

Week ending 03/04/18 - PA-08 MoCTrack Report

A note regarding the district name, since several of you have had questions about it: While the coming 2018 election will be for the Congressional seat of PA-01 (if the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's map stands), our Representative Brian Fitzpatrick will continue to represent PA-08 and the district boundaries as they were set in 2011. Thus, this report will keep its name the same until after the winner of the 2018 Congressional election takes his or her seat in January 2019 and begins to represent the new district of PA-01.

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 — **30.3%** (no change from last report)

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick — **83.6%** (no change from last report)

Senator Pat Toomey — **90.6%** (no change from last report)

Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight website assesses the voting records of our MoCs to provide this index. Congress is back from recess, but no votes were scored this week.

Words from our Founders

"One of the expedients of party to acquire influence within particular districts is to misrepresent the opinions and aims of other districts. You cannot shield yourselves too much against the jealousies and heartburnings which spring from these misrepresentations; they tend to render alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection." — from [George Washington's farewell address](#), 1796

Votes of Interest

On the Nomination PN367: Russell Vought, of Virginia, to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/115-2018/s40>

This vote was on the nomination of Russell Vought, for the second-in-command position under Mick Mulvaney at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). This confirmation comes at an interesting time. Current government funding (under a recent short-term funding deal reached only after a fight) will run out on March 23, and the OMB is always at the center of budget negotiation. [Roll Call](#) notes that Mr. Vought was a controversial nominee because of "his views on both fiscal and social issues." [The Atlantic](#) went further in its description of the objections to Mr. Vought. The authors cited an article that Mr. Vought wrote for the conservative website *The Resurgent*, where the nominee wrote, "Muslims do not simply have a deficient theology. They do not know God because they have rejected Jesus Christ his Son, and they stand condemned." Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) came out in strong opposition to Mr. Vought and said during the confirmation hearings, "In my view, the statement made by Mr. Vought is indefensible, it is hateful, it is Islamophobic, and it is an insult to over a billion Muslims throughout the world. This country, since its inception, has struggled, sometimes with great pain, to overcome discrimination of all forms... we must not go backwards." The debate in the Senate turned to whether Democrats were rejecting Mr. Vought because of his faith (as some GOP Senators contended) or whether the views the nominee expressed during the hearings demonstrated an inability to treat all peoples, even those who did not share his faith, equally under the law. Sen. Chris VanHollen (D-Conn.) observed, "No one is questioning your faith ... It's your comments that suggest a violation of the public trust in what will be a very important position."

In the end, the nominee was confirmed in a 50-49 vote on Feb. 26, 2018, with Vice President Mike Pence being brought in to break the tie (for the 9th time this session). **Casey voted NO and Toomey voted YES.**

H.R. 4296: To place requirements on operational risk capital requirements for banking organizations established by an appropriate Federal banking agency

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/115-2018/h89>

This bill was introduced in November by Rep. Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-Mo.). It relates to some of the regulations on banks that were put into place after the 2007-2008 financial crisis to prevent a future one. At that time, some financial institutions collapsed was that they were over-leveraged — that is, they did not have enough liquid assets relative to the risk they had accrued. The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act mandated “operation risk capital requirements” to prevent such collapses. When H.R. 4296 was introduced, a American Bankers Association *Banking Journal* [article](#) referred to this bill as “regulatory relief” that “would prohibit the establishment of operational risk capital requirements,” basically nullifying the portion of Dodd-Frank that would prevent financial collapse due to over-leverage positions. The Americans for Financial Reform wrote a [letter](#) opposing H.R. 4296, in which they said the proposed new law “is a transparent effort to boost big bank profits by pressuring regulators to weaken public protections. If it were passed, major Wall Street banks could increase their borrowing and reduce the private capital they hold to protect the financial system and the public against the effects of a megabank failure.” As one might expect from this anti-regulatory GOP Congress, the bill passed in a 245-169 vote on Feb. 27, 2018. **Fitzpatrick voted YES.**

MoC Twitter Action

Senator Bob Casey hot topics: The senator divided his Twitter attention this week between a wide variety of topics, including gun safety, corporate stock buybacks, the inadequacies of the health plans proposed by the Trump administration, Net Neutrality and the president’s proposed metal tariffs. On gun safety, the senator retweeted a number of articles and shared his own images from an open town hall he held with students in Cheltenham to discuss their concerns. He also commended companies like Walmart and Dick’s for their decisions to limit gun sales. On the topic of stock buybacks, the senator shares a number of articles that highlight the \$200 billion in buybacks that the GOP stock plan has enabled, and noted that the press is heavily covering the \$3 billion in employee bonuses, but not the much larger benefits accrued by corporations.

Casey tweet of the week, 02/28/18: “The big corporate buyback bonanza continues. The special interest donors are getting their payday from the GOP tax scam. After all, that was the point.”
— Shared with a [report](#) from the Senate Democratic Leadership titled “SPECIAL REPORT: THE #GOPTAXSCAM IS SETTING ALL THE WRONG RECORDS”

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick hot topics: The majority of the representative’s tweets this week concerned gun safety legislation. He retweeted a thank-you from a fellow legislator, thanking him for joining on as a co-sponsor of a bill to repeal the Dickey amendment, which prohibits the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) from using federal funds for gun violence research, and he shared photos from a meeting with a group of student who came to meet with him to discuss school and gun safety. He also retweeted a message from the House Committee on Small Business that included a photo from an event he attended, and images from his visit to the Bucks County Emergency Operations Center.

Fitzpatrick tweet of the week, 03/04/18: “Grateful for the support of my hometown paper in my push for meaningful government reform. @CourierTimes Editorial: 'Leading by example’”
— Shared with a *Bucks County Courier Times* [opinion piece](#) of the same name

Senator Pat Toomey hot topics: Sen. Toomey’s Twitter output this week centered on two topics: gun safety legislation and the president’s decision to increase tariffs on foreign steel and aluminum imports. The senator defended himself against the president’s televised accusation that he was afraid of the National Rifle Association (NRA), and espoused legislation that would keep the mentally ill and people on the terrorist watchlist from purchasing weapons. He never specifically mentioned the president’s tariff move, but instead claimed that the regulatory system was harming local metalworking industries and that deregulation would provide relief.

Toomey tweet of the week, 03/01/18: retweet of FoxNews tweet “@SenToomey: "The Manchin-Toomey legislation was strongly opposed by the @NRA. They didn't endorse me in my reelection. They haven't given me a dime since 2010. I'm the guy that's stood up to the NRA among Republicans."

— Shared with a [link](#) to a Fox News interview

Honorable mention, lawmaker

From @RonWyden, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), 03/02/18: “If Congress wants to #FollowTheMoney, the Senate Intel Committee needs to speak to Trump’s money man Michael Cohen again. It’s our job to tell the story to the American people. From @allinwithchris last night”

— Shared with a [link](#) to a clip from MSNBC’s All in with Chris Hayes

Honorable mention, journalist

From @IanBremmer, *Time* columnist, *Washington Post* contributor, 03/04/18: “For me, the most extraordinary thing about Trump is that he actually believes he’s the best President ever.

It’s a profoundly American trait. At times has served us well. At other times, well...”

Honorable mention, PARODY ACCOUNT

From @LynBrianFitz, 02/28/18: “I love Bucks County. I mean I really don’t know anything about it because I’m from California. But the chicks seem cool.”

— In response to a tweet where someone had noted how much they love the sporting goods chain store Dick’s

The evolving possibilities of gun safety legislation: Our MoCs respond

Senator Bob Casey, 02/28/18, via Twitter:

“Once again, the @HouseGOP & @SenateGOP are refusing to act to reform our gun laws. By failing to meet their basic obligation, they are making our nation less safe. Universal background checks are supported by the vast majority of Americans. If @SpeakerRyan truly believes our focus should be ‘making sure that citizens who shouldn’t get guns in the first place, don’t get those guns,’ then he should put legislation on the floor today.”

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick, 02/27/18, via his website:

“As we pray as a nation for all the victims and families devastated by the Parkland school shooting, we must not allow yet another tragedy to go unanswered. It is incumbent upon all of us to identify the root causes of this senseless violence and move to address it immediately. All options must be on the table, including comprehensive background checks, a bump stock ban, prohibiting the sale of military assault weapons and full funding for gun violence research in a comprehensive manner that could have prevented tragedies like this. This Congress can, and must, take meaningful action to put aside partisanship and work toward solutions.”

Senator Pat Toomey, made jointly with Sen. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), 02/28/18, via Toomey’s website:

“What we heard from the President today was very encouraging. His desire for a comprehensive approach to strengthening the background check system, and specifically using Manchin-Toomey as the foundation, would achieve our shared goal of keeping guns out of the hands of criminals, the dangerously mentally ill, and terrorists while respecting the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding Americans. Per the President’s instruction, Congress shouldn’t wait. We hope our colleagues will join us in cosponsoring the Manchin-Toomey bill and move quickly to keep the American people safe.”

President Trump announces steel and aluminium tariffs; our senators respond

Senator Bob Casey, 03/01/18, via his website:

“I commend the President for announcing his intent to take action to protect our steelworkers from countries, like China, that cheat on trade. I have repeatedly called on this and previous Administrations to

aggressively enforce our trade laws. For years, foreign countries have been dumping steel into our markets and costing our workers their jobs and suppressing their wages. It has taken the Administration far too long, but today's announcement of an intention to act next week is a welcome step. When countries cheat on trade, Pennsylvania workers lose. I urge the Administration to follow through and to take aggressive measures to ensure our workers can compete on a level playing field. When the playing field is level, Pennsylvania workers will outcompete any in the world."

Senator Pat Toomey, 03/01/18, via his website:

"The vast majority of the steel Americans consume is domestically produced, which is the way I prefer it. If a country is engaging in illegal trade practices, such as dumping steel or illegally subsidizing it, we should use existing tools in federal law to address these actions-and we have been doing so. That approach is reasonable and has been successful. The U.S. only imports two percent of its steel from China. Changing course from this approach by invoking national security as a means of imposing new, huge tariffs on all kinds of imported steel is a big mistake that will increase costs on American consumers, cost our country jobs, and invite retaliation from other countries."

Casey in the News

"Victims and their families shouldn't have to wait around while Congress does nothing, yet again. The students of Stoneman Douglas High School shouldn't have to wait. Activists have started a movement that should force every single member of Congress to listen with an open mind and take action so this senseless gun violence doesn't take another life."

— From a [Wilkes-Barre Times-Leader](#) article titled "Senators Toomey, Casey host call-ins on gun control"

"And all I can say to you is keep going, keep fighting, keep marching, keep mobilizing."

— Senator Casey's remarks to students, quoted in a [WHYY](#) article titled "Anxious students question Sen. Casey at Cheltenham town hall on guns"

"Your generation is leading. I don't want you to underestimate what you're doing. I know it's been a very difficult couple of weeks, not only in terms of what happened in Florida, but what is happening here in Cheltenham. Let's give your generation a hand for leading America in an important debate."

— Additional remarks made by the Senator to students, from a [Philly Voice](#) article titled "Cheltenham students urge Casey, Congress to enact stronger gun laws"

"I urge the administration to follow through and to take aggressive measures to ensure our workers can compete on a level playing field."

— The senator's comments on the president's foreign metal tariff plans, as reported in a [WTOP](#) article titled "White House: No exemptions from steel, aluminum tariffs"

Fitzpatrick in the News

Courtesy of contributor Gail Friedman

Gun Control — Rep. Fitzpatrick has been quoted in support of various types of gun control legislation during the week. [BloombergPolitics](#) quoted Fitzpatrick in a March 2 article on President Trump's televised remarks that guns should be confiscated from potentially dangerous people without a court order. House Democrats in May introduced [a bill](#) that would provide grants to states to create laws allowing family members or law enforcement officials to petition a judge to temporarily remove firearms from an individual in crisis. Fitzpatrick last week became the first Republican co-sponsor. "This is a common sense bill," Fitzpatrick said in the [BloombergPolitics](#) article.. "I'm expecting more Republicans to sign on."

Medicare — In an opinion piece in the February 26 [Bucks Local News](#), Rep. Fitzpatrick argues for the preservation of Medicare Advantage health care plans for the elderly, citing benefits that include prevention, competition, and coordination of care. "Medicare Advantage makes the right investments in seniors' wellness, which is good for them, their families, our broader communities, and our government budget. That is why I strongly oppose funding cuts to Medicare Advantage, which would negatively

impact access and use of cost-saving preventative services,” he wrote. Medicare Advantage, is but one of multiple types of Medicare coverage now available to Americans 65 and older. According to the opinion piece, 41 percent of Medicare enrollees nationwide choose Medicare Advantage. The piece makes no mention of other coverage options that involve purchasing “Medigap” supplements to basic Medicare coverage.

Workforce Education — The [Courier Times](#) reported on efforts to address the “skills gap” that results in a shortage of applicants for manufacturing and other jobs. The House Small Business Committee conducted a field hearing on February 26 at the Boilermakers’ Lodge in Bristol; Rep. Fitzpatrick and Rep. Dwight Evans (D-Philadelphia) led the hearing. Fitzpatrick said, “If left unaddressed, the skills gap could not only impact these businesses and workers, but it may also lead to significant economic spillovers throughout the state in general. Addressing this issue demands our attention now.”

Toomey in the News

“I’ve spent a lot of hours on the phone and communicating in other ways with my colleagues this week. I do think there are some members who were not supportive in the past who are reconsidering. I haven’t got anyone who said, ‘Yes, sign me up Pat.’ But there are definitely members who are reconsidering.” — From an [Allentown Morning Call](#) article titled “Pat Toomey says some Senate skeptics taking another look at background-check bill”

“Uh, it wouldn’t. Uh you know the fact is the bill that Joe Manchin and I introduced and that we still support, Chuck it’s not going to solve all the problems and we never suggested it would. And one of the challenges we face is what to do about someone who is clearly mentally deranged, but they haven’t acted out yet in a way that allows you to adjudicate them as dangerously mentally ill or they haven’t committed a crime. Clearly in this case there were all kinds of warning signs that were advertised, right? That were communicated. And nothing was done. That’s a problem.”

— Senator Toomey’s answer to the question “But there’s no part of the law that would have mandated that information make it into the background check system. How would your bill deal with that?” posed by Chuck Todd, as quoted in the [NBC News article](#) titled “Toomey admits expanded background checks wouldn’t have prevented Parkland shooter”

“I think he was referring to members of Congress generally. If there’s a Republican who has demonstrated he’s not afraid of the NRA, that would be me.”

— Senator Toomey’s remarks in response to President Trump’s comments at a Thursday meeting, as reported in a [CNN article](#) titled “Trump tells senators ‘You’re afraid of the NRA’”

Legislation of Interest: Bills related to guns since the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School massacre

Since Feb. 14, 2018, when 17 people were murdered in the tragic school shooting in Parkland, Fla., there have been 14 gun-related bills introduced in Congress. Reviewing the details of what topics are trending in each party, and how those topics change as the national conversation about gun safety legislation proceeds, is intriguing. Please keep in mind that some major issues like outlawing bump stocks, expanding background checks and “red flag” legislation (to allow family members and mental health professionals to initiate the process of legal firearm removal by law enforcement from someone who they deem a threat) already had bills pending. The bills below are listed in the order in which they were introduced. I added color to distinguish the party of the introducing legislator because I think it makes it easier to view the trend.

H.R. 5077: Assault Weapons Ban of 2018
<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr5077>

02/20/18

Introduced by Rep. Frederica Wilson (**D-Fla.**)

This bill bans the sale of semi-automatic weapons (and names several hundred specific models), restricts large-capacity ammunition feeding devices, and introduces new background checks for private sales or transfers of privately held weapons purchased before the ban.

H.R. 5087: Assault Weapons Ban of 2018

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr5087>

02/26/18

Introduced by Rep. David Cicilline (**D-R.I.**)

This is almost identical to Rep. Wilson's abovementioned bill. It has one addition, in that under this bill business owners must notify law enforcement of any attempted transfer of a prohibited firearm and this information must be entered into the national background check system. Of all the bills included here, this is the one with the widest support. It has 173 co-sponsors (all Democrats) as of 03/03/17.

H.R. 5088: No MAGA Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr5088>

02/26/18

Introduced by Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (**D-Texas**)

The "No MAGA" in this bill stands for "No More Atrocities with Guns Act." This bill would prohibit the sale of semi-automatic weapons to people under the age of 21.

H.R. 5090: Raise the Age Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr5090>

02/26/18

Introduced by Rep. Anthony Brown (**D-Md.**)

Like Rep. Jackson Lee's bill, this bill would prohibit the sale of semi-automatic weapons to people under the age of 21. It would also initiate the process of improving the FBI's public access line, through which citizens can provide tips. This bill has 22 co-sponsors — 20 Democrats and 2 Republicans — including PA-08's own Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick and PA-15's Rep. Charlie Dent (retiring).

H.R. 5103: Gun Violence Prevention and Safe Communities Act of 2018

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr5103>

02/27/18

Introduced by Rep. Danny Davis (**D-Ill.**)

This bill would dramatically increase the tax on both guns and ammunition, for both original purchases and transfers. It also increases the occupational tax on importers, manufacturers and dealers in firearms.

H.R. 5106: Investor Choice Against Gun Proliferation Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr5106>

02/27/18

Introduced by Rep. Gregory Meeks (**D-N.Y.**)

This would help people divest from financial positions that had interests in gun manufacturing and sales by changing Security and Exchange Commission Rules so that any fund that does hold such positions must disclose them to investors.

H.R. 5107: To direct the Secretary of Education to carry out a grant program to secure elementary schools and secondary schools

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr5107>

02/27/18

Introduced by Rep. Roger Williams (**R-Texas**)

This bill would increase funding for schools that want to increase the armed security presence.

H.R. 5112: To reduce, from 21 years of age to 18 years of age, the minimum age at which a person may obtain a handgun from a Federal firearms licensee

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr5112>

02/27/18

Introduced by Rep. Thomas Massie (**R-Ky.**)

As its name indicates, this would expand the rights of teenagers to access guns, but changing the rules that govern handgun sales to allow purchase by 18-year-olds.

S. 2470: A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit the purchase of certain firearms by individuals under 21 years of age

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s2470>

02/28/18

Introduced by Sen. Jeff Flake (**R-Ariz.**, retiring)

This bill would keep people under the age of 21 from purchasing semi-automatic weapons, long-guns or rifles and handguns.

S. 2475: A bill to amend title 18, United States Code, to prohibit the illegal modification of firearms

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s2475>

02/28/18

Introduced by Sen. Jeff Flake (**R-Ariz.**, retiring)

This bill would, as its name indicates, prohibit people from modifying firearms in way that would make them deadlier, and would increase penalties on those caught doing so.

S. 2486: A bill to repeal the Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990 and amendments to that Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/s2486>

03/01/18

Introduced by Sen. Rand Paul (**R-Ky.**)

This would allow for more armed people, including teachers, to be present in schools.

H.R. 5134: To amend title 18, United States Code, to combat straw purchases of firearms

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr5134>

03/01/18

Introduced by Rep. Don Bacon (**R-Neb.**)

This bill would increase penalties for professional gun middlemen who purchase guns in states with lax rules and then move or resell them elsewhere or via private sales, which have looser rules governing them.

H.R. 5135: To amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to provide for additional grants for school security, and for other purposes

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr5135>

03/01/18

Introduced by Rep. Kay Granger (**R-Texas**)

This bill would increase funding for schools that want to increase the armed security presence.

H.R. 5139: To reauthorize the grant program for school security in the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/115/hr5139>

03/01/18

Introduced by Rep. Steve Chabot (**R-Ohio**)

This bill would increase funding for schools that want to increase the armed security presence.

Reviewing the list above, it is easy to come to a few conclusions:

1. Democrats jumped in almost immediately after the massacre with bills, while Republicans gave it well over a week before introducing bills.
2. Democrats focused on solutions that would limit the sale of semi-automatic weapons, limit young people from accessing the most dangerous firearms, and place financial restrictions or disclosure related to weapons to disincentivize purchases.
3. Republicans moved towards age limits (with the outlier of Rep. Massie, who wants to end such limits), but also concentrated heavily on school security.
4. Republicans who are retiring (Dent and Flake), and those from the middle of the spectrum (Rep. Don Bacon of Nebraska, who is slightly to the left of the most conservative Democrat, per

GovTrack's Ideology score) are the ones trying to broker the GOP-introduced bills that relate to areas other than school security.

As this debate about gun safety legislation continues to evolve in the coming weeks, we will keep an eye on new legislation introduced related to firearms in this section of MoCTrack.

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- than 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 to track the action of any Member of Congress, 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 or experience. Can you help us out? Please email KierstynPZ@gmail.com and put "MoCTrack Help" in the subject. Thanks!