

PA-01 Member of Congress Tracking Report - 11/17/19

This is a 100% volunteer effort brought to you by a handful of progressive Democrats and Independents who share a vision of an informed electorate. We want to offer a big thank you to the [Pennsylvania Together](#), [Pennsylvania Statewide Indivisible](#) and [Demcast](#) organizations who host our report and help us share it out to the residents of our Commonwealth!

Tracking Congress in the Age of Trump

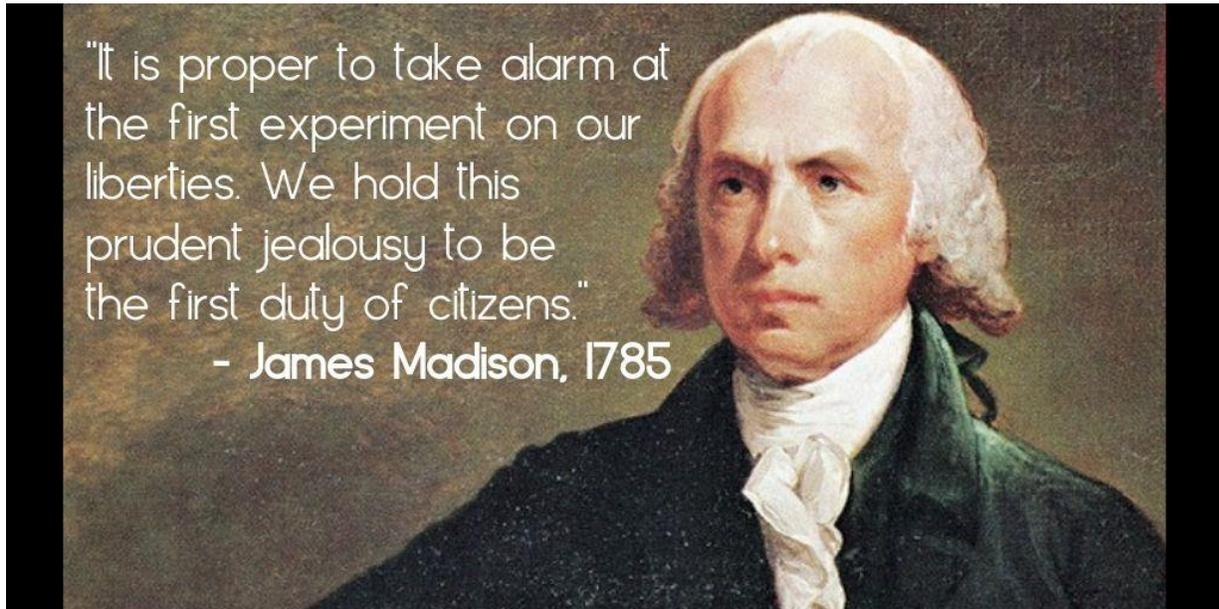
The lower the number, the more the legislator votes in opposition to the Trump agenda.

Member of Congress	This week's score	Change from last report
Senator Bob Casey (D)	27.7%	-0.2%
Senator Pat Toomey (R)	88.0%	+0.1%
PA-01 Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R)	67.3%	-0.5%

Nate Silver's [FiveThirtyEight website](#) assesses the voting records of our MoCs to provide this index, by comparing any legislation where President Trump has stated a position, and comparing the vote of each MoC to the President's opinion. The only vote scored this week was the House bill on the Ex-Im Bank.

Want to see exactly what votes went into giving your MoC the numbers above? Click on the name of any legislator and you will be brought to their 538 webpage, where all of the positions that went into the index are listed in an easy-to-read format.

Words From Our Founders



— from an [essay](#) titled "Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments"

Votes of Interest -

Legislation to bolster US Import/Export Bank passes with Puerto Rico assistance included [House Vote](#) on [H.R. 4863](#): United States Export Finance Agency Act

This week's most contentious bit of legislation concerns the Export-Import Bank (often abbreviated to Ex-Im Bank). The [Allentown Morning Call](#) recapped the contents of the measure:

[It] would reauthorize the Export-Import Bank's congressional charter through fiscal 2029 while renaming it the United States Export Financing Agency. The bill would increase the bank's lending authority from \$135 billion to \$175 billion and require at least 5 percent of its annual financing to support sales of renewable-energy and energy-efficiency products. Established in the New Deal, the bank provides taxpayer-backed financing to help foreign customers purchase U.S. goods and services when private-sector lenders are unable or unwilling to provide the financial assistance. Fewer than 2 percent of the Ex-Im transactions have defaulted in recent years, and the bank usually returns a profit to the Treasury even with an exposure of \$100 billion-plus in taxpayer liability.

The Ex-Im Bank is often a target of conservative politicians. Their concerns are best expressed by our own [Senator Toomey](#). When facing an Ex-Im related vote of his own earlier this year, he stated, "the Ex-Im Bank, unreformed, is an example of crony capitalism that puts U.S. taxpayers at risk and subsidizes some pretty unsavory characters." But this is one of those strange situations where GOP leaders are on the opposite side of many business interests. A number of business groups thanked the House for the passage of this bill. An example of this can be seen in this [statement](#) from the Association of Equipment Manufacturers, who said "our industry needs the long-term certainty that the Ex-Im Bank will continue to help equipment manufacturers of all sizes secure new sales overseas that support well-paying jobs in America. The United States Export Finance Agency Act of 2019 will help do just that and is an important step forward..."

Tucked into this Ex-Im Bank bill was a measure to help the residents of Puerto Rico. Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez (D-NY) was the sponsor of a separate bill called the Office of Territorial Exporting Act, and language from that legislation was included in the version of the Ex-Im Bank bill that came up for a vote. [The Weekly Journal](#) reported on the inclusion of this text, and had a quote from Rep. Velázquez explaining why it is important:

Puerto Rico's economy needs all the help it can get and stimulating exports can be a powerful tool for helping create and support job growth. My legislation would ensure there are personnel at the Export-Import Bank who are focused on helping Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and other territories export their products abroad... This legislation will help more firms in Puerto Rico export products to other countries, creating greater economic opportunity and good paying jobs along the way.

The vote was taken on Friday, November 15, 2019 and the bill passed, 235-184. This was not pure party line voting - 13 GOP MoCs voted YES with most Democrats; four Democrats joined the GOP in voting NO. **Fitzpatrick voted YES.**

The House Passes a package of Veterans' Program Reforms

- [House Vote](#) on [H.R. 499](#): Service-Disabled Veterans Small Business Continuation Act
- [House Vote](#) on [H.R. 3224](#): Deborah Sampson Act
- [House Vote](#) on [H.R. 3537](#): Veteran Entrepreneurship Training Act
- [House Vote](#) on [H.R. 3734](#): Successful Entrepreneurship for Reservists and Veterans Act
- [House Vote](#) on [H.R. 4162](#): GI Bill Planning Act

As is appropriate for a week that kicked off with Veterans Day, the House spent most of its time this week on legislation designed to introduce or fix a variety of programs that benefit those who have served. The five bills listed above are those that were passed via roll call votes. Ten other bills were passed via voice vote or unanimous consent.

The program amongst these that received the most press was H.R. 3224, the Deborah Sampson Act. The [New York Post](#) explains that the bill “would require more oversight of women’s health care within the Department of Veterans Affairs, establish a new Office of Women’s Health in the agency, and extend coverage of healthcare for newborn children of veterans from seven to 14 days.” When the measure was passed out of committee in October it had no Republican support, but it then succeeded in the full House on November 12, 2019 with a vote of 399-11. **Fitzpatrick voted YES on this, along with all of the other veteran-related bills.**

Three of the bills listed above are fixes to programs that help veteran business owners. H.R. 499 would change the Small Business Act so that spouses of disabled veterans are eligible to receive its benefits (it passed 423-0 on November 13, 2019). H.R. 3537 adds the “Boots to Business” program, which provides entrepreneurship training to members of the military returning from active duty, to the Small Business Act (it passed 424-1 on November 13, 2019). H.R. 3734 concentrated on credit access for veteran business owners, mandating outreach and reporting (it passed 421-3 on November 13, 2019).

The final bill of the five, H.R. 4162: GI Bill Planning Act, remedies a problem with the manner in which new service members must decide upon GI benefits. [Rep. Jack Bergman](#) (D-Mich.) explains the issue: Military basic training is a grueling ordeal meant to mold our nation’s finest. But it doesn’t make sense for these fatigued recruits to immediately be asked to make a consequential, expensive decision about using their future education benefits. By delaying this decision 6 months, my new legislation will give enlistees the ability to make an informed choice and plan for the future.

The bill passed in a 408-0 vote on November 12, 2019.

Unanimously Passed Legislation

The following bills passed either by unanimous consent or voice vote (which presumes unanimity, as any lawmaker can ask for a roll call vote if they object to the bill). They are all a part of the House’s Veteran’s Day initiative of reforming programs to help those who served.

- [H.R.1615](#): Verification Alignment and Service-disabled Business Adjustment Act
- [H.R.1773](#): Rosie the Riveter Congressional Gold Medal Act
- [H.R.3661](#): Patriotic Employer Protection Act
- [H.R.1424](#): Fallen Warrior Battlefield Cross Memorial Act
- [H.R.3996](#): VA Design-Build Construction Enhancement Act
- [H.R.4356](#): Protecting Families of Fallen Servicemembers Act
- [H.R.4360](#): VA Overpayment Accountability Act
- [H.R.4477](#): Reducing High Risk to Veterans and Veterans Services Act
- [H.R.4625](#): Protect the GI Bill Act
- [H.R.4771](#): VA Tele-Hearing Modernization Act

Judicial confirmation

[Senate Confirmation Vote](#) on Steven J. Menashi to be United States Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit

Last month MoCTrack supported a Call to Action from [Why Courts Matter PA](#) to oppose this judicial nomination. If you would like a full rundown of why this judicial nominee is amongst the worst yet to come out of the Trump Administration, please see that [full piece](#).

To recap some of the lowlights, [HuffPo](#) called Menashi “wildly problematic” because of “his inflammatory writings about women’s rights and diversity, his refusal to answer senators’ questions and his role in devising an illegal Education Department effort to deny debt relief to students cheated by for-profit colleges.” And [CNN Politics](#) highlighted the opposition Menashi faced over his work “with Trump adviser Stephen Miller on immigration issues in the White House” and added that the nominee “would not answer questions if he was involved in the events surrounding the President’s call to the Ukraine.”

It was [Slate’s](#) Mark Joseph Stern who really put this confirmation into full perspective, and expressed why it is so damaging:

With this confirmation, Donald Trump has flipped the 2nd Circuit to a majority of Republican appointees—a momentous shift in the balance of power that could help the president shield himself from criminal liability and congressional scrutiny in a jurisdiction, New York, which he previously called home.

In a vote taken on Thursday, November 14, 2019, Steven Menashi was confirmed to a lifetime appointment on the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals. The final vote was 51-41. All of the YES votes came from Republicans. The NO votes came from Democrats and Maine's pair of senators - Independent Angus King and Republican Susan Collins. **Casey voted NO** and **Toomey voted YES**.

Bureaucratic Confirmation

[Senate Confirmation Vote](#) on Chad F. Wolf to be Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans, Department of Homeland Security

Earlier this month, President Trump [announced](#) that Chad Wolf would be the acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), where he had previously served as Chief of Staff to Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen. The vote this week, though, was not to confirm him to that leadership role. Instead it is moving him from the unconfirmed position he previously held into a Senate-confirmed role of Under Secretary for Strategy, Policy, and Plans at the DHS. This is necessary because there are [challenges to the constitutionality](#) of a president's authority to name to the cabinet (even in an acting role) a person who does not hold a Senate confirmed role.

[NBC News](#) reports that Mr. Wolf was a key designer of the child separation policy that the Trump Administration enacted:

Wolf is not considered as hard-line on immigration as two other names floated for the job — acting Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Ken Cuccinelli and acting Commissioner of Customs and Border Protection Mark Morgan — but internal emails obtained by NBC News show Wolf was an early architect of the migrant family separation policy at the southwest border.

As far back as December 2017, when Wolf was acting chief of staff to Nielsen, he sent a list of 16 options to curb the number of undocumented immigrants to Gene Hamilton, counselor to then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions, for review.

Number two on the list: "Separate family units."

The vote on Mr. Wolf's nomination was taken on Wednesday, November 13, 2019, and he was confirmed 54-41. All Republicans voted YES, and they were joined by two Democrats - West Virginia's Joe Manchin and Arizona's Kyrsten Sinema. **Casey voted NO** and **Toomey voted YES**.

The looming government shutdown - 11/21/19 deadline

Once again, President Trump's demand for funding for his border wall may result in a government shutdown. In late September, the wall funding demands were the source of the inability for passage of a full budget, causing the need for a continuing resolution. The funding from that continuing resolution runs out on November 21, 2019 - this coming Thursday.

[CNN Politics](#) reports that Congress is expected to pass another short term continuing resolution this week, pushing the next budget shutdown into the week before Christmas:

The new short-term spending bill would kick negotiations squarely into the midst of expected House votes on impeachment. That timing threatens a potential repeat of last winter's record-breaking shutdown over the holidays, which dragged into January amid a standoff over border spending... If passed, the bill would also postpone Congress' holiday plans. Members were recently told not schedule any travel the week of December 16.

[The Hill](#) notes that “Democrats have objected to drawing funds from health-related bills to fund the wall in the Homeland Security bill.” But the same article cites a statement from Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, who stood at the White House podium and declared, “We have no intention of having a shutdown. I think everybody intends to keep the government open.”

With President Trump’s well-demonstrated unpredictability and the stresses put upon him by the impeachment process, it is hard to state definitively that a shutdown has been averted until President Trump signs a new continuing resolution (note the hedging “I *think*” part of Treasury Mnuchin’s statement, he won’t fully commit either). As Rachel Maddow says, ‘keep your eyes on this space’.

Twitter Action - Impeachment Hearings

Twitter action is brought to you courtesy of [@ElasticgirlVotes](#)

● Senator Bob Casey, @SenBobCasey, [11/15/19](#):

“Ambassador Yovanovitch is a career public servant who has courageously served our Nation around the world to advance the interests of the United States. The story she is sharing today is deeply troubling – for our national security, and for our Democracy.

For 33 years, Yovanovitch served with distinction in six Administrations – Democratic & Republican – & seven countries. Her colleagues in the State Department & across the national security community describe Yovanovitch as a respected professional with credibility and integrity.

Though Yovanovitch has devoted decades of service to this Nation, she has been the victim of inexplicable threats & smears by the President, his personal attorney & Fox News commentators. Despite feeling threatened by the President’s extreme rhetoric, she continues to speak out.

Even as she faces scrutiny and borderline abusive questioning from Republicans during today’s hearing, Yovanovitch is unwavering in her solidarity with career public servants and highlights the importance of a nonpartisan diplomatic corps that promotes U.S. interests abroad.

Ambassador Yovanovitch and the other witnesses are bravely testifying at great personal cost to themselves. We owe it to them to listen to their stories and learn the facts. Thank you, Ambassador, for your honesty, integrity and courage.”

Twitter Action - Topic Gun violence

● Senator Bob Casey, @SenBobCasey, [11/15/19](#):

“Our communities continue to face unconscionable gun violence. From the recent outbreak of children dying because of guns in Philadelphia, to the shooting at Saugus High School in Santa Clarita, CA yesterday, the trauma these kids faced will haunt them for the rest of their lives.

Far too often we come together to mourn the victims of gun violence in our communities, but enough is enough. We should not have to ask kids to do active shooter drills at schools while refusing to require background checks on individuals purchasing a firearm.

Gun violence is a uniquely American problem and the first step to reducing gun violence is passing universal background checks, limiting the size of magazines & banning military-style assault weapons. These measures will reduce the likelihood of more kids dying from gun violence.

Yesterday @ChrisMurphyCT attempted to bring the House-passed bipartisan background checks bill to the floor, which was blocked by Republicans. It’s time we hold politicians accountable including @senatemajldr who refuses to let the Senate debate & vote on gun violence legislation”

● PA-01’s Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, @RepBrianFitz, [11/14/19](#):

“My heart goes out to the entire Santa Clarita community. We must do better to protect our communities and our children from senseless acts of gun violence.”

Twitter Action - MoCs on Legislation

● Senator Bob Casey, @SenBobCasey, [11/15/19](#):

“Senate Republicans refuse to pass the Violence Against Women Act reauthorization, so this week, my Democratic colleagues and I introduced our own bill – because every day we fail to renew VAWA, we fail to protect women from violence.” *tweeted with a link to a [HuffPo article](#)*

● Senator Pat Toomey, @SenToomey, [11/08/19](#):

“Today in Dauphin County I touted 2 measures designed to preserve PA's natural gas industry. The 1st underscores that no president can legally ban fracking on state/private lands. The 2nd aims to curb states like NY's abuse of federal laws to thwart natural gas development.”



● PA-01's Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, @RepBrianFitz, [11/13/19](#):

“Today, the House passed H.R. 1173, the Rosie the Riveter Congressional Gold Medal Act. I was proud to lead this effort with my colleague, @RepSpeier. I'm happy to represent a “Rosie”, Mae Krier of Levittown, who has worked tirelessly for this long-overdue recognition.”



Tweet of the Week

● Senator Bob Casey, @SenBobCasey, [11/12/19](#):

“The Trump Admin slashed funding for ACA open enrollment assistance & outreach while hiring allies as “consultants” for hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars simply to improve the Administrator's image. This is yet another example of this Administration's health care sabotage.” *Tweet includes [link](#) to Politico article.*

Casey in the News

Courtesy of contributor Linda Houk

“Thousands of Pennsylvania families are counting on us to take action. We must hold a vote and pass the American Miners Act now.”

— from an article in *the Cherokee Tribune & Ledger-News* titled [“Casey, other senators introduce bill to save miners' pensions”](#)

“Today is the day for citizens, all of us, but especially those of us who are not veterans to renew our commitment, not just to veterans but all the programs that are designed to make sure we keep our promises to them” ... “In addition to that, we renew our commitment to the values that these veterans fought so hard for, freedom, democracy and liberty.”

—from an article in *the Delco Times* titled [“Delaware County Veterans Day Parade honors 100th Anniversary of the American Legion”](#)

“Rural hospitals will close if the Affordable Care Act is deemed unconstitutional... President Trump’s budget proposal for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 not only aims to repeal the ACA — and along with it, the advances made to Medicare and Medicaid — it also proposes to slash Medicare and Medicaid spending by more than \$2.3 trillion over 10 years,”

—from an article in the *Daily Item* titled [“Sen. Casey: Repealing Affordable Care Act would hurt rural hospitals, people with disabilities”](#)

“The false choice is that you have to choose fracking over good climate policy”

—from an article in *GoErie* titled [“Toomey offers resolution asserting presidents cannot ban fracking”](#)

“I can’t predict nor can anybody in the House predict how long that will take, but it will take a few weeks. I don’t expect anything to be concluded in the House until probably sometime in December. We’re not certain at the conclusion of that process there will be one article of impeachment or multiple articles or no articles.”

—from an article in the *New Castle News* titled [“Local party chiefs disagree on impact of hearings in Pennsylvania”](#)

“Far too many children across Pennsylvania and the nation have unstable living situations, many of whom are displaced due to the opioid epidemic. During this tumultuous time, these children should not have to worry when or where they will receive their next meal... The CARE for Kids Act provides assurance that these children can maintain access to nutritious foods through school meal programs. This legislation also eases the financial burden for the selfless caregivers, often grandparents or other relatives, who have taken on the responsibility of caring for these children.”

—from an article in the *Philadelphia Sun* titled [“Casey Introduces Bill to Expand school meals for children being raised by grandparents and relative caregivers”](#)

Fitzpatrick in the News

“The most significant thing we can do in the House is declare war and to send somebody’s children into battle. Right beneath that is to impeach a president and overturn the results of an election. The process should be taken very seriously and very somberly. And it’s not. It is very partisan and political, and it’s very disappointing to see.”

— from an article in the *New Hope Free Press* titled [“Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick Votes Against Trump Impeachment Resolution”](#)

“We’re hearing from witnesses, so that’s good. But how the whole process is being conducted, questions that are being objected to, witnesses not being permitted to answer questions. That being said, I’ve found the witnesses to be credible.”

— from an article in the *Allentown Morning Call* titled [“Ukrainian angle moves Susan Wild closer to impeachment fray”](#)

NOTE - that same article, from the Morning Call’s Laura Olson, included this interesting information. To put it into context, there have been nearly a dozen closed door Impeachment Inquiry hearings that Foreign Affairs Committee members were to attend, lasting over 100 hours:

Fitzpatrick, a former supervisory FBI agent [who says the allegations against Trump instead should be investigated by law enforcement](#), said Wednesday that he has listened in on testimony from two witnesses so far, including Taylor.

He has stayed in those session for about an hour each time. Like Wild, Fitzpatrick didn't ask any questions while he was listening, and said staff counsel for the committees handled questions to the witnesses.

"Historical precedent demands that this only occurs in the most extreme circumstances, and should happen only after a formal law enforcement investigation where independent, nonpartisan factual findings of criminal activity are presented to Congress. As this had not occurred, and as all proceedings to date have been held in secret and excluded 75% of Congress, today's actions by the House have set a dangerous precedent for our nation."

— from a [Philadelphia Inquirer](#) article titled "[Stop putting politics ahead of our country' on Trump impeachment, veterans tell GOP Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick in new ad](#)"

"The biggest threat we face in this country is the way we talk to each other. That's everywhere from the kitchen table to the White House and everywhere in between."

— from a [Boston University News Service](#) article titled "[The view from the center: undeclared voters in New Hampshire clamor for compromise](#)"

"Clean energy presents an enormous opportunity to grow our economy, reduce carbon emissions and bolster our national security. Entrepreneurship in clean energy must be incentivized for these reasons, and I strongly support enhanced investment in the clean energy sector to promote American prosperity."

— from an article in [Solar Power World](#) titled "[SEIA garners industry support and lobbies for ITC extension](#)"

"Investing in our roads, bridges, and energy grid is an investment in our nation, our economy, and our families. I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to advance a bipartisan plan that brings each phase of infrastructure into the 21st century."

— from a blog post on the [Ripon Advance](#) site titled "[Fitzpatrick joins call urging Congress support a federal infrastructure package](#)"

"This bipartisan legislation is a crucial step toward ensuring small businesses in our communities have the tools and training to protect themselves, and their customers, from cyberattacks... As a former FBI Special Agent, I understand that cybersecurity is a complex and serious national and economic security issue that our country will continue to face over the decades to come. As such, we need to take action now to ensure we're protecting our nation's infrastructure and businesses."

— from a blog post on the [Ripon Advance](#) site titled "[Fitzpatrick proposes cybersecurity loans for nation's small businesses](#)"

"If you believe that Twitter is better at determining violent extremist content than the United States Government's interagency process, then we urge you to come testify before Congress to explain your own process and how it differs from that of the State and Treasury Departments."

— an excerpt from a letter to Twitter's leadership from four Congressmen, including Rep. Fitzpatrick, as reported in [The Algemeiner](#) article titled "[Major Jewish Groups Applaud Twitter for 'Belated' Shut Down of Hamas, Hezbollah Accounts](#)"

“Every single one of us at the time that we’re born baked into our genetic DNA is a natural human instinct to run away from danger — to flee fires, to flee dangers, to flee violence. The men and women that wear the uniform make a conscious decision to do the opposite, to run counter that human instinct and run toward the danger at great physical sacrifice, at great emotional sacrifice, all in the cause of serving something bigger than themselves... “I asked [a veteran heading to his third deployment overseas] a question most would: Repeatedly going back in harms way ... leaving a young family behind, what motivates you to do that? His words were, ‘We fight not because we hate the enemy standing in front of us, we fight because we love the nation standing behind us.’”

— from an article in the [Bucks County Courier Times](#) titled “[Hundreds honor veterans at Washington Crossing National Cemetery](#)”

“To our veterans who are here, God bless all of you for doing the work you have done. It’s also important that we send a message to our kids. If you serve your nation, your nation will stand behind you. And our nation will protect you and defend you and take care of you for the rest of your life.”

— from a [Bucks Local News](#) article titled “[Lower Makefield says thank you to its veterans with a parade and ceremony; special tribute given to Hamburger Hill veteran](#)”

“Jordan is one of our most important allies in the Middle East. The relationship we have built with them over the years has been crucial to our combined success in the war on terror. Now more than ever we need to reaffirm our commitment to them. I am proud to join this bipartisan group in supporting the United States-Jordan Defense Cooperation Extension Act.”

— from a [Florida Daily](#) article titled “[Ted Deutch Get Bill Helping Jordan Through House Foreign Affairs Committee](#)”

“We have no higher responsibility than to protect our kids. We must do everything we can to forcefully respond to egregious instances of stalking and cyberstalking.”

— from an article in [The Beaver Times](#) titled “[Senate passes Casey, Toomey bill that tightens penalties for stalking minors](#)”

Last, but certainly not least, is that one of our wonderful contributors, [@jgcOCANADA](#), was kind enough to transcribe the [full interview](#) that Rep. Fitzpatrick did with conservative talk radio host Dom Giordano. [Her transcription is available HERE](#). It is too long to include here in full, but this snippet of what Rep. Fitzpatrick said shows the vast difference between the tone he uses in his official statements and comments to journalists, and the tone he uses when talking to a partisan, talk-radio audience. In this quote below the Congressman is discussing House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Adam Schiff:

6:53 BF: Yeah, again, credibility is very important and the process matters. The process has been very partisan, and has not been designed to find facts and follow the truth. I could speculate as to why she’s given him primary jurisdiction because most of what they do is in the SCIF. It’s out of view of the cameras, and they can selectively cherry-pick information coming out of the deposition, leak it to the press, and try to change public opinion because that’s a lot of what is going on here, Dom.

Toomey in the News

Courtesy of contributor Elayne Baker

“Number one, it reaffirms that states are the number one regulators of fracking on state and private lands. And it states very clearly that the President of the United States does not have the authority to ban fracking... I don’t think they have the legal authority but apparently they do, and that’s why I think it’s important for Congress to go on record and make it clear — you do not have this authority.”

— from a [CBS Pittsburgh](#) article titled "[Pa. Senator Pat Toomey Introduces Bill To Prevent Presidents From Banning Fracking](#)"

"The top Democratic presidential candidates are competing with each other over who can be more hostile to this tremendous source of economic growth and national security. If enacted, their policies would abruptly end new natural gas extraction, drive up the cost of energy, cost many tens of thousands of jobs in Pennsylvania, create big holes in state and local government budgets, and increase our dependence on foreign energy sources once again."

— from an article in [Go Erie](#) titled "[Toomey offers resolution asserting presidents cannot ban fracking](#)"

"Passing this legislation is a major victory in the effort to stop animal cruelty and make our communities safer."

— from an article in [Go Erie](#) titled "[Toomey's bill banning animal crushing passes Senate](#)"

Lastly, there was an article about the SECURE Act, a retirement-related bill stalled in McConnell's Graveyard in the Senate. Senator Toomey's role in the situation was featured in the Allentown Morning Call article, titled "[Toomey at center of Senate standoff over retirement bill](#)." The entire article is worth reading. But, if you cannot read it in full, the segments below provide the context necessary to understand the situation.

Toomey's anger has reached a boiling point over widely popular legislation that updates federal retirement rules for the first time in 13 years, expanding options for consumers to save for retirement.

Last week, after Senate Democrats rejected his proposal to consider amendments — and Toomey rejected Senate Democrats' proposal to vote for the bill as written — the SECURE Act faces a longer, murkier path to passage.

"What we're hearing from our Democratic colleagues is the Senate is supposed to be a rubber stamp for what the House has done," Toomey said during a contentious floor debate...

...After the bill cruised through the House by a 417-3 vote in May, advocates like Richman expected quick passage through a process called unanimous consent. That means the Senate can pass the House version, so long as there are not any changes and every senator approves.

But Toomey — along with fellow Republicans Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and Sen. Mike Lee of Utah — raised objections and put a hold on the bill over the summer.

Toomey's opposition has put him at odds with fellow Republicans including Sen. Chuck Grassley of Iowa, chairman of the Finance Committee, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky.

After months of uncertainty, Toomey proposed a deal last week: GOP senators will offer five amendments, matched by up to five amendments offered by Democrats. He also proposed setting a 10-hour debate limit on the bill and 30 minutes of debate for each amendment.

"We could bang this out in a day, at the end of which we would pass the SECURE Act, preferably after considering amendments from both sides," Toomey said. He pointed out Senate Democrats frequently criticize the body as a "legislative graveyard" and "sometimes they have a point."

Learning about Legislation - Paid Family and Medical Leave

H.R. 1185: FAMILY Act - to provide paid family and medical leave benefits

This bill was introduced by Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D - Conn.) and it is pending in the House Ways and Means Committee. Our allies at the organization [Family Values @ Work](#) explain why this bill is so important:

Across the country, workers and businesses have realized that access to paid family and medical leave is key to managing the demands of job and family. But only 19% of workers have paid family and medical leave through their jobs. That reality is changing with the passage of statewide paid family and medical leave laws. 8 states and Washington DC now have paid family and medical leave, and several more (including PA!) are working on legislation. But for everyone to truly have access, we need a national program.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. DeLauro, made the following [statement](#) in support of her bill earlier this year. She said:

The FAMILY Act sets out the gold standard for paid leave for working people. It would ensure that millions of families that cannot afford to lose several weeks' worth of wages in order to care for an ill loved one or the birth of a child never have to make that impossible choice. Any proposal that stops short at parental leave only, does not cover at least up to 12 weeks, does not have a stable financing mechanism, or delays workers' Social Security benefits, is insufficient and will not actually help workers. We can do much better for the people of this country, and we must. That is why I will keep fighting until the FAMILY Act is the law of the land.

First introduced in 2013, the FAMILY Act would:

- Provide up to 12 weeks of partial wages to working people who need to take time away from their jobs to address a serious personal or family health issue, to care for a newborn or newly adopted child, or for circumstances arising from a loved one's military deployment or serious injury;
- Be self-funded through payroll contributions from employers and employees of just two-tenths of 1% each (two cents per \$10 in wages), or about \$4 a week total, split between employers and employees;
- Guarantee portable coverage so that workers who have multiple jobs, change jobs, or are self-employed are provided with the same security as traditional employees; and
- Provide 66% wage replacement, capped at \$4,000 a month.

Rep. Richard Neal, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, has also spoken out on behalf of paid family and medical leave programs. He made this [statement](#) to his committee:

No one should be forced to choose between caring for a loved one or dealing with a serious medical condition and paying their bills, but American working families face this choice all too frequently. Nearly all workers will need to take time away from work at some point to deal with serious personal health issues, to care for a family member, or to welcome a new child. But for middle-class workers, especially those on the lower end of the pay scale, taking unpaid leave makes it impossible to make ends meet. Other struggles without income for short periods of time then cut into these opportunities, and we simply see families that can't afford to take any leave from their responsibilities...

Lack of paid leave doesn't mean just harm to workers and their families; it also makes it difficult for employers to recruit and retain good workers. Many small business owners would like to provide paid leave, but can't without the backstop of a state or federal program. And the lack of access to paid leave hurts our economy by forcing talented, hard-working people to take a step back in their careers or drop out of the labor force entirely.

This is a problem. It is only going to grow. The most common reason that workers take leave today is to deal with their own serious medical conditions while remaining attached to the labor force. The population is aging, and the Department of Health and Human Services estimates that about half of Americans turning 65 today will develop a disability serious enough to require care. This means that the number of American workers who need personal medical leave and the number of American workers who need leave to care for aging parents, spouses, and other family members is only going to increase.

Now that you understand what is at stake and why paid family and medical leave benefits are critical to a thriving workforce, MoCTrack hopes that you are willing to take the next step...

Call to Action - Support this paid family and medical leave bill!

The GOP is constantly repeating the talking point that Democrats are so busy with impeachment that they cannot focus on anything else. Let's prove them WRONG! Please take a few minutes this week to contact your Member of Congress in support of **H.R. 1185: the FAMILY Act**.

The National Implementation Director from [Family Values @ Work](#) had the following message for us: "The Family And Medical Insurance Leave (FAMILY) Act is what we need for our workers and our economy. With 199 cosponsors, the bill is ready for a hearing in the House of Representatives – and that's where we need your help."

First, if you are in the Congressional districts for ● **PA-02's Rep. Brendan Boyle** or ● **PA-03's Rep. Dwight Evans** - [SIGN ON TO THIS LETTER](#) [Family Values @ Work](#) prepared [this letter](#) to contact Reps. Boyle and Evans and ask them for help getting a hearing. As our representatives on Ways & Means, their additional support (they are already cosponsors!) could help us pass this legislation in the House.

Those of us in other districts can help as well, though our action is slightly different. If you live in a district with a Democratic MoC, your representative is already a co-sponsor. When you call ● **PA-04's Rep. Madeleine Dean**, ● **PA-05's Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon**, ● **PA-06's Rep. Chrissy Houlahan**, ● **PA-07's Rep. Susan Wild**, ● **PA-08's Rep. Matt Cartwright**, ● **PA-17's Rep. Conor Lamb**, or ● **PA-18's Rep. Mike Doyle**, please use this script:

I am calling in support of H.R. 1185, the FAMILY Act. Hard working Americans deserve a paid family and sick leave program, and I want to thank you for co-sponsoring this bill. I hope you will take the addition step of encouraging your colleagues on the House Ways and Means Committee to schedule a hearing for this important legislation.

If you live in a district with a Republican MoC, the ask is slightly different. So those of you represented by ● **PA-01's Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick**, ● **PA-09's Rep. Dan Meuser**, ● **PA-10's Rep. Scott Perry**, ● **PA-11's Rep. Lloyd Smucker**, ● **PA-12's Rep. Fred Keller**, ● **PA-13's Rep. John Joyce**, ● **PA-14's Rep. Guy Reschenthaler**, ● **PA-15's Rep. Glenn W. Thompson** or ● **PA-16's Rep. Mike Kelly** will want to use this script:

Hard working Americans deserve a paid family and sick leave program. I am calling in support of H.R. 1185, the FAMILY Act. There are millions of American families that cannot afford to lose several weeks' worth of wages in order to care for an ill loved one, and that's just not right. A number of states and cities have put successful paid leave programs into place, but we deserve a national plan. The FAMILY Act has bipartisan cosponsors, and I hope you will consider joining on as well - for the sake of all the families in our district.

We hope you can take a little bit of time this week to make this one call. And MoCTrack wants to sincerely thank [Family Values @ Work](#) for their help with this week's Call to Action. Please check out their [website](#), [Facebook](#) presence and [Twitter](#) account to learn more about the great work they do to advocate for secure paid family leave for all workers!

This report brought to you by the Pennsylvania MoCTrack team...

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We can always use 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!