

PA-01 Member of Congress Tracking Report - 02.16.20

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 Demcast and Pennsylvania Statewide Indivisible 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)	29.1%	0.0%
Senator Pat Toomey (R)	87.5%	0.0%
PA-01 Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R)	64.8%	-0.8%

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. There was a scoring anomaly this week, and we are waiting for feedback from FiveThirtyEight to explain it. No votes were scored this week, but on 02/11/20 the website did an update/modification of scores. We will provide an explanation once information is available.

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.

Votes of Interest

The Senate Asserts its War Powers and Blocks Iran Hostilities

[Senate Vote on S.J.Res. 68](#): *A joint resolution to direct the removal of United States Armed Forces from hostilities against the Islamic Republic of Iran that have not been authorized by Congress*

A bipartisan group of four senators (Time Kane of Virginia, Dick Durbin of Illinois, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Mike Lee of Utah) introduced a joint resolution to limit the president's ability to direct an offensive strike against Iran. The resolution is built around the opening statement of "Congress has the sole power to declare war under article I, section 8, clause 11 of the United States Constitution." The measure goes on to affirm that the United States Congress has NOT declared war on Iran, and notes that "more than 100 members of the United States Armed Forces sustained traumatic brain injuries in the Iranian retaliatory attack on the Ain al-Assad air base in Iraq despite initial reports that no casualties were sustained in the attack." The closing portions of the resolution read (**emphasis** added by MoCTrack):

(a) Termination - Pursuant to section 1013 of the Department of State Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1984 and 1985 (50 U.S.C. 1546a), and in accordance with the provisions of section 601(b) of the International Security Assistance and Arms Export Control Act of 1976, **Congress hereby directs the President to terminate the use of United States Armed Forces for hostilities against the Islamic Republic of Iran or any part of its government or military**, unless explicitly authorized by a declaration of war or specific authorization for use of military force against Iran.

(b) Rule of construction - **Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the United States from defending itself from imminent attack.**

Vote date: Thursday, February 13, 2020

Vote Tally: 55-45

Party Breakdown: All Democrats and Independents were joined by 8 Republicans in voting YES. The Eight Republicans are Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Todd Young of Indiana, Jerry Moran of Kansas, Rand Paul of Kentucky, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, Susan Collins of Maine, Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and Mike Lee of Utah.

Additional Reading:

- [“Senate Approves Legislation To Limit President’s War Powers Against Iran,”](#) from *NPR*
- [“In Bipartisan Bid to Restrain Trump, Senate Passes Iran War Powers Resolution,”](#) from *The New York Times*
- [“For Some Reason, No One Trusts This President* to Go to War With Iran,”](#) from *Esquire*

Casey voted YES and Toomey voted NO. A veto is expected.

One Small Step toward the Equal Rights Amendment

[House Vote](#) on [H.J.Res. 79](#): *Removing the deadline for the ratification of the equal rights amendment*

For an amendment to be added to the Constitution, it must not only pass both houses of Congress, but it must be ratified by ¾ of our states. Often, the text of such an amendment includes a deadline by which it must receive the approval of the requisite states. In the case of the ERA, passed in 1972, the text of the amendment notes it must be ratified by 1979. It is, however, well within the rights of Congress to extend that deadline and has already been done once before for this measure. Earlier this year, Virginia became the 38th and final state to ratify the ERA, prompting this week’s vote to extend the ratification deadline.

Vote date: Thursday, February 13, 2020 **Vote Tally: 232-183**

Party Breakdown: All Democrats and 5 Republicans (including PA-01’s Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick) voted YES on this measure. Independent Justin Amash and all remaining Republicans voted NO.

Additional Reading:

- [“House passes resolution that would dissolve Equal Rights Amendment deadline,”](#) from *ABC News*
- [“House action on Equal Rights Amendment sets up legal fights,”](#) from *The Hill*
- [“U.S. House removes ERA ratification deadline, one obstacle to enactment,”](#) from *The Washington Post*

Fitzpatrick voted YES.

The House Votes to Protect more Western Wilderness

[House Vote](#) on [H.R. 2546](#): *Colorado Wilderness Act*

This is an amalgam of six separate bills that will protect over 1.3 million acres of wilderness in not just Colorado but also California and Washington state. It establishes several new wilderness areas, expands the boundaries of several existing preserves, and expands the National Wild and Scenic Rivers network by about 1,000 miles. The [Sierra Club](#) explains that wilderness is “the strongest level of federal lands protection, a product of the 1964 Wilderness Act, which created a framework for designating areas ‘unimpaired for future use.’ Commercial activity, vehicles, and motorized equipment are not permitted. Even bikes are a no-no. It’s wilderness in the purest sense.”

Vote date: Wednesday, February 12, 2020 **Vote Tally: 231-183**

Party Breakdown: All but six Republicans voted NO, along with the lone Independent. All Democrats present voted YES.

Additional Reading:

- [“Another Wilderness Bill?”](#) from *The Sierra Club*
- [“US House approves wilderness protection bill,”](#) from *The Telluride Daily Planet*
- [“U.S. House approves largest Colorado wilderness bill in 40 years. But not everyone is happy.”](#) from *The Colorado Sun*

Fitzpatrick voted YES.

Judicial Confirmation #1

[Senate Confirmation Vote](#) on Andrew Lynn Brasher to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit

It was only nine months ago that the 38-year-old Judge Brasher was confirmed to a district court position. Now the Trump Administration wants to launch him into the level of the judiciary just below the Supreme Court. Brasher is a close ally of the president having worked on his transition team, coordinating criminal justice policy. A number of legal groups came out strongly against Brasher both then and now. The [Alliance for Justice](#) explains why, in a letter to Senators:

Brasher's record on eroding rights for persons of color should alone be disqualifying. He filed an amicus brief in *Shelby County v. Holder* that supported eroding the Voting Rights Act. He defended Alabama's harsh felon anti-voter law that, according to one study, disenfranchises over 286,000 Alabamians. Brasher was involved in a lawsuit arguing it is unconstitutional for the Census Bureau to count non-citizens. He has a history of defending unconstitutional racial gerrymanders in Alabama and Virginia, and in his personal capacity has criticized the Supreme Court's efforts to remedy racial gerrymanders. Brasher also supported an unconstitutional Florida law mandating universal drug testing for Florida Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) applicants that the Eleventh Circuit found stripped away "legitimate expectations of privacy" for thousands simply "by virtue of [their] poverty."

That same letter also cites that the nominee "consistently fought against rights of women," and "attacked LGBTQ rights" as well as "fought against workers, consumers, and the environment." The [Vetting Room](#) also has a substantial list of cases where Mr. Brasher fought against the rights of citizens. Once such example was a Supreme Court case where he defended the imposition of the death penalty upon a mentally ill defendant.

Vote date: Tuesday, February 11, 2020 **Vote Tally:** 52-43 (confirmed)

Party Breakdown: This was a pure, party line vote with all Democrats and Independents present voting NO, and Republicans voting YES.

Additional Reading:

- [Full Nominee Report on Andrew Brasher](#), from *Alliance for Justice*
- ["NAACP Strongly Opposes Andrew Brasher's Nomination to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals,"](#) from the *NAACP*
- ["Senate confirms Alabama Judge Andrew Brasher for federal appeals court post,"](#) from *Alabama.com*
- ["Judge Andrew Brasher – Nominee to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit,"](#) from *The Vetting Room*

Casey voted NO and Toomey voted YES

Judicial Confirmation #2

[Senate Confirmation Vote](#) on Joshua M. Kindred to be United States District Judge for the District of Alaska

[The Vetting Room](#) puts this nomination into context by comparing it to a past, failed Trump nomination to the same seat. They explain the issues with this nominee so well, let's just review some of their comments:

Last year, the nomination of Jon Katchen to the federal bench in Alaska failed amidst opposition from Alaskan lawyers regarding Katchen's relative inexperience. The Trump Administration has responded by nominating an even younger lawyer with less experience. This time, with a broader Senate majority, Republicans look to push through Joshua Kindred to the Alaska federal bench...

...Kindred participated in regulatory rulemaking processes, including commenting on proposed regulations of the Alaska oil and gas industries. For example, in 2015, Kindred testified before the Senate Committee in favor of further oil and gas development under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). He also opposed potential state regulations on fracking, arguing that the regulations are "unnecessary" and "provide delays and increased costs."

... In 2018, Katchen's nomination faced sharp criticism on the grounds that he was rated 13th out of 20 applicants before the Alaska Bar Association. Today, Kindred has been

nominated for the position despite having an even worse rating of 16th.[15] Comparatively, while only 31% of respondents rated Katchen as Extremely Qualified or Well Qualified for a federal judgment, only 15% similarly rated Kindred. As such, the same criticisms of youth and inexperience that dogged Katchen could be applied to Kindred.

Vote date: Wednesday, February 12, 2020

Vote Tally: 54-41 (confirmed)

Party Breakdown: All Republicans voted YES, and they were joined by two Democrats - Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona and Joe Manchin of West Virginia. All other Democrats and Independents present voted NO.

Additional Reading:

- [“Trump's Alaska Trial Court Pick Worth \\$761K,”](#) from *Law 360*
- [“Trump's nominee for US court in Alaska gets low marks from state Bar but has youth on his side,”](#) from *Alaska Public Media*
- [“Joshua Kindred – Nominee to the U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska,”](#) from *The Vetting Room*

Casey voted NO and Toomey voted YES

Judicial Confirmations, widely approved

This trio of judges were confirmed with supermajorities, a rare enough occurrence for Trump nominations.

- [Philip M. Halpern](#) to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of New York; confirmed in a 77-19 vote on Wednesday, February 12, 2020. **Casey voted NO and Toomey voted YES**
- [John Fitzgerald Kness](#) to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Illinois; confirmed in an 81-12 vote on Wednesday, February 12, 2020. **Casey voted YES and Toomey voted YES**
- [Matthew Thomas Schelp](#) to be United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Missouri; confirmed in a 72-23 vote on Wednesday, February 12, 2020. **Casey voted NO and Toomey voted YES**

Unanimously passed legislation

The following bills were passed through unanimous consent or voice vote (which presumes unanimity, as any member can object to the voice vote and ask for a roll call). This list excludes bills related to post offices, stamps, memorials, awareness weeks and other ceremonial activities.

- [H.R. 1494](#) - Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) Homeland Security Partnerships Act
- [H.R. 4432](#) - Protecting Critical Infrastructure Against Drones and Emerging Threats Act
- [H.R. 4737](#) - Department of Homeland Security Climate Change Research Act
- [H.R. 4753](#) - Drone Origin Security Enhancement Act
- [H.R. 5273](#) - Securing America's Ports Act
- [S. 2107](#) - Protecting America's Food and Agriculture Act
- [H.J. Res. 80](#) - Approving the request of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs for a waiver under section 1703E(f) of title 38, United States Code
- [H.R. 2744](#) - USAID Branding Modernization Act
- [S. Res. 504](#) - A resolution honoring the memories of the victims of the senseless attack at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, 2018

Our Senators' statements on the Iran War Powers vote:

● **Senator Bob Casey, via Twitter, [02/13/20](#):**

“Today, the Senate met its constitutionally-mandated responsibility and voted to restrict the President's ability to drag us into a war with Iran without congressional authorization.

While President Trump has stated that he plans to veto the Iran War Powers Resolution, today was a significant step towards Congress re-asserting its authority and meeting its responsibility to carefully consider any action that may bring U.S. servicemembers into harm's way."

● **Senator Pat Toomey, via his official website, [02/13/20](#):**

"Iran is the leading state sponsor of terrorism in the world. President Trump was right to take decisive action recently to hold Iran accountable and restore deterrence, the result of which has led to a de-escalation of tensions between the United States and Iran. As we are not currently engaged in hostilities with Iran, the War Powers Resolution is both unnecessary and unhelpful. Further, its enactment would limit the president's ability as commander-in-chief to defend our troops and diplomats abroad as necessary."

MoC Twitter Action

Courtesy of contributor Hele, a.k.a @ElastigirlVotes on Twitter

Twitter Action - the Trump Budget

● **Senator Bob Casey, @SenBobCasey, [02/12/20](#):**

"President: 'I'm going to protect seniors.'

President's FY 2021 budget:

100% cut to falls prevention programs

50% cut to lifespan respite care program

25% cut to intellectual disability programs

25% cut to aging and disability resource centers

20% cut to disability research programs

19% cut to family caregiver support services

13% cut to assistive technology programs

9% cut to Health and Human Services

Billions of dollars slashed from Medicare and Medicaid.

All while expanding tax cuts for the rich."

Twitter Action - Guns

● **Senator Bob Casey, @SenBobCasey, [02/14/20](#):**

"Alyssa Alhadeff

Scott Beigel

Martin Duque

Nicholas Dworet

Aaron Feis

Jaime Guttenberg

Chris Hixon

Luke Hoyer

Cara Loughran

Gina Montalto

Joaquin Oliver

Alaina Petty

Meadow Pollack

Helena Ramsay

Alex Schachter

Carmen Schentrup

Peter Wang

17 lost.

0 major gun safety bills passed.

After Columbine, we said never again. After Sandy Hook, we said never again. After Parkland, we said never again. We say “never again” again and again. Yet every year approx. 2,900 children and teens are shot and killed in the United States.

Inaction is killing our children.”

● **PA-01’s Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, @RepBrianFitz, [02/14/20](#):**

“Great meeting with Tony Montalto and @StandWParkland. This organization is committed to ensuring that our kids are safe in school We must continue to come together to find solutions to stop gun violence”



Twitter Action - MoCs on Legislation

● **Senator Bob Casey, @SenBobCasey, [02/13/20](#):**

“The House just voted to remove the deadline on the #ERA and prove that there’s no deadline on equality. Now the Senate must do the same. Our Constitution must reflect our values: that we all deserve equal treatment under the law. #ERANow”



● **PA-01’s Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, @RepBrianFitz, [02/11/20](#):**

“HERstory!!! Today I took to the House Floor in support of my bill, the Smithsonian Women’s History Museum Act, before it passed the House. I am thrilled to see the culmination of our work get us one step closer to making this a reality for all women across America, and I thank my co-lead @RepMaloney for her leadership and her friendship.” *tweeted with embedded video*

Tweet of the Week

The best and worst content of the week from Pennsylvania's MoCs

● **Senator Bob Casey, @SenBobCasey, 01/20/20:**

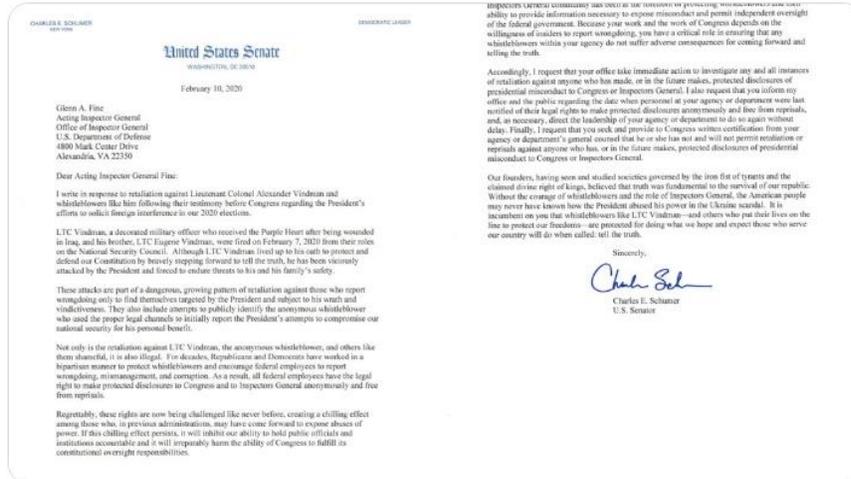
"In light of escalating attacks against public servants who come forward in the face of unprecedented corruption, I strongly support calling on IGs to protect whistleblowers from retaliation. Not only is retaliation a disgrace to our democracy, as @SenSchumer said, it's illegal."



Chuck Schumer ✓
@SenSchumer

Not only is retaliation against LTC Vindman, the anonymous whistleblower, and others like them shameful—it is also illegal.

I'm calling on every single federal Inspector General to investigate any and all retaliation against whistleblowers who disclose presidential misconduct.



11:14 AM · Feb 10, 2020 · Twitter Web App

● **Senator Pat Toomey, @SenToomey, 02/14/20:**

"What's sweet on #ValentinesDay? Candy from one of PA's many confectioners. What's not? Our gov. sponsored sugar program where we saddle consumers with the bill for overpriced sugar. If only there was a bipartisan proposal to fix it, right @SenatorShaheen? <http://bit.ly/2u26pE2>"

● **PA-01's Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, @RepBrianFitz, 02/12/20:**

"I met with students from New Hope Solebury Cares, to discuss their concerns with opioid, alcohol, and vape abuse in their schools. It is incredibly important that we listen to our students, work with them, and learn from their experiences."



Casey in the News

Courtesy of contributor Linda Houk

“President Trump’s budget slashes Medicare and Medicaid. He promised to protect the programs in 2016, but he lied. Instead of strengthening the middle class, the President keeps giving tax cuts to the super-rich and big corporations while hardworking families foot the bill... This budget makes it clear: Whenever President Trump and congressional Republicans get the chance, Medicare and Medicaid are on the chopping block.”

—from an article in *the Bradford Era* titled [“Toomey, Casey disagree on Trump’s proposed budget”](#)

“An investment in home care is an investment in the future of rural America... We’ve got to have more resources.”

—from an article in the *Ellwood City Ledger* titled [“‘We have to fix this,’ home health-care worker tells Casey, Aging Committee”](#)

“We must invest in home health care... That is why I am introducing the Home and Community-Based Services Infrastructure Improvement Act. This bill will provide Medicaid grants to all states to support existing service providers and encourage the creation of new delivery systems to meet the needs of older adults and people with disabilities.”

—from an article in *Home Health Care News* titled [“Senate Bill Seeks to Create New Home-Based Care Delivery Systems, Boost Caregiver Wages”](#)

“Attorney General Barr is disgracing our rule of law by diverting law enforcement resources away from legitimate law enforcement to investigate debunked conspiracy theories... After the Senate impeachment trial, some of my Republican colleagues said the president had learned his lesson and would change his behavior. Clearly, he has done neither.”

—from an article in *Mother Jones* titled [“Why Did William Barr Pick Pittsburgh to be Rudy Giuliani’s Ukraine Conduit?”](#)

“I thought it was an especially important year to propose this, when you have a huge presidential election ... and a big Congressional election. I just think these big debates should be on the table, and we’ll do everything we can to make the case for our kids.”

“We just have to give every kid a shot. And, if they have health care, they have enough to eat, they have early learning opportunities and you can do everything possible to keep them safe, they’re going to have a chance.”

—from an article in *The Citizens' Voice* titled [“Casey’s proposal offers protections for children”](#)

Fitzpatrick in the News

“We must ensure that no child, and no family, will ever endure such a tragedy again. I commend these families for their commitment to bipartisan solutions, and for having the courage to turn their tragedy into positive action.”

— from a *Pennsylvania Capital-Star* episode titled [“U.S. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick meets with Parkland families, Trump on school safety measures”](#)

“When it comes to a 3.5% pay increase, I have your back and I’m with you. When it comes to protecting your pensions, I’m with you. This is not about left and right, this is right and wrong. For the sustainability of any movement, and this is why I love the labor movement, you focus like a laser on the issues. We have to focus on that. We need as many friends from as many corners as we can get to get that accomplished. Count me in; I’m with you guys.”

— the representative’s comments on the low pay increase for federal employees in the Trump Budget, from an article in the *Federal News Network* titled [“Despite last year’s victories, familiar challenges resurface for AFGE in 2020”](#)

“Aside from a shared devotion to the Philadelphia Eagles, we both believe that Congress can and must do more to combat climate change and rebuild our crumbling infrastructure. These two issues go hand in hand and have the potential to shape our communities and our country for decades.”

— from a *Philadelphia Inquirer* opinion piece co-authored by Sen. Chris Coons (D-Del.) and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, titled [“It’s time for bipartisan support in combating climate change and rebuilding infrastructure”](#)

Representative Fitzpatrick did [a radio interview](#) this week on 1440 AM WNPV’s Comment Please program. MoCTrack contributor CC was kind enough to transcribe portions of that 15-minute-long interview.

From 2:15, his comments on his brother:

“He was a big, big believer in... as soon as votes are done, the second they’re done, getting on that Amtrak train, getting home and being with our bosses, our constituents, spending as much time in the district, out and about on the streets, going to every corner of the community to just interact with people and listen to them. That’s probably the greatest lesson that Mike taught me — that to be an effective representative, you’ve gotta spend time listening to people, seeing the world through their eyes, walking in their shoes and understanding their perspective on an issue or any problem that they’re dealing with, and put yourself in their position that you’re able to personalize it a lot more and your response is generally much better.”

From 10:45, his comments on the impeachment process:

“There was no law enforcement investigation, even though I asked them to make that referral, they did not. It was originally taken out of the committee of jurisdiction, the Judiciary, and given to the Intelligence Committee and for over a month there were hearings in a [unintelligible], essentially a classified bunker even though no classified information was being discussed; all these witnesses being deposed — not all those witnesses deposed made their way to the Judiciary Committee or even the Intel Committee for the open hearings. The majority/minority parties were not given equal rights to call witnesses and subpoena documents. What I surmised as the only FBI agent in Congress whose last assignment ... was in Ukraine fighting corruption, even I, Darryl, was totally blocked out of the process.”

From 12:33, his comments on the Problem Solvers Caucus:

"I will tell you, I mean, this morning we had our Problem Solvers Caucus meeting, and I can tell you, Darryl, it has not impacted our relationships with each other... We need to move forward on a lot of important work. Thankfully USMCA got across the finish line, which is gonna be a tremendous boon to our economy. And we got a lot of work to do on infrastructure, we have a lot of work to do on opioids, on mental health parity, student loan debt, there's a lot of things we're trying to tackle here, that we gotta get across the finish line, and we can't dwell on anything in the past, especially divisive things like impeachment.

Toomey in the News

Courtesy of contributor Elayne Baker

"Tax reform's most pro-growth feature was allowing businesses to immediately write off purchases of new equipment. It led to workers becoming more productive, which resulted in higher wages and more jobs. My bill to make full expensing permanent would give manufacturers and businesses of all sizes certainty around investment planning and it would keep our economy humming. I thank my cosponsors for recognizing the economic benefits of full expensing and look forward to getting this measure passed and signed into law."

— from an article in the [Daily Local News](#) titled "[Sen. Pat Toomey introduces bill to boost U.S. economy](#)"

"For the past five years, I have fought to end sanctuary city policies that endanger the public. The fact is that these policies, like the ones in Philadelphia, San Francisco, and other areas across the country, make it harder to keep dangerous criminals off the streets.

"President Trump was right to shine a light on the threat sanctuary city policies pose as part of his State of the Union address and I wholeheartedly applaud Attorney General Barr and the Department of Justice for taking further legal actions to combat them.

"It's past time for Congress to do its part and pass my Stop Dangerous Sanctuary Cities legislation, which would help put an end to sanctuary city policies."

— from a [MyChesCo](#) article titled "[Toomey Statement on DOJ Action Against Sanctuary City Policies](#)"

"As a result of paying the punitive tariffs, ATI has been forced to operate certain facilities at unsustainable levels. I am concerned that if ATI's exclusion requests are denied or decisions are not made until early this spring, ATI may be forced to announce the closure of the Midland mill, which would directly eliminate 100 jobs and impact another 200 outside jobs that support the mill."

— an excerpt from a letter penned by the senator, as cited in a [Pennsylvania Business Report](#) article titled "[Sen. Toomey requests tariff relief for Allegheny Technologies](#)"

"Pennsylvania has been hit hard by the opioid epidemic and while significant steps have been taken to address it, more work remains. [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services] CMS is proposing to implement three provisions I authored as part of the 2018 SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act that would help ensure Medicare is a better steward of opioid prescriptions and takes commonsense steps to prevent abuse and misuse. I look forward to working with CMS to enact these provisions and improve Medicare for seniors and people with disabilities."

— from an article in [The Bradford Era](#) titled "[Toomey provisions included in CMS proposal](#)"

"Our government is on an unsustainable spending path. Since 2014, overall spending has increased by nearly a trillion dollars and our big entitlement programs remain on a crash course with insolvency. For

that reason, I appreciate that President Trump's proposal includes \$4.6 trillion in savings over the next decade. With unemployment at near historic lows, the president is right to slow the growth rates of, and tighten eligibility requirements for, the various welfare programs.

"Furthermore, the entire 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act should be made permanent in order to continue fueling a booming economy. The president's budget takes a constructive step in that direction.

The most important responsibility for a president is to keep the American people safe. Continuing efforts to rebuild the military and increase security at the southern border are necessary parts of accomplishing this.

Finally, this budget proposal serves only to outline the priorities of the administration and does not carry the weight of law. The ultimate responsibility for passing a budget and funding the government rests with Congress."

— from an article in *MyChesCo* titled "[Toomey Statement on Trump's 2021 Budget Proposal](#)"

"That's a very, very dangerous path to go down. This beggar-thy-neighbor mutual currency devaluation is not in our interest, and it is not in the mandate of the Fed to pursue it."

— the senator's comments to Fed Chair nominee Judy Shelton during her committee hearing, as quoted by *Deal Breaker* in the article "[You'll Never Guess What Happened To Trump's Latest Fed Nominee](#)"

Learning about Legislation - Five Freedoms for America's Children

Late last week Senator Casey unveiled his new legislative initiative, the [Five Freedoms for America's Children](#). It is an ambitious proposal, outlining a collection of policy goals and legislative proposals to make sure that every child in the United States is provided with a safe, nurturing and secure start to life. This plan is meticulously researched, and because of that it is quite lengthy. Below you will find a detailed recap of Casey's outline for how politicians of today can build a system to benefit the children of future generations. Any quotes noted below are from the plan proposal on Senator Casey's website, unless otherwise indicated.

Background

In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered an annual address that has come to be known as the [Four Freedoms speech](#). The centerpiece of that speech was this passage:

In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression – everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship god in his own way – everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want...everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear...anywhere in the world. That is no vision of a distant millennium. It is a definite basis for a kind of world attainable in our own time and generation.

Senator Casey grounded his Five Freedoms for America's Children on the goals outlined by President Roosevelt, but he also noted that he was inspired by a passage of writing from his father, the late Pennsylvania Governor Bob Casey. [Governor Casey wrote](#):

Only government, when all else fails, can safeguard the vulnerable and powerless. When it renegs [sic] on that obligation, freedom becomes a hollow word. A hard-working person unable to find work and support his or her family is not free. A person for whom sickness means financial ruin, with no health insurance to soften the blow, is not free. A malnourished child, an uneducated child, a child trapped in foster care - these children are not free. And without a few breaks along the way from government, such children in most cases will never be truly free.

The Broad Strokes

Based on those foundational statements, Senator Casey crafted his Five Freedoms for America's Children. They are:

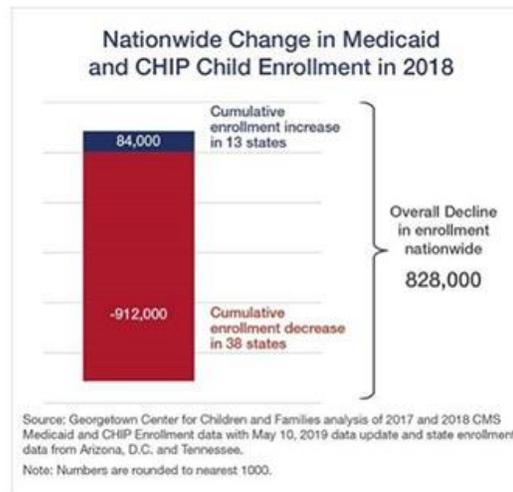
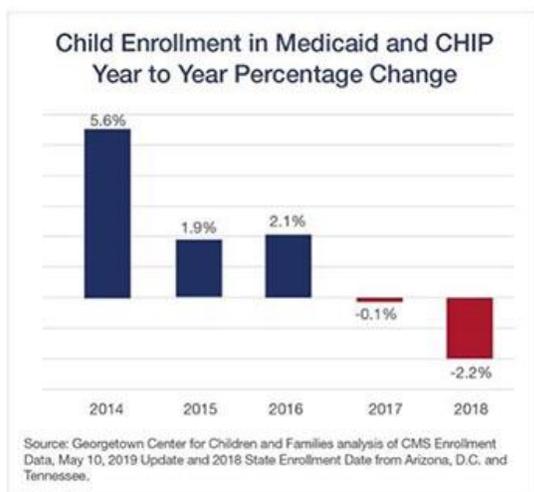
1. The freedom to be healthy
2. The freedom to be economically secure
3. The freedom to learn
4. The freedom from hunger
5. The freedom to be safe from harm

For each of these freedoms, Senator Casey has provided a set of publicly available research data, the conclusions that he has drawn from that data, and suggestions for policies to be implemented.

Freedom to be Healthy

"All children deserve access to quality health care. Public policy should ensure that children benefit from both preventive health care and the dramatic advances in American medical care." - Senator Casey

In the documentation portion of the plan, Senator Casey shows that over 4 in 10 American children currently receive health coverage that is either provided by the government (Medicaid, Medicare, VA) or subsidized by government sources (CHIP, ACA Marketplace). But those programs cover less than half of children with disabilities or special health needs, and only cover 8 in 10 children who live in poverty. And even with these government programs, there are still children in the country who remain uninsured. Even worse, the percentage of children enrolled in some of these critical programs is declining dramatically, as the Trump Administration has continued their attacks on government health care initiatives. The charts below, from [Senator Casey's site](#), show the decline in coverage, just from 2017 to 2018.



His proposed solution: automatic Medicaid enrollment for all children at birth. This would ensure that all children are guaranteed access to early care, testing and treatment (if needed). In his words, "access to Medicaid, and especially to [the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment program], leads to positive education and economic outcomes over an individual's lifetime. By guaranteeing access to health care, this policy will create a better future for our children and our Nation."

Freedom to Be Economically Secure

"Economic stability and security for children and their families are the best predictors of a child's well-being. Many programs that alleviate poverty have been shown to improve a child's birth, health and educational outcomes." - Senator Casey

The research background of this portion outlines the income levels of America's families and the widespread lack of savings. It also provides some information on policies that some states have

undertaken to address this issue. The senator draws from what has been learned in the implementation of those state programs in crafting his policy response.

Senator Casey suggests several policy solutions to create financial security for children:

- The American Family Act - this is a bill introduced by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio) and Sen. Michael Bennet (D-Colo.) that nearly doubles the amount provided under the existing Child Tax Credit.
- The Working Families Tax Relief Act - this was also introduced by Senators Brown and Bennet, and it expands the current Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as well as the Child Tax Credit and makes the latter fully refundable.
- Senator Casey's [new proposal](#) to be added to the other two initiatives is a Children's Savings Account - this would establish a savings account for every child parent(s) or guardian earns under \$100,000 per year (about half of children in the United States), and each year \$500 would be deposited at tax time. Parents, family and friends could add to that account as well.

The combination of these three policies would drastically reduce childhood poverty.

Freedom to Learn

"High quality early care and education activities improve children's capacity to learn and succeed in school, their emotional development and their ability to succeed in jobs and careers." - Senator Casey

In the research portion of the [plan](#), it is explained that a declining number of children who qualify for early childhood programs like child care assistance are accessing those services. It also details that under 4 in 10 of the kids who are eligible to attend the Head Start program are doing so, even as childcare costs are skyrocketing. Also provided is information about the benefits of Head Start, and the positive later-in-life outcomes that result from quality early-childhood programs.

The Senator offers three policy solutions:

- Increase funding of the Head Start program by \$18 billion a year, so that all 3 and 4-year-old children in the country can attend full day early education programs.
- Increase funding to the Child Care Entitlement to States (CCES) program, so that states can offer more childcare cost subsidies to families.
- Implement the senator's own [Child Care and Dependent Tax Credit Enhancement Act](#). This legislation would create (based on income level and number of children) a tax credit of up to \$6,000 per year to offset childcare costs. This would be available to families that make up to \$120,000 per year.

A [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#) study found that the child care tax credit alone would raise nearly 900,000 children out of poverty, create half a million jobs and create aggregate earning growth of more than \$9 billion.

Freedom from Hunger

"The negative consequences of hunger and food insecurity among children are well-documented. Hunger is associated with a higher risk of chronic diseases, particularly asthma, and also with a range of behavioral, social and mental disorders." - Senator Casey

Many of the hurdles in addressing childhood hunger are purely bureaucratic, according to the research portion of the senator's proposal. It outlines the tangled web of agencies, certification processes, and data matching systems involved in determining if a child is eligible for free or subsidized school nutrition programs. Other roadblocks to providing school meal programs involve awareness of eligibility, shaming issues, and the manner in which school debts are handled by districts.

The [policy solutions](#) that the Senator offers are:

- Expansion of direct certification of eligibility - if a child is eligible for a needs-based health care program (like CHIP or Medicaid) then they are automatically eligible for school nutrition programs.

Currently this is only available to Medicaid recipients, but any number of other needs-based programs can be added to reduce the administrative burden on parents, school districts and states.

- Expansion of community eligibility - there are current policies in place where if a certain percentage of students are eligible for school nutrition programs, then ALL students in the given community can access those programs. The Senator's plan would reduce the threshold for community wide free meals and change the manner in which it is calculated, so that more children have access to free lunch programs.
- Change and standardize the manner in which school lunch debt is handled to reduce stigma and shaming, by implementing retroactive reimbursement.

In Senator Casey's words, "the most important impact of expanding direct certification and community eligibility is that when combined, these changes move the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs much further in the direction of universal meal service, especially in schools with significant proportions of low- and moderate-income students."

Freedom to be Safe from Harm

"Children deserve to grow up free from abuse and neglect, yet, all too often, children in America do not grow up in a safe environment. An estimated one in seven children experienced abuse or neglect in the last year. " - Senator Casey

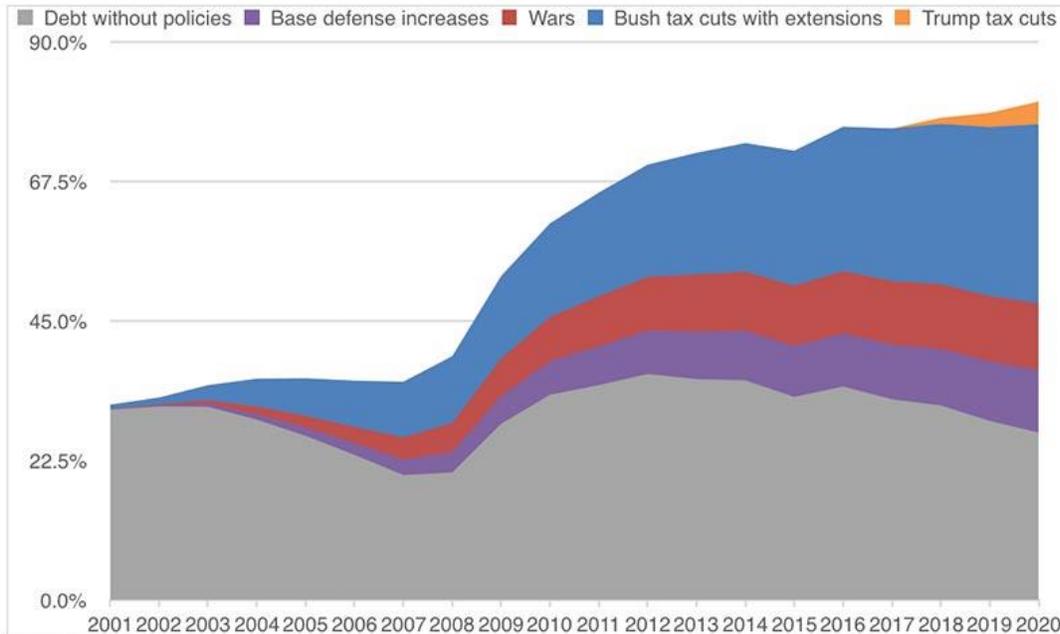
The [research portion](#) of the plan explains the incidence of abuse and neglect experienced by the children of our nation. It proceeds to outline the issues involved in the under-funding of state systems designed to deal with abuse and neglect, and the growing and unmanageable caseloads experienced by the employees of those agencies. It also notes the ties between the opioid epidemic in the country, and the strains on service agencies helping children of parents that suffer from substance abuse disorders.

The senator details how the current legislation that funds and dictates the interaction between the federal funding and state agencies dealing with child welfare - the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) - works. It is currently funded at under \$200 million a year. The Senator wants to see that expanded to a funding level of \$5 billion across 10 years. The other solution that he proposes is a dispersal of grant funds to State Attorneys General to deal with wide-spread or long-term abuse cases, like the cases of the Catholic Church, Penn State University, and Michigan State University. Currently, local police are expected to handle abuse cases, but such widespread, systemic situations can only be handled by statewide authorities.

At the heart of the senator's proposal for safety is that the current systems only need small structural modifications, but must be funded at a level to provide sustainable operations, so that no child slips through the cracks.

Funding

Central to most of these policy proposals from Senator Casey is increased funding to existing programs, or funds for new policies. To do so, the senator calls for "reforming our national spending priorities." In [this section of the policy proposal](#), Senator Casey turns a critical eye past tax cuts as well as the 2017 GOP Tax Plan. He lays out how, if several portions of that corporate welfare programs instituted by the Republican Party were reversed, it would provide more than adequate funding to institute those reforms necessary to provide the **Five Freedoms for America's Children**.



New Policies Are Responsible for a Significant Portion of the Existing Debt.

Debt held by the public as a percent of gross domestic product

Note: All figures include net debt service effects. Base defense increases are increases above the January 2001 baseline.

Conclusion

This portion is quoted, in full, from the Senator's [policy proposal](#):

The goal of the Five Freedoms for America's Children is to reimagine our approach to public policy that affects children, and to create a framework to talk about those policies and how they address the needs of children in America. These are commonsense yet forward-leaning policies to ensure that we are giving our children the best start in life. By meeting their needs with respect to health, economic security, nutrition, education and safety, we can set our children on a path to success, and our Nation on a path to prosperity.

These proposals are intended to invite a robust debate, with the hope of securing the support of those who want to ensure that the light inside of each and every child can shine brightly as that child grows.

At a time when the very nature of our government is under assault from so many angles, it feels as all we can do is defend little bits of what we have. But Senator Casey's proposal shows that it is possible to look for something better. In fact, by inspiring people to think about our goals, and what government can achieve if we support it properly, it puts in stark relief the gap between the future envisioned by America's two political parties. It compels us to ask if we want to see a future governed by those who desire to starve government programs into ineffectiveness with no care for the wellbeing of our communities; or if we long for robust programs that work to support a shared vision of something better - like future generations of well-educated, healthy American children who are free from hunger, want and abuse.

What YOU Can Do to HELP

1. Talk about this initiative with family, neighbors and friends.
2. Share information and articles about it on social media.
3. Write an Op-Ed to your local paper about the plan.

4. Call your Congressperson (and Senator Toomey) and tell them that you support this plan and ask them what policy steps they are willing to take to guarantee the Five Freedoms for America's Children.

Framing is going to be key to these conversations. As Senator Casey says, to enact these changes will require "reforming our national spending priorities." Accordingly, one way to discuss this with others is to speak in terms of choices. Here's an example:

"Ensuring that children get quality early childhood education is one of the best ways to ensure later in life success. We could get every three and four-year-old in the country into Head Start for less than the cost of reversing the 2017 GOP Tax Plan. What matters more? Our children's well-being and futures, or yet another corporate tax cut?"

Now is a great time for us to talk about what we want for the future in terms of positive goals. And thankfully, we have someone like Senator Casey to provide us with a great place to start.

This report was brought to you by the Pennsylvania 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!