

Week ending 10/28/18 - 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 **30.4%** — (no change from last report)

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick — **83.9%** (no change from last report)

Senator Pat Toomey — **90.8%** (no change 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 House is on recess, and no votes were scored in either house this week.

Words From Our Founders

"The definition of the right of suffrage is very justly regarded as a fundamental article of republican government. It was incumbent on the convention, therefore, to define and establish this right in the Constitution. To have left it open for the occasional regulation of the Congress, would have been improper for the reason just mentioned. To have submitted it to the legislative discretion of the States, would have been improper for the same reason; and for the additional reason that it would have rendered too dependent on the State governments that branch of the federal government which ought to be dependent on the people alone."

— James Madison, 1788, from the opening of [Federalist 52](#)

Votes of Interest -

No votes have been taken by either house since October 11, 2018. But that gives you the perfect opportunity to review how our legislators have been using their power to vote in the last twenty-two months of the 115th Congress. Here are some tools you might find helpful in the lead-up to Election Day:

- A short [prose recap](#) of the votes of Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick
- A [database](#) of major votes taken by ALL PA members of the House of Representatives, broken down by topic, with short bill recaps and links to longer bill details
- A [recap](#) of major Cabinet-level, bureaucratic, and judicial confirmation votes from our senators.

The Pittsburgh synagogue shooting, our MoCs respond

Senator Bob Casey, 10/27/18, via [Facebook](#):

"Today, our Commonwealth and country stand in solidarity with the Jewish community of Pittsburgh. We mourn the loss of eleven lives at Tree of Life Synagogue in Squirrel Hill and pray for their families. This was an evil act of hate and the perpetrator must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

I received a briefing from the FBI and local law enforcement officials directly involved in this investigation. Our Commonwealth is grateful for the heroic actions of the Pittsburgh police officers who directly engaged the suspect and saved lives. We are also thankful for the work being done by federal, state and local law enforcement who also responded and are assisting in the investigation. People across our nation are praying for the officers who were injured today.

We stand with the victims and their families in this time of tragedy. Those of us in public office have an obligation to take actions that can reduce the likelihood of mass shootings. We must come together as a nation and meet this challenge."

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick, 10/27/18, via [Facebook](#):

"I am closely monitoring the tragic situation at the Tree of Life Congregation Synagogue in Pittsburgh. Hateful rhetoric and acts of violence in a synagogue—or any other peaceful house of worship—is the epitome of evil. An attack on the Jewish faith community is an attack on us all.

The FBI, the Pittsburgh Police Department and first responders are selflessly working to secure the scene and save lives. Action must, and will, be taken to end this hatred against our Jewish Faith Community and all of our communities."

Senator Pat Toomey, 10/27/18, via [Facebook](#):

"Synagogues and other places of worship are safe havens where communities come together to celebrate, pray, and reflect. What happened today at the Tree of Life Synagogue was a cowardly act of violence fueled by hate and anti-Semitism.

My prayers are with the victims, their families and friends, the members of the Tree of Life Synagogue, and the city of Pittsburgh. I greatly appreciate the actions of the first responders who tended to the wounded and apprehended the shooter.

My staff and I will remain in contact with law enforcement and local officials over the course of coming days."

The attempted bombings of Trump critics, our MoCs respond

Senator Bob Casey, 10/24/18, via [Twitter](#):

"I'm thankful to law enforcement who discovered these explosives. Whoever has engaged in these violent acts must be held fully accountable." (shared with a link to a *New York Time* [article](#) that provided details about the situation)

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick, 10/24/18, via his [website](#):

"The attempted attacks against the Obama and Clinton families, Governor Cuomo, CNN and others are vile acts of terrorism. These malicious efforts to divide Americans endangered public servants, media personnel, and the public at large.

These actions are appalling and a setback to civil political discourse. Terrorism is a tool of the weak and must be universally condemned by all Americans, regardless of political persuasion. I have full confidence that our law enforcement will apprehend those responsible for this despicable operation. The perpetrators of these acts will be held accountable.

We must stand together against those who seek to divide us through evil, as violence has no place in our society."

Senator Pat Toomey, 10/24/18, via [Facebook](#):

"Today's attempted acts of domestic terrorism are unconscionable. Political violence of any sort is unacceptable, period. I'm grateful to those who stopped the attacks before they could be carried out, & that no one was harmed. The perpetrators must be brought to justice."

MoC Twitter Action

Senator Bob Casey hot topics: The senator's output this week revolved entirely around the attempted bombings of Trump critics and the deadly shooting in the Pittsburgh synagogue. His extended comments on each can be read in the preceding sections.

Casey tweet of the week, 10/27/18: “I’m closely monitoring the situation in Squirrel Hill. I’m praying for all those impacted and thankful to our law enforcement officers who responded. Our state and nation will stand with the Tree of Life Synagogue along with the entire Pittsburgh community.”

— shared at the first reports of the shooting were coming out, and as part of a larger thread of responses across the day

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick hot topics: The representative only shared two tweets this week on topics other than the synagogue murders or the bomb mailings. He shared an article about a round table he held with the non-voting congressional delegate from Puerto Rico, Jennifer Gonzalez-Colon, and he promoted the use of vaccines.

Fitzpatrick tweet of the week, 10/22/18: “I was proud to host my friend and colleague @RepJenniffer, Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico, to discuss the federal response to Hurricanes Irma and Maria with the Bucks County Puerto Rican Cultural Association.” [sic]

— shared with a [link](#) to a *Bucks County Courier Times* article about the event. (EDITOR’S NOTE: The article starts off with a great recap of the interaction between Fitzpatrick and concerned constituent/amazing activist and friend of MoCTrack, Karen Rodriguez. Check it out!)

Senator Pat Toomey hot topics: The senator discussed both incidences of domestic terrorism this week (his full comments are available above, in the special sections). He offered a tribute to retired Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor and shared a *USA Today* article about the news of her health issues. When sharing an article from the *Centre Daily* the senator discussed the commonality of difficulties presented by the opioid crisis. He also shared a *Bloomberg* article and did some cheerleading on the economy, opining that it is “stronger than it has been in over a decade” followed by a local media piece on a visit the senator made to a business in western PA.

Toomey tweets of the week, 10/25/18: “I’m a gun owner & support 2A. I believe that background checks for commercial gun sales don’t infringe on your 2A right. They help keep guns away from criminals. I talked more about this with a @TIME-@JRart joint project called “Guns In America.””

— shared with a [link](#) to his own website, where he has reprinted an article from *Time Magazine* titled “Guns in America”

Honorable mention, lawmaker

From @RepAdamSchiff (D-Calif.) on 10/28/18:

“The gunman is responsible for mass murder. He alone pulls the trigger. But we create the atmosphere in which the gunman acts, and no one sets the tone more than @POTUS. It’s not enough to say the right words now if he preaches hatred and division every other day of the year.”

— shared with a [link](#) to a CNN clip of an interview between himself and Jake Tapper

Honorable mention, media

From @DanRather on 10/27/18:

“Antisemitism, history shows, simmers like an ember even in times of seeming peace. A small provocation can spur a deadly conflagration. At the faintest hint of smoke, we must stamp out the flames as soon as possible. Those who stoke the danger are literally playing with fire.”

— shared as part of a longer commentary on Saturday’s synagogue shooting

Honorable mention, constituent response

From @Shadh15551067 on 10/26/18:

"I call BS on you @SenToomey!!! Do not touch one cent of Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security to pay off your self inflicted deficit!!!!"

— [tweeted in response to the senator's self-congratulatory tweet about the economy](#)

Casey in the News

Courtesy of contributor Kathy Sites

"People have literally died for the right to vote. Some people, like John Lewis, have been beaten several times (for the right to vote). You've got to vote, because if you don't vote, we're going to be in big trouble for the country. Your generation has a substantial obligation to vote because of the sacrifice previous generations gave protecting the right to vote. Get others to join you in voting. Push, and even push them uncomfortably so because it is that important."

— [from a speech given to students at Allegheny College in the Titusville Herald article titled "Casey Stumps in Crawford County"](#)

"The federal government missed the opportunity to do something about the nation's crumbling infrastructure which includes not only roads and bridges but also water and sewer systems, stormwater overflow projects which are of concern to small towns. These issues had been "glossed over" by Republicans who control both houses of Congress and the administration in their efforts to run through a tax bill — the first in 31 years — which benefited the richest Americans. The top 1 percent got 83 percent of the benefits."

— [from an article in the New Castle News article titled "Senator acknowledges problems of small cities, rural areas"](#)

"There are some people in Washington who just don't believe in the Medicaid program or who think it should be scaled back substantially. But they especially seem to have a hostility to Medicaid expansion out of one side of their mouth. And, out of the other side, they're saying the opioid crisis is a terrible crisis. We all have to come together and work on it. You can't say both. You've either got to choose to support Medicaid expansion and therefore work on the opioid crisis, or you're doing something else."

— [from a Johnstown Tribune Democrat article titled "Casey: Robust Medicaid a must"](#)

"In Wayne County, 4,961 people have been added to the group of people who have health insurance thanks to the Affordable Care Act and expanded Medicaid. They (Republicans) want to end Medicaid expansion completely. That's the official position of the Republican Party. If Republicans are successful in the effort to end Medicaid expansion, more than half of the 4,961 recently insured people in the county would lose their healthcare. "

— [excerpts from a speech given in Honesdale, Pa. as quoted in an article in the River Reporter titled "Casey talks healthcare in Honesdale"](#)

"We're going to make sure she has health care today, health care tomorrow, health care in 50 years, whatever she needs. That's who we are. That's America. Don't let these yahoos in Washington tell us who we are. We're America, and we're going to make sure families have health care. Health care in so many ways is the defining issue in my campaign and why the choice is so stark. It's the No. 1 issue in the country right now because people know we still have a way to go on health care, but they don't want us to fall backwards. They don't want to put ourselves in a predicament where people who got health care through the Affordable Care Act are going to lose it through the GOP effort to eliminate required coverage of pre-existing conditions."

— [from a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article titled "Bob Casey unleashes his voice and leads polls in race against Trump ally Lou Barletta"](#)

“Our staff in DC and in the state remain vigilant when handling postal mail and continue to follow our standard protocols for mail and deliveries.”

—from a [CBS Pittsburgh](#) article titled “[This Clearly Is An Act Of Terrorism’: Pa. Lawmakers Condemn Attempted Bombing Attack On Democratic Leaders, CNN Offices](#)”

“One place to start would be universal background checks. But I think there are a series of other common-sense measures we can take that have tremendous support, none of which is a magic wand, even if you passed a series of measures, none would wipe out the problem. But there are plenty of steps we can take that are common sense measures that will reduce the likelihood that you’ll have more mass shootings, more school shootings. And if we pass several bills and have prevented one mass shooting, or two or three over the next 25 years, then it’s a damn good idea.

“We’ve gotta start taking action in a manner that’s common sense but has nothing to do with the second amendment. The second amendment doesn’t need to be altered to do that, we just need to pass measures that are common sense, consistent with the second amendment, but also will reduce the likelihood that you have very dangerous people getting their hands on any weapon, especially weapons that have great power.”

—from a [St. Joseph News-Press Now](#) article titled “[Senator Bob Casey stops in Coudersport](#)”

“The 2013 Senate bill was the best set of border security proposals that anyone’s ever seen and much better than Trump’s proposal. We should get back to something very close to what we did in 2013. Unfortunately, the prevailing point of view of the Republican Party is both simple, inhumane and insulting: deport 11 million people. That’s all they talk about. They talk about deporting 11 million and building a wall. It’s not serious. It would not be effective.”

— from a [Citizens Voice](#) article titled “[Candidates differ on how to tackle illegal immigration](#)”

“I voted against the tax cut because more should have gone to the middle class. A bigger middle-class cut and a larger child tax credit would have really boosted the economy. Those two things alone, short-term and long-term, would lead to much more economic growth than the tax cut would. They also would reduce deficits. I could have gone along with a smaller corporate tax cut if the revenues paid for a large infrastructure bill.”

— from a [Citizens Voice](#) article titled “[Congressional candidates talk tax cuts, jobs](#)”

Fitzpatrick in the News

“I’m hearing you throw the word Republican out. Do your best to try to keep party labels out of the debate, because really it’s important. OK?”

— the representative tries to avoid his chosen party affiliation at the final debate of the election season, as reported in the [WTF](#) article titled “[In suburban Philly debate, GOP congressman wants to avoid the word Republican](#)”

“My biggest concern for our country right now is hyper-partisanship. We’re polarizing to the extremes rather than growing to the center-out. I really worry about it.”

— from a [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) article titled “[Can Brian Fitzpatrick, a self-described ‘centrist’ Republican congressman, survive in the Philly suburbs in 2018?](#)”

“[I’ll] take care of this, today.”

— the representative’s response to a constituent who pointed out a half-dozen bills about Puerto Rico he had failed to take any action on over the past year, as reported in a [Bucks County Courier Times](#) article titled “[Congresswoman from Puerto Rico visits Bristol Borough](#)”

“There are 7.1 million unfilled jobs in the country, so we’ve gone from an economy that asked ‘Where are the jobs?’ to one that is asking ‘Where are the workers?’ That’s why workforce development programs are so important, and I praise this institution (BCCC) for being on the cutting edge of that. When people have jobs, it trickles down into a lot of other good things. They are less prone to abuse drugs, commit crimes and other things.”

— excerpts from the representative’s remarks at an opening ceremony, as reported in the [Doylestown Intelligencer](#) article titled “[Bucks County Community College planning new \\$14M workforce training building](#)”

“Do I get time to think about that? What do I agree with Scott on? You know, I wish I could answer that question. ... Nothing comes to mind, to be honest, that I can think of.”

— the representative struggles to answer the closing question at a debate, as reported in the [Jewish Exponent](#) article titled “[Brian Fitzpatrick, Scott Wallace Spar at Shir Ami Debate](#)”

“The goal of any tax or regulation reform is finding that equilibrium. You don’t want taxes so high they stifle the economy, but you don’t want them so low it bleeds revenue for the federal government. If we continue with the economic expansion we have seen, it will benefit the social safety nets.”

— an excerpt from the representative debate content, as reported in the [Doylestown Intelligencer](#) article titled “[Brian Fitzpatrick, Scott Wallace face off in first district debate](#)”

Toomey in the News

Courtesy of contributor Elayne Baker

“One of the fundamental drivers of the tax reform, the conceptual framework was, how do we lower the after tax cost of deploying capital? ...I have to say, so far, so good. I’m pretty pleased with how it’s working now.”

— from the [Tri-County Sunday](#) article titled “[Toomey, Paris Companies officials talk about impact of tax reform](#)”

“There’s a possibility that we could address some of these what I consider flaws in the implementing legislation that Congress has to pass.”

— the senator’s comment on addressing flaws in the new trade agreement between the United States, Mexico and Canada, in the [CNBC](#) article titled “[Mitch McConnell says a vote on Trump’s NAFTA replacement won’t happen until next year](#)”

“The president very frequently just refers to the trade deficit with China, which is a different thing all together, and in my mind not nearly as significant a concern as the theft of intellectual property. The EU is a very big trading block all together and working jointly, we could make it impossible for China to continue some of these practices. I would rather have four percent economic growth like we have now, record low unemployment, everyone who wants a job has a job, wages are going up. And in that situation, guess what? You’re gonna have a trade deficit. I’ll take it.”

— from a [WFMZ Allentown](#) article titled “[Toomey pushes for tariff relief for Pennsylvania companies](#)”

“Here in Pennsylvania, it’s just as bad as anywhere. We have passed a number of bills. Unfortunately, as you know, there’s no easy solution. In some of our counties, it’s (fentanyl) by far the number one source of overdose deaths. It’s incredibly powerful. As you may know, it’s about 50 times as powerful as heroin. Then you get the wrong dose, it just kills you, you’re done. That 110 pounds of fentanyl was enough to to kill every person in Pennsylvania twice. It’s almost all coming from China... Fentanyl is illegal in China, and so are maybe a couple of dozen of the analogues, very similar chemicals that do

have the same effect. The problem is there's about 1,400 different chemical formulations for fentanyl that will have the same effect, be just as lethal. Only 25 of them are illegal."

— from a [Courier Express](#) article titled "[Drug crisis in Clearfield Co.: 'It's become cultural'](#)"

"The development of fentanyl as a specific opioid of choice is a little bit more recent ... but there is no question it is very, very pervasive now throughout the Commonwealth. Fentanyl has introduced a level of lethality in this crisis that is even greater than how terribly lethal it was before."

— from a [StateCollege.com](#) article titled "[Visiting Centre County, Toomey Touts Bipartisan Bill to Stop Illegal Fentanyl Imports](#)"

"People are not confident that they can make investments knowing the tariff regime and the trade regime if the trade agreement expires. We're all going to pay more for cars, whether it's because they're built somewhere else or because there's a tariff that's slapped on the cars when you exceed the quota... Why are my constituents still subject to this tax on Canadian and Mexican products? That's a problem. That needs to go away."

— from a [WFMZ Allentown](#) article titled "[Senator Toomey speaks about new NAFTA](#)"

"Section 301 tariffs are direct taxes on American consumers and producers. They directly reduce American purchasing power, curtail freedom, impede job creation, and limit production."

— from a [Penna Business Report](#) article titled "[Toomey asks Trump Administration to exempt Pennsylvanians from tariffs](#)"

Learning about Legislation - Voter Rights in Pennsylvania

As we approach Election Day on Tuesday, November 6th, it is important to know your rights and responsibilities as a voter.

1. Polls are open from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM on Election Day. If you are still in line at 8PM, don't leave! You are entitled to place your vote as long as you were in line before closing.
2. You only need an ID to vote if it is your first time voting at a given polling place. Accepted IDs include your driver's license; a U.S. passport; a military, student, or employee ID; your voter registration card; a firearm permit; a current utility bill, bank statement, paycheck or government check ;an ID issued by the commonwealth or federal government
3. You can still place a vote even if your name is not in the polling book. If that should occur, you can place a provisional ballot.
4. If you see improper behavior or intimidation in a polling place, you can call the Pennsylvania Department of State at 1.877.VOTESPA or the ACLU at 1.866.OURVOTE

Additional information about your rights on Election Day can be found at:

- The [ACLU Pennsylvania](#) website
- This excellent ACLU [flier](#) on voting rights
- The [official Pennsylvania government](#) website on voters' rights
- Governor Wolf's office [guide](#) to elections in Pennsylvania

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!