean energy products and incentives for energy efficient homes, businesses and vehicles. This is a long, comprehensive bill, with plans for agricultural and education recovery along with economic development assistance. It is an admirable plan, and warrants much wider support than it is currently receiving.

H.R. 4789: Cutting Local Taxes by Reinstating SALT Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr4789>

This bill was introduced by Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ) and it has one Republican co-sponsor (Rep. Leonard Lance, NJ). This bill is pending in the House Ways and Means Committee, but Rep. Fitzpatrick is not a member of that group. The bill is quite simple; it strikes the paragraph from the tax code (as amended by the GOP Tax bill) about deductions for state and local taxes. It makes sense that a bipartisan group from New Jersey would address this issue, as they are among the states most severely affected by this GOP Tax Bill change in policy. Some municipalities in high-tax areas are attempting creative changes to tax rules by allowing people to pay their money into local charities (and thus get the tax benefit for such a donation) in lieu of tax payments. But a wholesale change like this bill would be more effective than piecemeal changes.

If you are interested in following all of the voting action in Congress, a number of phone apps come in handy. One of the Lower Bucks Indivisible leaders 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 Member of Congress, 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 or experience. Can you help us out? Please email KierstynPZ@gmail.com and put "MoCTrack Help" in the subject. Thanks!