

Week ending 11/11/18 - 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. Neither house held votes this week.

Words From Our Founders

“Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all... nothing is more essential than that permanent, inveterate antipathies against particular nations, and passionate attachments for others, should be excluded; and that, in place of them, just and amicable feelings towards all should be cultivated. The nation which indulges towards another a habitual hatred or a habitual fondness is in some degree a slave. It is a slave to its animosity or to its affection, either of which is sufficient to lead it astray from its duty and its interest... The nation, prompted by ill-will and resentment, sometimes impels to war the government, contrary to the best calculations of policy. The government sometimes participates in the national propensity, and adopts through passion what reason would reject; at other times it makes the animosity of the nation subservient to projects of hostility instigated by pride, ambition, and other sinister and pernicious motives. The peace often, sometimes perhaps the liberty, of nations, has been the victim.”

— thoughts on war, peace and diplomacy from [George Washington](#),
excerpted from his Farewell Address of 1796

Votes of Interest -

There have been no votes taken by either house since October 11th.

MoC Twitter Action

Senator Bob Casey hot topics: On this, his official government account, there was no mention of the election or results from the senator. His first tweet of the week concerned well-wishes to a policeman in Philadelphia who was recovering after an on-duty shooting. The senator then went on to share several extended threads of tweets during the rest of the week on the topics of the president's interference in the Mueller investigation, the executive order changing rules for asylum seekers, and the meaning of Veterans Day.

Casey tweet of the week, 011/08/18

“This is nothing more than a mean-spirited, cruel assault on vulnerable people seeking asylum. This will do NOTHING to make our nation safer. Congress should immediately put an end to this policy.”

— shared with a link to an [NBC News article titled “Trump signs proclamation restricting asylum-seekers at the border”](#)

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick hot topics: The representative tweeted twice this week. On Monday he shared a link to a YouTube video of a floor speech he made about term limits. On Thursday he shared a response to the mass shooting in California.

Fitzpatrick tweet of the week, 11/08/18

“Our nation witnessed yet another tragedy. I cannot fathom the unimaginable pain felt by the Thousand Oaks community, and I send my deepest condolences to those mourning their loved ones and friends today.”

— shared with an [image](#) of the representative’s full statement

Senator Pat Toomey hot topics: The senator touched upon four topics this week. He noted that a member of the Philadelphia police was injured in the line of duty. Two tweets were shared in regards to the forced resignation of Jeff Sessions, thanking him for his service, but ignoring the larger context of his departure. After the mass shooting in California, the Senator shared his thoughts on the need for common sense gun reform. The senator closed the week with his thoughts on Veterans Day.

Toomey tweet of the week, 11/08/18

“Republicans & Democrats must stop talking past one another & concentrate on how we can improve gun safety laws to ensure people who shouldn’t have access to firearms are unable to obtain them. The victims & wounded from the tragedy in CA & the 1st responders are in my prayers.”

— shared in response to the mass shooting in a California bar

Honorable mention, lawmaker

From @PramilaJayapal, Democrat Representative from Washington, on 11/10/18:

“Every vote counts. Count every vote. It really is that simple. #Florida #Georgia”

— referring to news of GOP politicians, including the president, criticizing the process of counting all absentee, overseas and provisional ballots in close elections

Honorable mention, media

From @OrinKerr, Lawfare blogger and University of Southern California law professor on 11/10/18:

“Several possible reasons Rosenstein called Whitaker a “superb choice,” assuming he doesn’t believe it: Smart move internally to be a team player; Whitaker’s presence means Rod is off the hot seat; any future objections to Whitaker get amplified b/c was favorable on day one, etc.”

— shared as part of a Q&A exchange with followers following the share of this [NPR article](#) about the appointment of new acting Attorney General Matt Whitaker

Honorable mention, constituent response

From @ATPacy on 11/07/18:

“The time is soon coming Senator where you will have to choose between the Trump regime and justice.

Be on time.”

— shared in response to Senator Toomey’s tweet about Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ forced resignation

The forced resignation of Attorney General Jeff Sessions, our Senators respond
Sen. Bob Casey, 11/07/18, via his [website](#):

“Pressuring and forcing Attorney General Sessions to resign is an unacceptable effort to interfere with the chain of command in the Russia investigation. This is part of President Trump’s pattern of obstructing Special Counsel Mueller’s independent investigation. He has attempted to fire, demand loyalty of and interfere with any official investigating Russia’s attack on our nation during the 2016 election. Now, President Trump is removing his own Attorney General in order to install a lapdog who will do what he has called for repeatedly- end or hamstring an independent

investigation that is vital to our national security. Congress must immediately act to protect Special Counsel Mueller's investigation from interference by this Administration."

Sen. Pat Toomey, 11/07/18, via [Twitter](#):

"I thank my friend and colleague Jeff Sessions for his dedicated service as Attorney General. He is a credit to the Department of Justice and the United States Senate. Throughout his career, Attorney General Sessions has tirelessly worked to uphold the rule of law and keep our communities safe. I look forward to President Trump nominating a new Attorney General who is equally committed to the rule of law."

Casey in the News

Courtesy of contributor Kathy Sites

"Well, if it all works out for me and I win, the first thing I do is say thank you. It's a privilege to serve this state, it's a privilege to serve in the Senate, and to be reelected to the Senate is a great honor, so the first thing I'll say is 'thank you.' And then, just go back to work and try to figure out a way to bring the sides together. I think a big issue we can bring both parties together on is infrastructure. You've got plenty of bridges in Erie County that need to be repaired. You've got folks in Northwestern Pennsylvania — I was down in Warren the other day, and 40 percent of the people that live in Warren County have no high-speed Internet. How the hell can you learn in a school or build a small business, or grow an economy if 40 percent of the people living in your county don't have high-speed Internet? That should be part of a broad infrastructure agenda. So, I think both parties can come together on that."

— from an [Erie Reader](#) article titled "[A Brief Chat with Senator Bob Casey Jr.](#)"

"There is so much at stake, especially on healthcare. And that was a major issue of course in the campaign. But after today, no matter what happens, I hope we can come together as a country and work on issues that bring us together like, in fact lowering the cost of health care covering the cost of prescription drugs."

— from a [PA Homepage](#) article titled "[From Your Local Election HQ: Senator Bob Casey Votes](#)"

"This is a victory for people across our commonwealth who want a new direction in Washington, and a triumph for people who are really concerned about their health care. In the years ahead, our nation will confront many challenges, but we must also seize opportunities, and I think there are many opportunities to make our nation more perfect and to advance the cause of justice... We're the strongest country in the world. ... We build in America. We innovate. We invest. We invest in the future, and we advance the cause of justice when we are at our best."

— from a [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#) article titled "[Bob Casey coasts to third term in U.S. Senate](#)"

Fitzpatrick in the News

"I understand it's been a very tumultuous political environment. I just want [Wallace voters] to know that I respect everything they believe in. They are people that care about the community and the country. They just have a different perspective. I want to learn from them. I want to bring them into fold and I want them to be part of how we lead this community. Respecting differences of opinions is a strength to be harnessed and not a weakness to be criticized."

— from a [Penn Live](#) article titled "[U.S. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick wins tight race in Bucks County, beating Scott Wallace](#)"

"I don't like and have never liked injecting labels like that. I just think that people should talk about what their principles are, talk about what they believe in."

— from a [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) article titled "[What candidates in Pa.'s closest congressional race are telling voters days before the election](#)"

"You have to communicate with your constituents. What's the alternative?"

— the representative's response to being told that he spent more on franking privileges (\$316,000) than any other lawmaker in the region, from a [WHYY](#) article titled "[Some Pa., N.J. members of Congress spending \\$200K or more on 'franking'](#)"

"Every single time I talk about my time in Congress or about my campaign, I bring up the Problem Solvers. One hundred percent of the time. I think it's the only way to save this country."

— from a [Washington Post](#) article titled "[House Problem Solvers Caucus has solved few problems, bipartisan critics allege](#)"

"I have and will continue to support the Special Counsel investigation led by my former boss, Robert Mueller. Our job as FBI agents was to follow the facts wherever they lead, and to report those facts with unimpeachable integrity. My former colleagues at the FBI, who are true professionals, must be allowed to finish their work and present their facts to Congress. The pursuit of truth and the defense of our nation must be held above all else."

— from a [Bucks County Courier Times](#) article titled "[Rally outside Fitzpatrick offices calls for Mueller protection](#)"

"We lost Carlos tonight. It's heartbreaking ... but I'm going to push [the MARKET Choice Act] as hard as ever. He was my colleague on that bill, so now I'm going to find another partner that can help me on it."

— the representative's comments on the election night defeat of Florida Republican Carlos Curbelo, a sponsor of a carbon tax bill, from a [Red, Green and Blue](#) article titled "[EcoRight election report – Some green Republicans survived the blue wave](#)"

Toomey in the News

Courtesy of contributor Elayne Baker

"It would be a very bad idea for the president to disrupt the Mueller investigation. Having said that, I also think it's about time they wrap this up. ... I think it's time for Bob Mueller to present to Congress whatever he has or doesn't have. It's time to get that. He should be allowed to finish, but that should happen in a timely way."

— from a [Lehigh Valley Live](#) article titled "[Toomey: No reason to think Trump will halt Mueller investigation](#)"

"It's clear that their relationship had deteriorated, and so it was probably time for this change to occur."

— the senator's comments on the relationship between president Trump and former Attorney General Jeff Sessions, from the [Allentown Morning Call](#) article titled "[Pat Toomey's advice to next attorney general: Wrap up Trump probe](#)"

"It was a terrible moment for these men, and some women, who served during the Vietnam-era and didn't get the recognition and appreciation that they totally earned... It's very important for me, and moving for me, to play a small role in commemorating their service and it seems to mean a lot to the veterans."

— from a [Wilkes-Barre Fox 56 News](#) article titled "[Senator Pat Toomey honors local Vietnam veterans in Wayne County](#)"

Learning about Legislation - Veterans Pensions, a history

This is a reprint of the Learning About Legislation section that appeared in the 11/12/17 MoCTrack Report:

In honor of Veterans Day, I thought we could look at some of the [first legislation](#) in our country designed to create a separate authority to provide for the men who had fought in the War for Independence. This early piece of legislation highlighted today was composed by James Madison, and it passed the General Assembly of Virginia (for this was from before we had a Constitution, in the days of the Articles of Confederation) in 1784. Prior to this bill, individual veterans would have to come before the Assembly and petition for pensions - that is the process referenced in the first sentence of this bill, about another, earlier bill passed in 1782. This new legislation sought to solve that issue.

Bill Enabling the Executive to Pension Disabled Veterans, with Amendments

Whereas the act of Assembly passed in the year 1782 entitled "An Act Concerning Pensioners," which has been continued by several subsequent acts will expire at the end of the present Session of Assembly, and it is expedient that the same should be further continued

Be it therefore enacted that the act entitled An Act "Concerning Pensioners" shall continue and be in force from and after the expiration thereof, so long as any of the persons who have, or hereafter shall receive annual allowances from this Commonwealth in Consideration of Wounds, shall continue to receive the same.

And be it further enacted that the Executive shall be and they are hereby authorized and empowered to put on the List of Pensioners with such allowances as to them shall seem just all Regular or Militia Officers and Soldiers who have been wounded or otherwise disabled in the Service of their Country upon application being made to them therefor. And whereas the said recited Act entitled An Act Concerning Pensioners directs the Courts of the several Counties within this Commonwealth to inquire into the bodily ability of all persons receiving annual Pensions from the Public and to certify to the General Assembly whether in their Opinion they ought to be continued on the Pension List

Be it further enacted that the said Returns shall be made to the Executive who are hereby authorized to continue or discontinue the said allowances as to them shall seem proper.

This piece of legislation is of particular interest because it shows us how the various branches of government can interact to solve problems. The Legislature could not handle the influx of business involved in dealing with veteran pension petitions one by one. So they created an office, answerable to the Executive - this is an early part of our bureaucracy - to handle the issue at hand. But they maintained separate oversight of the process by having "the courts of several counties" assess how the benefits were being provided. This is an early example of checks and balances in action, to serve the needs of wounded veterans who had found for the establishment of the rights we all now enjoy.

Virginia was not the only state to create such a system, and throughout our nation's history many individual organizations were created to assist veterans after each of our country's wars. In 1921 all of those organizations were combined under one umbrella, the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Are there questions that you have about how Congress works, about elections, about voting... or anything to do with government processes? I am looking for topics for future "Learning about Legislation" topics, so please - email me your questions at KierstynPZ@gmail.com - I can't promise that I already know the answer, but I will research the issue and share my findings with our readers in a future segment.

A note about our tracking report schedule for the rest of the year

While it is impossible to predict what the next weeks hold in store for us, legislation and voting does tend to slow up in the weeks around Thanksgiving and Christmas. It is our intention to shift to a bi-monthly report for the rest of the Congressional term, culminating in a "115th Congress in review" report at the end of December. We will return to our normal weekly schedule of weekly reports in time for the start of the 116th Congress on January 5, 2019, at which point this report will become the new [PA-01](#) report! If, however, major legislative news develops in the off-weeks of the report, we will be sure to provide a mid-

week supplement with recaps of the bills or resolutions in questions, any voting results and the statements made by our legislators.

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!