

Week ending 06/24/18 - PA-08 MoCTrack Report

Tracking Congress in the Age of Trump

The lower the number, the more the legislator votes in opposition to the Trump agenda.

Senator Bob Casey — **29.7%** (-0.4% from last report)

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick — **83.3%** (-0.5% from last report)

Senator Pat Toomey — **91.5%** (+0.1 from last report)

Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight website assesses the voting records of our MoCs to provide this index, by comparing any bills where President Trump has stated a position, and comparing the vote of the legislator to that opinion. The votes scored this week in the House related to addressing the opioid crisis and the Farm bill. In the Senate one vote was scored, on rescinding funds from the omnibus spending bill.

Words From Our Founders

"The Desolation, and Misery, which ministerial Vengeance had planned, and, in Contempt of every Principle of Humanity, has been so lately brought... I know not, how Sufficiently to detest. Nor can my Compassion for the general Suffering, be Conceived beyond the true Measure of my Feelings. "

— [George Washington](#), 1775, from an address to the Falmouth Committee of Safety

Votes of Interest

H.R. 4760: Securing America's Future Act of 2018

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/115-2018/h282>

In the past months, support in Congress had grown for a [discharge petition](#) to bring potential immigration solutions to the floor. As of this week, the issue had 216 supporters of the 218 votes needed to initiate [Queen of the Hill](#) proceedings that would allow the House to vote on several immigration bills; the one that received the most votes would move on to the Senate. . To avoid this procedural embarrassment to the leadership, House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-Wisc.) agreed to bring two immigration bills to the floor. One was to be a deeply conservative bill that included all of President Trump's "[four pillars](#)": a wall; legal status (but not a path to citizenship) for a severely limited number of Dreamers; an end to the diversity lottery; and an end to so-called "chain migration," also known as family reunification. The second bill was supposed to be a [compromise](#) bill, but that term should not be taken seriously. The compromise was between the moderate and Trump wings of the Republican party, with no involvement of Democrats.

This week, the House considered the deeply conservative bill, H.R. 4760, also known as "Goodlatte One." C-SPAN offers full coverage of the debate preceding the vote:

- [House Debate on Immigration](#): The U.S. House of Representatives considered Republican immigration and border security bills.
- [House Session, Part 2](#): The House defeated the Goodlatte-McCaul bill 193-231, with 41 Republicans joining all Democrats in voting against it.
- [House Session, Part 3](#): The House meets for legislative business with work possible on border security and immigration.

An interesting development during the debate concerned speeches and time allotment. Each party is given an equal amount of time to support its position, which a member assigned to the task can give out in minute-long chunks as he or she sees fit. With all Democrats lined up against the bill, they scarcely had enough time to allow every representative to get on the record opposing the legislation. Many had to talk quite rapidly to get their points in. On the other hand, the Republicans had trouble getting enough people to speak in support of the bill. The GOP speeches were made slowly in order to eat up the extra time. At one point the Democrat assigning time asked the Republican if he could have the GOP's extra time since the Republicans had so few people who wanted to speak and the Democrats had so many. That request

was, obviously, denied.

In a vote on June 21, 2018, the bill failed, 193–231. **Fitzpatrick voted NO**, as did 40 other Republicans. No Democrats voted for this bill. In the aftermath of that failure, Speaker Ryan made the decision to hold off on the vote on the so-called compromise bill' [Politico](#) reports that Ryan was "...delaying a vote on a 'compromise' immigration package until next week, as GOP leaders search for a way to get 218 votes to pass the measure. Ryan told lawmakers that leadership may add an E-Verify mandate — an online system that allows employers to confirm the eligibility of employees to work in the United States — as well as other provisions called for by rural state lawmakers to the package."

Please keep calling Rep. Fitzpatrick and letting him know your feelings on immigration-related issues. This compromise bill is no compromise at all, and it must be stopped. Consider asking him to vigorously and vocally support [H.R. 4796](#), a bipartisan bill he has already co-sponsored, or [H.R. 3440](#), a clean version of the Dream Act.

H.R. 2: Agriculture and Nutrition Act of 2018

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/115-2018/h284>

This bill is also known as the Farm Bill. It is the measure passed every five years that sets the framework for crop insurance, subsidies and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), more commonly known as food stamps. A massive piece of legislation, the bill contains \$860 billion in funding and allotments. Even the [summary](#) is 122 pages long. This bill is usually one of the last bastions of bipartisanship, and the result of months of negotiation from the Agriculture Committee. This time, however, it was introduced and passed out of committee with no Democratic input or support. The main sticking point was a [work requirement](#) for SNAP that would affect between 5 and 7 million households that currently receive the benefit. It is believed that this new provision, along with tighter eligibility requirements, would cause around 400,000 households to lose food assistance altogether. The bill was brought up for a vote back in May and failed, 198–213. No Democrats supported the original version of the Farm Bill. Its failure fell on the shoulders of the Freedom Caucus, the deeply conservative wing of the Republican party.

In the immediate aftermath of the failed vote on the Goodlatte One immigration bill, Speaker Ryan pivoted to bring up the Farm Bill again. In the weeks since the initial failure, Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) secured enough support for the H.R. 2 version of the Farm Bill to move it forward. It came up for a vote on June 21, 2018, and it passed, 213–211. **Fitzpatrick voted NO.**

It is unlikely that the bill, in its current form, will pass the Senate, which has its own [bill](#) that passed out of committee with bipartisan support. It is budget neutral and does not include the SNAP work requirements. If that bill passes the Senate, which it likely will, then the two dueling version of the Farm Bill will have to go to conference. Sen. Bob Casey, who is a member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, is a staunch supporter of a fair, bipartisan Farm Bill. Sen. Pat Toomey needs to hear from us all in force that we do NOT support any version of a Farm Bill that will strip eligibility from Americans and will increase hunger and food insecurity.

House Opioid-related legislation

In the early part of the week, the House continued its push to move legislation to address the ever-growing opioid crisis in this country. The bills that passed this week are:

- [H.R. 6082](#): Overdose Prevention and Patient Safety Act — This bill changes and improves the rules related to disclosure of medical information, particularly related to people with substance use disorder (SUD). It increases the penalties if SUD information is disclosed, and forbids discrimination based on SUD status. It passed 357–57 on June 20, 2018, and **Fitzpatrick voted YES.**
- [H.R. 5797](#): Individuals in Medicaid Deserve Care that is Appropriate and Responsible in its Execution Act — This bill changes Medicaid rules to give people with a SUD full coverage for 30 days of care at an institution for mental diseases (IMD) per year. It also includes provisions for

states to improve both access to outpatient care and transitioning from inpatient to outpatient care. The bill passed 261–155 on June 20, 2018, and **Fitzpatrick voted YES**.

- [H.R. 5796](#): Responsible Education Achieves Care and Healthy Outcomes for Users' Treatment Act of 2018 — This bill was sponsored by our own Rep. Fitzpatrick. It requires the Department of Health and Human Services to identify medical providers who are high prescribers of opioids and offer them new training on pain management that includes methods other than opioids. This measure passed the House by voice vote on June 19, 2018, so no tally was kept. **Fitzpatrick voted YES**.
- [H.R. 5687](#): SOUND Disposal and Packaging Act — This bill requires the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to create a new program for the return or destruction of unused Schedule II or III opioids. It will also encourage the use of packaging that may reduce overprescribing, diversion or abuse of opioids. In a vote on June 19, 2018, this bill passed 342–13. **Fitzpatrick voted YES**.
- [H.R. 6](#): SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act — This bill is the most expansive effort of all of the legislation in the push to address the opioid crisis. A detailed summary can be found [here](#). In brief, it makes major changes to Medicare and Medicaid to support screening, treatment, research and management programs for SUDs. It also requires other insurance to cover services provided by certified opioid treatment programs, and expands programs to support increased detection and monitoring of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. The bill passed 396–14 on June 22, 2018, and **Fitzpatrick voted YES**.

On the Motion in the Senate to Discharge H.R. 3: Spending Cuts to Expired and Unnecessary Programs Act

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/115-2018/s134>

In the [06/10/18 MoCTrack Report](#) we covered the passage of this bill through the House. We explained the concept of [rescission](#), when the government attempts to claw back — usually at the President's behest — funds that had already been assigned and passed out to programs via a prior appropriations bill. This bill, H.R. 3, was an attempt to take back \$15 billion from the \$1.3 trillion omnibus spending package passed earlier this year. It narrowly passed through the House on June 7, 2018, without Rep. Fitzpatrick's support.

Last week saw a motion to discharge that bill in the Senate. Like the discharge petition related to immigration in the House, this motion was an attempt to push the rescission bill onto the floor of the Senate without it passing through committee. It would have needed a simple majority (50+1) to pass. In a vote on June 20, 2018, the discharge failed, 48–50. **Casey voted NO** and **Toomey voted YES**. However, this effort is not dead. We still need to be concerned about this rescission effort. However, the vote does mean that the fast-tracking of the bill has been thwarted. The bill will have to go through the normal committee scheduling and voting before it comes back to the Senate floor.

H.R. 5515: National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/115-2018/s128>

This is the massive \$717 billion defense spending bill for 2019. It had previously passed the House in late May. The [Library of Congress](#) provides a brief recap of priorities in this hefty bill, including:

- (1) Procurement, including aircraft, missiles, weapons and tracked combat vehicles, ammunition, shipbuilding and conversion, and space procurement;
- (2) Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation;
- (3) Operation and Maintenance;
- (4) Working Capital Funds;
- (5) Chemical Agents and Munitions Destruction;
- (6) Drug Interdiction and Counter-Drug Activities;
- (7) the Defense Inspector General;
- (8) the Defense Health Program;
- (9) the Armed Forces Retirement Home;
- (10) Overseas Contingency Operations; and
- (11) Military Construction.

The bill passed 85–10 in a vote on June 18, 2018. **Casey votes YES** and **Toomey votes YES**.

The Senate version of the bill was named for Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.). The senator, who did not vote because he is still at home in Arizona battling brain cancer, said, “I am proud that the Senate voted overwhelmingly to pass the National Defense Authorization Act and I’m deeply humbled that my colleagues saw fit to do me the undeserved honor of designating it in my name. This legislation continues our reform agenda and helps better position the Department of Defense and the joint force to implement the National Defense Strategy by continuing to restore readiness, rebuild capacity, and modernize capabilities.” As the version passed by the Senate differed from the version of the bill passed by the House, this will now go to the House for re-approval before implementation.

Immigration/Family Separation Legislation Explainer

The [Inestimable GovTrack](#) has compiled a piece that manages to be both comprehensive and concise. It gets to the crux of each of the six bills currently under consideration in Congress to address both the family separation crisis and the attempts to change our immigration system. It is copied in full below:

Six proposals to end the separation of families immigrating illegally at the border are before Congress: Four Republican proposals, two Democratic proposals

In May, the Trump Administration began a new zero-tolerance policy that is separating families at the border when they attempt to illegally immigrate to the United States. Six proposals are now before Congress to end this practice.

The proposals take aim at ending the Administration’s actions from very different angles. That reflects the complex legal situation playing out. Although the Trump Administration has not ordered the separation of children from their families, the separation is a known, inevitable consequence of existing law that prohibits children from being detained by the Department of Homeland Security in federal prison—in this case, when their parents are detained for prosecution under the zero-tolerance policy.

Here’s a quick summary of each proposal:

- The simplest proposal is the **Keep Families Together Act** [[S. 3036](#)], which would prohibit the separation of children from their families at the border. It doesn’t specify what to do instead—that would be left up to the Administration—but some form of [Catch and Release](#) might be the only legal option available. The bill would also require information be given to parents on how to locate, and monthly updates about, their children. This is Sen. Dianne Feinstein’s proposal, and all Senate Democrats have signed on as cosponsors. For more, see our [extended summary of the Keep Families Together Act](#).
- Sen. Ted Cruz’s [R–Tex.] **Protect Kids and Parents Act** goes further. The bill would require that families be detained together. It would also speed up the judicial process by doubling the number of immigration judges available to hear cases and limit the duration of asylum review cases, and it would require that written guidance be given to asylum applicants on how to locate separated children. For more, see our [extended summary of the Protect Kids and Parents Act](#).
- The **Equal Protection of Unaccompanied Minors Act**, proposed by Rep. Mark Meadows [R–N.C.], is more complex. It would prevent the separation of families by keeping them detained together. It would also limit who could seek asylum and make other changes to immigration law. The bill has yet to be formally introduced in Congress, but draft text is available. For more, see our [extended summary of the Equal Protection of Unaccompanied Minors Act](#).
- Late Tuesday a comprehensive immigration reform bill that had long been in the works to codify a form of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which the Trump Administration ended last year, was announced by Rep. Bob Goodlatte [R–Va.], chair of the

House Judiciary Committee. The bill, the **Border Security and Immigration Reform Act of 2018**, would provide \$25 billion for a border wall, make other reforms, and contains the same provisions for keeping families together as in the Equal Protection of Unaccompanied Minors Act by Rep. Meadows. The bill has not been formally introduced but [draft text](#) is available. For more information, see [Goodlatte's press release](#). [MoCTrack EDITOR'S NOTE: This is H.R. 6136. *Politico* reported on June 22, 2018 that this bill has been delayed until at least next week, and that "Leadership may add to the package E-Verify — an online system that allows employers to confirm the eligibility of employees to work in the U.S. — and other provisions rural state lawmakers have called for."]

- The **HELP Separated Children Act** [[H.R. 5950](#); [S. 2937](#)], which was introduced nearly a month ago by Democrats, took a middle-of-the-road approach. While it wouldn't have ended the practice of separating families, the legislation would allow children to visit parents who are detained and allow parents one last goodbye to their children prior to being taken into custody. For more, see our [extended summary on the HELP Separated Children Act](#).
- The Trump Administration could also end the practice immediately, at least temporarily, by freezing its zero-tolerance policy, and [Sen. Orin Hatch has asked the President to do just that](#). [MoCTrack EDITOR'S NOTE: President Trump's recent executive order purports to solve the crisis, but did not end the zero-tolerance policy, and only allows for families to be detained together indefinitely.]

● The Trump Administration has wavered on whether separating families [is meant as a deterrent](#), but it's [clear it is being used as leverage](#) for funding a border wall, ending the Catch and Release process, and turning to merit-based immigration. The Administration has said it will not support a narrow fix for keeping families together and will only support comprehensive reform with those elements —such as the Goodlatte bill.

The Family Separation Crisis, our MoCs respond

Bob Casey, 06/20/18, via his [website](#):

"It is long overdue for President Trump to amend the most egregious element of his cruel and inhumane policy of ripping migrant children from their parents. But substituting a lesser form of cruelty for a greater form is still cruelty. Family detention is far from the only or best solution for the majority of families at the border. In addition, for thousands of children the damage is already done. Nearly 2,000 children have been subjected to what the American Academy of Pediatrics has called, 'toxic stress' and 'amounts to child abuse.' These medical experts have said that the long-term impacts of this barbaric treatment could be lifelong health problems, such as heart disease and substance abuse disorders.

"The Administration, aided by the complicity of extreme congressional Republicans, made a proactive decision to enact a policy that has harmed children, told falsehoods about the origin and scope of the policy and for days held the fate of these children hostage in order to extract policy concessions. This hellish policy was a choice and there must be a full measure of accountability for those officials who ordered it, defended it and carried it out.

"The Administration has an obligation to ensure that children whose health has been adversely impacted by this policy receive appropriate medical services. Congress must demand that the Administration take steps to reunite every child that has been separated from their parents. There are no excuses. Every child that was cruelly separated from their parents, from months-old babies to young teenagers, must be reunited with their families."

Senator Casey also released a [statement](#) on June 7, 2018, detailing the release of a letter he wrote with over a dozen other senators, imploring the Trump Administration to cease their practice of separating families. That letter said, in part, "we are writing to ask that you reverse course on your inhumane decision to separate children from their parents at the border. This policy has traumatized children who are fleeing extreme violence. Our government has a humanitarian duty to the children and families seeking asylum in the United States to end this policy immediately."

Brian Fitzpatrick, 06/18/18, via his [website](#):

"I ran for Congress to make a difference and to actually get things done. As a member of the Homeland Security Committee, I've seen firsthand the threats our nation faces from a porous border and a fragmented and broken immigration system.

"I firmly detest the heartless and inhumane practice of separating children from their parents at the border. This extreme measure must end. It is an ineffective deterrent against illegal immigration, and children should not have to face traumatic ordeals given the actions of their parents. We have waited over a year and a half for Congress to resolve the crisis on our borders. Inaction is unacceptable.

"I will continue to demand debate and a vote on legislative solutions to secure our borders, respect the rule of law, and protect the dignity and humanity of our children. The time is now to act. We cannot and must not allow partisanship and gridlock to prevent sensible fixes from being implemented. Our nation's security and our nation's children depend on us."

Pat Toomey, 06/20/18, from [website](#):

"Separating children from parents who enter the country illegally is heartbreaking and President Trump is right to stop the practice. But this problem can only be permanently fixed by a change in law. Congress must stop talking past one another and find a solution that enforces the law and keeps families together while their immigration cases are being resolved. Legislation like the bill offered by Senator Cruz is a good starting point. It ensures that migrant families can stay together and seeks to streamline the processing of asylum claims."

MoC Twitter Action

Senator Bob Casey hot topics: Almost all of the senator's Twitter output concerned the child separation crisis at the border. He tweeted more than 60 times on the topic and shared dozens of articles as well as first-hand statements from people affected by this failed and cruel policy. Casey pointedly amplified his Republican colleagues' statements when they joined him in calling for an end to the Trump Administration's traumatic treatment of children and families and ended the week with a long tweetstorm response to the president's executive order.

Casey tweets of the week, 06/21/18: "Substituting a lesser form of cruelty for a greater form is still cruelty."

— one tweet from a [larger tweetstorm](#) made by the senator in response to the president's executive order ending family separations, but continuing the zero-tolerance border policy

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick hot topics: The representative only tweeted three times this week. Two celebrated the House passage of a bill that he introduced to address the opioid epidemic. The third concerned his newly announced trip to visit a child detention center in Texas.

Fitzpatrick tweet of the week, 06/22/18: "I'm leading a bipartisan inspection of Tornillo Detention Center. While I am hopeful that the President's executive order will end the practice of separating families awaiting court proceedings, we must ensure that this order is properly carried out."

— shared with a link to his own [press release](#) about his coming trip

Senator Pat Toomey hot topics: The senator shared several tweets about the child detention and separation crisis. In one, he included the text of Sen. Marco Rubio's (R-Fla.) statement in support of detaining whole families together; another included the full text of his statement on the president's executive order. On a separate topic, he addressed news about two Pennsylvania employers, one who is threatened by ongoing tariffs and the other who just won a defense

contract. Lastly, he retweeted a *Business Insider* reporter who quoted from one of Sen. Toomey's recent media appearances.

Toomey tweets of the week, 06/20/18: "Sen. Toomey to Commerce Sec. Wilbur Ross: 'I wish we would stop invoking national security, because that's not what this is about. This is about economic nationalism and an economic policy of managing trade.'"

— a retweet, with no additional comment, of *Business Insider* reporter [Bob Bryan's tweet](#)

Honorable mention, lawmaker

From @HurdontheHill, Rep. Will Hurd (R-Tex.) on 06/18/18: "What I've seen in #Tornillo is a manifestation of a failed policy. This policy can and should be changed today."

— shared with a link to an [interview](#) the Congressman did with CNN

Honorable mention, media

From @LauraLitvan of *Bloomberg News* on 06/23/18: "Trump mocks John McCain's 'thumbs down' on the Obamacare repeal, tells Nevada Republican convention that 'it doesn't matter. We gutted it anyway.'"

— from the reporter's coverage on President Trump's [Las Vegas speech](#)

Honorable mention, constituent response

From @GarenMeguerian, Member of Way Forward PA on 06/20/18: "Weeks of silence, with your staff ignoring calls and pleas that you take a stand against a morally indefensible practice, culminating in this meek statement still pushing an inhumane practice that will result in jailing families escaping violence. #toomeywrongoneveryissue"

— tweeted in response to Senator Toomey's [statement](#) on the child separation policy

Casey in the News

"If you're coming across the border seeking asylum and you have a child with you, it's simple. That child should stay with you."

— from a video clip shared by the *Allentown Morning Call* titled "[Casey discusses immigration](#)"

"[This is] an unnecessary and cruel act that violates our American values. While this problem was created by the administration, I joined my Senate Democratic colleagues in introducing the 'Keep Families Together Act,' which would end the inhumane practice of ripping children away from their parents. Speaker Ryan and Majority Leader McConnell control what comes up on the floor of the House and Senate. It's time they stood up and scheduled a vote so we can end this insult to our nation."

— from an article in the *Sunbury Daily Item* titled "[Forced separation of migrant families spurs outrage; GOP calls for change in law](#)"

"There is one resolution for this problem, and that is for the administration to end this policy now. Today. This is not an American policy. This is a crass, cruel policy by one administration."

— from an *Ellwood City Ledger* article titled "[U.S. Sen. Bob Casey says child separation policy 'straight from the pit of hell'](#)"

"I am disturbed by what I saw on the video, and I have numerous questions about exactly what happened and why. A thorough investigation is necessary. Antwon's family has a right to answers."

— from the Johnstown *NBC* affiliate *WJAC* article titled "[Wolf, Casey call video of deadly officer-involved shooting in East Pittsburgh 'disturbing'](#)"

"Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are among the greatest public health challenges facing older Americans. As our population ages, the number of people living with the disease and their caregivers will only grow."

— from a [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#) article titled [“Senate panel looks to fund Alzheimer’s research and resources”](#)

Fitzpatrick in the News

EDITOR’S NOTE: It is our usual practice to include only full quotes from our MoCs. However, all of Rep. Fitzpatrick’s media presence this week was via snippets that would not make sense without the journalist-supplied context and content.

“Pennsylvania’s Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, another vulnerable Republican, said he plans to visit the border ‘to see what’s going on down there with my own eyes.’ He called the detainees ‘our planet’s children’ and said they shouldn’t be punished ‘for things that their parents do or don’t do.’ ”

— excerpted from a [KCAU](#) article titled [“Border separations ripple through midterm campaigns”](#)

“In a statement provided Tuesday afternoon, Fitzpatrick said that economic indicators are ‘pointing in the right direction,’ with May’s jobs numbers signaling ‘steady growth and broad improvement in the labor market.’ ”

— from a [Bucks County Courier Times](#) article titled [“Protesters send Fitzpatrick message about tax cut bill”](#)

Toomey in the News

“I think the instance of the, you know, the heart-wrenching separation of a small child from the mother is, has been, the frequency has been exaggerated significantly. There are serious challenges at the border like, ‘Does the person claiming to be the parent, is that person actually the parent?’ ”

— from an interview with radio host Hugh Hewitt, as reported in an article in [The Hill](#) titled [“GOP senator calls frequency of family separations ‘exaggerated,’ then backs down”](#)

“Clearly, the country is focused on this. Clearly, it’s a horrendous situation if a small child is being taken away from the child’s actual mother. We’ve got to solve this problem.”

— from later in the same Hugh Hewitt interview, as reported by [Newsweek](#) in an article titled [“Donald and Ivanka Trump ridiculed over child separation policy with cartoons on San Francisco federal building”](#)

“There are some things we ought to look at doing differently.”

— from a [Philadelphia Magazine](#) article titled [“Toomey: Let’s Look Into Opening More Family Detention Centers”](#)

“The Canadians have decided that they’re going to impose huge taxes on the sale of American ketchup. It’s hard to imagine that this doesn’t dramatically erode their market share.”

— the Senator explains retaliatory tariffs introduced in response to the President’s economic policy, from a transcript of an [NPR All Things Considered](#) segment titled [“Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross Defends U.S. Trade Policies”](#)

“We are witnessing what I think is a wholly inappropriate misuse of 232 tariffs.”

— from a [Wichita, Kansas, NBC affiliate](#) article and video clip titled [“Fears of trade war growing as President Trump threatens more tariffs”](#)

Press release spotlight

Each MoC's media staffers issue press releases almost every day. Some tout legislative triumphs; many feature reactions to issues in the news. All of them present the face that the MoC wants to show to the public. Often press outlets use these releases to get quotes for their own articles about newsworthy topics. Especially in a week like the one just passed, where it seems like all media was focused on the family separation crisis at the border, it can be instructive to review the MoC press releases that did **not** get picked up as major stories in the media. Overlooked releases provide a glimpse at what the MoC is thinking about and the goals he wants to promote on issues — insights that are not making it to most constituents in this news-dense environment.

Bob Casey's featured [press release](#):

Released June 20, 2018:

Casey, Colleagues Look to Improve Access to Mental Health Services for Students

Many college campuses across America lack the resources necessary to support students with mental health issues. To address this shortcoming and expand protections for students, U.S. Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), alongside his colleagues U.S. Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA), Bill Nelson (D-FL), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Tina Smith (D-MN), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), introduced the Higher Education Mental Health Commission Act. This legislation would establish a national Commission to study the mental health concerns facing students at colleges and universities across the country.

"We need to make sure we are doing everything we can to support young people during this exciting, but stressful time of transition in their lives," said Senator Casey. "The Higher Education Mental Health Commission Act will establish a space for stakeholders and experts to come together and start a dialogue on how to best support our students."

Between 2010 and 2015, enrollment in colleges and universities increased by only 5 percent, yet the number of students using mental health services increased by 30 to 40 percent. More than 50 percent of students between the ages of 18 and 24 reported having a severe psychological problem or experiencing feelings of hopelessness.

Specifically, the Higher Education Mental Health Commission Act:

- creates a commission that will be composed of stakeholders that represent individuals and students with mental health disabilities and family members of students enrolled in an institution of higher education, institutions of higher education, and disability and student advocacy groups.
- requires the Commission to release a report at the end of its investigation that examines the services available to students with mental health disabilities and to make recommendations to Congress, states and institutions of higher education that will assist students to remain in school, return to school and complete their degrees.

This legislation has been endorsed by: American Council on Education, Association on Higher Education and Disability, Autistic Self Advocacy Network, Active Minds, National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, National Disability Rights Network, Healthy Minds Network, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Autism Society of America, Higher Education Consortium for Special Education, Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children, American Association of People with Disabilities, Learning Disabilities Association of America, Council of Administrators of Special Education, and the School Social Work Association of America.

WHY THIS RELEASE IS SIGNIFICANT: Improving access to mental health services is an issue that has wide bipartisan support. It is of particular note because in the common-sense gun reform discussions, mental health is often cited by 2nd Amendment defenders as the solution to all problems related to gun violence. Casey can cite his efforts to improve mental health services in schools as a proactive step he

supports to people who make such claims. Additionally, Casey has been a strong supporter of legislation to help people with disabilities, both mental and physical. This bill adds to his portfolio in that realm and will strengthen the support he gets from disability rights activists and the families of people with disabilities.

Brian Fitzpatrick featured [press release](#):

Released June 21, 2018:

Fitzpatrick Statement on CDC Draft PFAS Health Assessment

Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-08) released a statement following the release of a draft assessment on the health effects resulting from exposure to PFOS and PFOA:

"For several weeks I have called on EPA Administrator Pruitt and Health and Human Services to release this draft health study on the effects of PFOS and PFOA. While the release of this study is a welcome step, it is unacceptable that political considerations played any role in its release. The more we learn about these chemicals, the more concerning they become, especially for our most sensitive populations. The EPA must take a careful look at this study, and be prepared to bring the full force of the federal government to prevent any further exposure to these chemicals. That includes implementing a National PFAS Management Plan with an enforceable maximum contaminant level.

Since we've first become aware of this contamination, my constituents have been forced to take drastic action, at personal expense, to reduce their exposure to PFOS and PFOA. The federal government caused this public health crisis, and I will continue to hold them accountable to remediating this situation. This draft assessment raises serious concerns. The time is now for the EPA and Department of Defense to step up and act to stop the harm they have caused my constituents.

This draft toxicological profile is now open for public comment where experts, advocates, and stakeholders from all over the nation have the opportunity to comment on the draft. We will continue to maintain a vigilant eye on the process to ensure its completed as thoroughly and expeditiously as possible."

Last month, Fitzpatrick joined fellow Congressman Brendan Boyle to demand the release of the release of the study on the human health effects of PFOS and PFOA that was reportedly suppressed by EPA staff out of concern for negative public relations. Fitzpatrick and Boyle were disappointed at Administrator Pruitt's lackluster response to their inquiry regarding reports that the EPA purposely suppressed a health effects study related to human exposure to PFAS.

WHY THIS RELEASE IS SIGNIFICANT: In the run-up to the election, Fitzpatrick is desperate to highlight two of what he believes are his biggest selling points, his perceived environmentalism and his willingness to work across the aisle. This issue of contaminated local water is one that meets both of those criteria.

Pat Toomey featured [press release](#):

Released June 20, 2018:

Toomey Lauds USMC Decision to Build New Combat Vehicles in York

U.S. Senator Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) is lauding a decision made by the U.S. Marine Corps to award a \$198 million contract to BAE Systems for the production of 30 new Amphibious Combat Vehicles (ACV). Work for these vehicles will take place in BAE facilities across the country, including York.

"I have seen first-hand the important work that is carried out by the employees at York's BAE facility," said Senator Toomey. "The Marine Corps has made a great decision and I have no doubt that these vehicles will be well-crafted and help our Marines safely carry out their missions around the globe."

The ACV can be used in any terrain, including water. The ACV's v-hull design and suspended seats provide added protection for occupants. It can carry three crew members and 13 embarked Marines. BAE is slated to deliver these 30 vehicles to the Marine Corps by the fall of 2019. The award contract includes options that could lead to this award reaching \$1.2 billion and 204 total vehicles. In addition to York, work will also be performed at BAE facilities in South Carolina, Michigan, Minnesota, and California.

WHY THIS RELEASE IS SIGNIFICANT: In recent weeks Senator Toomey has been confronting the Trump Administration on its trade policy and tariffs, alienating much of his Trump-supporting base. By highlighting his support of a strong defense and a military program that will bring jobs to Pennsylvania, Toomey is trying to win back some of his wavering base by appealing to topics that have broad appeal to most Republican voters, regardless of how far to the right they lean. By promoting his backing of military and local jobs, Toomey is trying to remind his base that he shares their priorities.

Legislation of Interest

The GOP Budget Plan

This week the House Leadership introduced a budget for 2019, which they are calling the “Budget for a Brighter American Future.” It has yet to be assigned a bill number, so we must rely on the [un-numbered draft](#) provided by the House Budget Committee. The Budget Committee also released a [one-page summary](#) as a part of the public relations initiative in support of its plan. Their claims include:

- “Budget for a Brighter American Future achieves balance through responsible reforms and savings for government programs”
- “By achieving \$8.1 trillion in deficit reduction over ten years, this budget begins to slow down the unsustainable rate at which debt is growing to less than the American economy’s nominal rate of expansion.”
- “This budget seeks to scale back overreach of the federal government and restore power to the states in areas such as health care, welfare, environmental regulation, education, workforce development, and transportation.”
- “Budget for a Brighter American Future builds on the success of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, further promoting economic growth and encouraging job creation. It reduces burdensome regulations currently holding back job creators.”

The *Washington Post* eschewed the public relations pitch and provided a more reasoned analysis of the provisions made in the text of the proposed budget. Their June 19, 2018, article titled “[House GOP plan would cut Medicare, Medicaid to balance budget.](#)” describes the massive social safety net cuts included in this plan:

The House Republican budget, titled “A Brighter American Future,” would remake Medicare by giving seniors the option of enrolling in private plans that compete with traditional Medicare, a system of competition designed to keep costs down but dismissed by critics as an effort to privatize the program. Along with other changes, the budget proposes to squeeze \$537 billion out of Medicare over the next decade.

The budget would transform Medicaid, the federal-state health-care program for the poor, by limiting per capita payments or allowing states to turn it into a block-grant program — the same approach House Republicans took in their legislation that passed last year to repeal the Affordable Care Act (the repeal effort died in the Senate, but the GOP budget assumes that the repeal takes place). It also proposes adding work requirements for certain adults enrolled in Medicaid. Changes to Medicaid and other health programs would account for \$1.5 trillion in savings.

Social Security comes in for more modest cuts of \$4 billion over the decade, which the budget projects could be reached by eliminating concurrent receipt of unemployment benefits and Social Security disability insurance.

If that \$1.5 trillion number cited as cuts to social safety net programs sounds familiar, that's because it is the precise amount given away to corporations and the wealthiest Americans in the GOP Tax Plan passed at the end of 2017. The [bill passed](#) out of committee in a 21–13 vote on June 21, 2018, and should move to a full vote in the House within the next week or two. Our members of Congress need to hear from us that the social safety net programs on the chopping block make this plan completely unacceptable. Please call Representative Fitzpatrick and let him know your feelings about this bill at your earliest convenience!

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!