

PA-01 Member of Congress Tracking Report - 04/05/20

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 Pennsylvania Together and Pennsylvania Statewide Indivisible organizations who host our report and help us share it out to the residents of our Commonwealth!

Neither the House nor the Senate were present in Washington for voting this past week but there were some measures that were passed by unanimous consent, and this report will look at those. We are going to use the opportunity of a slow legislative week to catch up on the traditional media presences of our Senators, since those segments had been left out of our last several reports.

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) | 29.8% | +1.2% |
| Senator Pat Toomey (R) | 87.9% | +0.2% |
| PA-01 Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R) | 64.5% | +0.3% |

Nate Silver's [FiveThirtyEight website](#) assesses the voting records of our MoCs to provide this index, by comparing any bills where President Trump has stated a position, and comparing the vote of the legislator to that opinion. The rise in the scoring numbers this week reflect legislator votes for the coronavirus response bills, which the president has also supported.

Bills passed via Unanimous Consent/Voice Votes

The last few editions of MoCTrack were mainly focused on the first three phases of coronavirus response legislation. These are smaller pieces of legislation, mostly related to veterans' programs, that passed at least one chamber of Congress in the past three weeks.

- **[H.R. 6322](#) - Student Veteran Coronavirus Response Act of 2020**

This bill makes changes to educational programs run by the Department of Veterans Affairs. From March 1, through December 31, 2020, it ensures that anyone who is already a part of a work study program will continue to be paid even if they cannot perform their work duties because of the emergency. It also extends time periods for eligible veterans to access benefits. A key example of this is the Montgomery GI bill, which gives veterans ten years after their period of active service to access their benefits. This new bill would ensure that if their eligibility period expires during this emergency (when facilities are closed), they still have some time after the emergency is over to use their benefits. This passed the House on 03/31/20 with no objection.

- **[H.R. 3504](#) - Ryan Kules and Paul Benne Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act**

This is a bill that increases funding and allowances for the Department of Veterans Affairs, so that they can build special housing for veterans who are fully or partially blind. There are also portions of the legislation that deal with technical changes to Department of Veterans Affairs educational assistance programs and work-study allowance programs. This bill had passed the House in July 2019. The Senate passed it with some changes via unanimous consent on 03/26/20, and so it will now go back to the House.

- **[H.R. 4771](#): VA Tele-Hearing Modernization Act**

This measure allows for claimants who have cases before the Board of Veterans' Appeals to appear at a hearing through remote video (like Skype), and to do some from locations other than VA facilities. his bill had passed the House in November 2019. The Senate passed it with no changes via unanimous consent on 03/26/20, and so it will now go to the president for enactment.

- **[S. 3587](#) - Department of Veterans Affairs Website Accessibility Act**

This is a bill that was introduced by our own  **Senator Bob Casey**. This bill explanation is from the [Senator's website](#):

Under current law, the Rehabilitation Act requires federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to individuals with disabilities. Unfortunately, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has not made all of their websites accessible for individuals who are blind or have vision impairments. This creates an extra, unacceptable burden for blind veterans, as well as blind family members of veterans, who may wish to use online or electronic resources through the VA.

The VA Website Accessibility Act will address this issue by requiring the VA to examine all of their websites to determine if they are accessible to people with disabilities. It will also require the VA to submit a report to Congress detailing which websites are not accessible to people with disabilities, along with a plan to make them accessible and a description of existing barriers to doing so. The VA would also be required to review the accessibility of kiosks at VA medical facilities. Kiosk accessibility is critical, as many VA medical centers use them for patient check in and management. Unfortunately, many of these kiosks do not currently use technology that would make them accessible for blind veterans.

This bill passed the Senate via unanimous consent on 03/26/20, and now goes to the House for consideration.

- **[S. 3503](#): A bill to authorize the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to treat certain programs of education converted to distance learning by reason of emergencies and health-related situations in the same manner as programs of education pursued at educational institutions**

This bill does very much what its title describes. It directs the Department of Veterans Affairs to continue to provide educational assistance through 12/21/20 when educational programs have been converted into distance learning programs. It also ensures that the VA will continue to provide monthly housing stipends or subsistence allowances. This measure passed the Senate by a voice vote on 03/16/20. It then went to the House on 03/19/20, where it was passed without objection. President Trump signed it into law on 03/21/20.

- **[S. 3501](#): A bill to provide a 77-day extension of certain authorities for foreign intelligence and international terrorism investigations**

Several provisions of the USA PATRIOT Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005 and the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 were due to expire on 03/15/20. This bill extends those expiration dates to May 30th. This passed the Senate by voice vote on 03/16/20.

Casey in the News

Courtesy of contributor Linda Houk

“During this time of great uncertainty and difficulty, Pennsylvania’s rural and urban areas alike need support to respond to COVID-19. I am pleased that the transportation systems in our communities will receive a combined total of \$1.13 billion in FTA grants to support transit operations, pay employees who are unable to work due to the pandemic and continue operating for those who rely on public transportation. Our public transit systems are a backbone of our communities and I will continue to work to ensure they receive the resources they need during this time of national crisis.”

— from a [04/03/20 article on the ABC 27 website titled “Senator Casey releases transit funding breakdown for Pa. communities”](#)

“An outbreak at a BOP facility will impact far more people than simply those inside the facility. If the staff and general prison population are not adequately tested, they will be more likely to unknowingly spread the disease to other staff members and incarcerated individuals.”

“Furthermore, without proper PPE, those correctional officers will then subsequently be more likely to take the virus home with them and spread it unknowingly to their family and friends. Infected individuals from BOP facilities may also strain local healthcare facilities, particularly in small rural communities similar to the towns scattered across Pennsylvania housing BOP facilities.

“It would be deeply irresponsible and significantly damaging to any community housing a BOP facility if a COVID-19 outbreak were to occur at that facility without the DOJ ensuring that complete and comprehensive preventive measures were being fully deployed at BOP facilities across the country.”

— an excerpt of a letter sent from Senator Casey to Attorney General William Barr, from a 04/03/20 article in *The Bradford Era* titled “[Casey requests DOJ’s plans to prevent coronavirus spread in prisons](#)”

“I will be pushing for such a waiver to be included in a future coronavirus legislative package. Pennsylvanians should not have to pay exorbitant fees to get home during a crisis.”

— from a 04/03/20 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article titled “[Pompeo, State Department work to bring home U.S. citizens but thousands remain abroad](#)”

“We have to treat health care workers on the same level as soldiers in combat. At the end of this, we should have something comparable to a GI Bill. It’s the kind of challenge we have not seen since World War II.”

— from a 03/31/20 article in *The Danville News* titled “[Health care workers need protection in fight against virus](#)”

“Americans need money now to pay for basic necessities, not temporary credits towards future travel... We believe your company has a moral responsibility to provide real refunds, not travel vouchers, to consumers, and to support State Department efforts to repatriate any American citizens trying to come home.”

— an excerpt from a letter that nine senators, including Bob Casey, sent to the chief executives of eleven airlines after the federal government approved \$25 billion in grants to the airline industry, from a 03/31/20 *New York Post* article titled “[Senators urge airlines to issue cash ticket refunds after bailout](#)”

“It is outrageous that scammers are seeking to capitalize on the public anxiety of the COVID-19 pandemic to prey on the public, especially seniors. Scammers are continuously updating their tactics to find new ways to trick consumers, so it is imperative that all individuals, particularly older adults, are armed with information to prevent them from falling victim to a con artist.”

— from a 03/31/20 *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* article titled “[A neighbor or a robocall? FCC steps up efforts to root out fake caller ID 'spoofing'](#)”

“We're going to have to take a closer look at this in the next piece of legislation, if not having a separate bill just on some of the census related issues.”

— from a 03/30/20 article on the *Local 21 News* website titled “[Deadline to respond to Census extended to August](#)”

“The COVID-19 pandemic has created and worsened many health and economic challenges for Pennsylvania families, including food and security. I wrote a letter to Secretary Perdue in support of PDA’s request so that the Bureau of Food Assistance can serve our families who need help, including an influx of children, older adults and displaced workers. In my bill, the Food Assistance for Kids and Families during COVID-19 Act, I called for this authority to be provided nationwide in order to streamline

paperwork requirements to reduce contact and accelerate the process of helping individuals and families in need of food assistance. As congress considers further Covid-19 relief legislation, I will continue to fight to make food assistance a national priority.”

— from a 03/29/20 *Your Erie* article titled [“Casey and Wolf administration secure waiver for local food banks to expand access”](#)

“I commend the Department of Education for taking long-overdue action to address the failures that allowed Jerry Sandusky to harm children. Anyone who abuses a child or stands by silently as someone else does must be held fully accountable, and that includes institutions.

“As part of my newly released legislative plan, Five Freedoms for America’s Children, I outline several steps our Nation must take to better protect children from harm. “I will also continue to push to enact this proposal into law, along with the Speak Up Act, which would work to ensure that instances of child abuse are more likely to be reported.”

— from a 03/29/20 article in the *Sharon Herald* titled [“Dept. of Education reprimands PSU for handling of sexual misconduct cases”](#)

“We can’t even begin to say we are on the right track until we have the pandemic in a place where if it is not under control, it is pushed back... [the bill] provides significant funding to combat this public health emergency, including a \$150 billion ‘Marshall Plan’ for hospitals, nursing homes and community health centers...”

“I think our team did a good job with small business as well.”

“Unlike Congressional Republicans, who refused to support the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act when a Democratic president (Barack Obama) proposed it to rescue the American economy in 2009, Democrats worked with a Republican administration to help all Americans during this time of national crisis... This agreement could have been even better for Main Street if not for the intransigence of Senate Republicans, who prioritized Wall Street and corporate interests over hardworking Americans.”

—from a 03/26/20 article in *the Indiana Gazette* titled [“Area lawmakers respond to stimulus bill”](#)

“This wouldn't be possible without the work of Senate Democrats. Simple as that... We added so much to the Republicans' initial proposal of the bill and Democrats put it in much better shape.”

—from a 03/26/20 article in *the Delco Times* titled [“Morning Briefing: State's politicians praise stimulus”](#)

“Today, we can announce, that after my efforts, substantial funding to feed seniors during the coronavirus pandemic will be released to older Americans across the country and in Pennsylvania... While this funding is needed, getting it out the door should not have taken this long. The Administration should have moved more quickly and I will continue to press them to act with the speed that this crisis deserves.”

—from a 03/26/20 article in *the Bradford Era* titled [“Casey secures \\$250 million to help feed seniors during pandemic”](#)

“It’s vitally important that this bill move as fast as we can now that we’ve made badly needed corrections to meet the crisis that so many families, so many businesses, so many workers face.”

—from a 03/25/20 article in *WENY News* titled [“Senate prepares to vote on \\$2 trillion Coronavirus stimulus package”](#)

Toomey in the News

Courtesy of contributor Elayne Baker

“The CDC is right to clarify its guidance to encourage Americans to wear cloth masks when they must venture out of their homes, even if they are not exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. We appreciate the President, Dr. Fauci, Dr. Redfield, and his team at the CDC working with us on this issue.

“Wearing a cloth mask is not a substitute for staying home and regularly washing our hands, but it is an important compliment. By wearing a cloth mask when in public, we will limit transmission of the virus, which can be spread through saliva emitted via cough, sneeze, or even when speaking and breathing. Put simply, my mask protects you, and your mask protects me.

“To be clear, N95 or surgical masks should be reserved for front-line health care workers. We implore all Americans, when you leave your house, cover up with a cloth mask or any sort of facial barrier like a scarf or a bandanna.”

— from a 04/03/20 [Media News Group](#) article titled [“Toomey urges residents to wear masks when going out in public”](#)

“The final week of negotiations were extremely intense, and at times, there were a dozen or more people in a small conference room, sitting around a table in a room with no windows. After several days of that, it occurred to me that, probably for the sake of Kris and the kids, I probably ought to just keep to myself for the two-week period. I have no symptoms or anything. I feel fine, 100%, but just to be safe, I’m sticking with basement life...”

“...we could do a lot of good at slowing down the rate of transmission if we just put a scarf, or a bandanna, or a homemade mask, some kind of device that would slow down the rate of transmission.

“I had a good conversation with the president [Tuesday] afternoon, where I called him to advocate for this. He was sympathetic. He did not make a commitment, but he was aware that his team was discussing this very matter.

Some governors might choose to mandate it. I would not suggest that on a national level, certainly. I would leave that up to the individual governors. But I would want to strongly encourage the adoption of this behavior.”

— from a 04/02/20 [Washington Examiner](#) article titled [“Pat Toomey Q&A: Why masks matter for all of us in the fight against coronavirus”](#)

“My staff is in regular contact with the Governor’s office and Pennsylvania healthcare providers actively troubleshooting and directing traffic as needed. We will continue to aggressively advocate for Pennsylvania’s health care providers until they get the materials they need.”

— from a 04/02/20 article on the [WESA website](#) titled [“Documents Show FEMA Fulfills Only Part Of Pennsylvania’s Requests For Emergency Equipment”](#)

“...it should not be the vehicle for Speaker Pelosi’s partisan, parochial wish list.”

— [Senator Toomey’s comments on a potential Phase Four coronavirus response bill](#), from a 03/31/20 [Politico](#) article titled [“McConnell and Pelosi draw coronavirus battle lines”](#)

“...the biggest government intervention in the economy in the history of the world... This is a response to an invasion. This is the kind of thing you’d have to do if we were at war.”

— [Senator Toomey’s description of the Phase Three response bill](#), from a 03/29/20 article in the [Journal Gazette](#) titled [“Many in GOP change tune on big spending”](#)

“[failing to take action] would be a wildly imprudent thing, and it would probably result in such a severe recession — it might very well be a depression — and it could take decades to come out of this.”

— from a 03/28/20 article in [ABC News](#) titled [“Hawks no more: Fiscal conservatives embrace rescue package”](#)

“A lethal pathogen has invaded our country, killing hundreds and making tens of thousands ill. In an effort to contain the spread of the coronavirus, employers across the country, including in Pennsylvania, have

been forced to close. Our economy is shutting down and millions of Americans are unable to work, travel, or simply enjoy common aspects of life.

“For financially-stressed families and workers who are furloughed or laid off, the CARES Act delivers direct payments and expanded unemployment benefits. The CARES Act aims to keep this economic contraction from becoming a full-blown depression through crucial lending programs for businesses — small and large — so they can survive an extended period with little or no revenue.”

“Unfortunately, it contains policies that waste taxpayer money and others that create unhelpful incentives. Nevertheless, this bill will do much more good than harm. This crisis demands this action and the Senate delivered.”

— from a 03/28/20 article in *The Bradford Era* titled [“Pa. legislators pleased with passage of bill”](#)

“It is true that the Fed theoretically has an infinite steadiness sheet, however the Fed has constraints in the way it can deploy that. The Fed is not allowed to lose cash. That is why our laws is so important.”

“What we do is we authorize a program the place the Treasury can capitalize autos that may then exit and leverage up that capital, many multiples from the Fed, and use that to before everything stabilize these markets. Get the company bond market, get the muni market functioning as a result of they aren’t functioning proper now.”

“The purpose is to offer the liquidity to get by means of this horrible second. All of us hope this is transient however if you’re prohibited from opening your doorways, when you cannot promote your merchandise, you cannot keep alive.”

— from a 03/25/20 article in *GruntStuff* titled [“GOP Sen. Pat Toomey: New Fed action shows why the stalled coronavirus bill is ‘so important’”](#)

“While our Democratic colleagues were going down to the floor and criticizing our bill to be a big slush fund, a big giveaway to corporations despite the fact that these are loans. Behind closed doors they were insisting actually to give away money to the airlines.”

— from a 03/25/20 article on the *WKOK* website titled [“Senators Toomey, Casey supported \\$2 trillion COVID-19 bill”](#)

Toomey told a CNBC reporter that by combining the direct \$1,200 payment and extending the unemployment benefits “creates incentives not to work.”

— excerpted from a 03/23/20 *Pittsburgh City Paper* article titled [“Sen. Pat Toomey supports coronavirus stimulus bill, but worries it ‘creates incentives not to work’”](#)

Fitzpatrick in the News

Created from research provided by volunteer CC

“During a time of national emergency, all Americans need support from their government. That is why it is incredibly important that federal funds are used to purchase American made, to best support our manufacturers and our economy. The Made in America Emergency Preparedness Act would protect American businesses, and allow our government to provide a swift, safe, and effective response during a national emergency. I look forward to working with my colleagues to protect our economy and our people.”

— from a 04/04/20 reproduced press release in *My Little Falls* titled [“Brindisi and Fitzpatrick introduce Bill to Ensure Comprehensive Preparedness for Future Natural Emergencies”](#)

"I did a lot of international travel and saw the nexus of how the tiger trade was linked with organized crime, financed arms trades, drug trades... We've had such a hard time getting the public's attention. Now, every day, it's Tiger King or coronavirus."

— from a 04/03/20 article in [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#) titled "[U.S. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick wrestles the Tiger King,](#)" about his [Big Cat Public Safety Act](#) legislation.

"As members of the bipartisan Congressional PFAS Task Force, we are writing in regard to policies that we would like to see included in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act to address harmful PFAS chemicals impacting our communities and service members."

— an excerpt of a letter sent by Rep. Fitzpatrick and Rep. Dan Kildee on behalf of the PFAS Task Force to the House Armed Services Committee, as reported in a 04/02/20 article on the [WNEM website](#), titled "[Officials send letter outlining priorities to tackle PFAS](#)"

"Charitable organizations in my community and across our nation are hurting. In times like these, we must support these critically important organizations that serve our most-vulnerable citizens. The focus of our efforts to save America's small businesses must include all of our nonprofit organizations. Our community and our nation, and those most in need, cannot survive without them."

— from a 03/31/20 [Ripon Advance](#) blog post titled "[Fitzpatrick introduces bipartisan Save Organizations that Serve America Act](#)"

"Our seniors need our help, now more than ever. All of them are vulnerable to COVID-19, and forced to self-isolate, away from friends and family. By expanding the network of senior assistance hotlines, and providing federal funding, we can protect them from scams and misinformation. Thank you to my friend, Congressman Cartwright for his leadership, and I look forward to working to ensure that our seniors are safe and healthy."

— from a 03/30/20 article in the [Bucks Local News](#) titled "[Fitzpatrick, Cartwright introduce bill to provide federal funding for senior legal hotlines.](#)" The article notes that Senator Casey introduced a companion bill in the senate.

"A whole lot of seniors that have relied on people that they've interacted with, your economic planners, lawyers or what have you, do not have that ability mainly because they're remaining at residence for their individual health and fitness and security."

— Rep. Fitzpatrick explained the importance of his new bill introduced with Rep. Cartwright, from a 03/31/20 article in [Mash Viral](#) titled "['We're going to locate you and prosecute you': Lawmakers search to defend elders from coronavirus frauds](#)"

"[I have] ceased all campaign and fundraising operations and has focused 100 percent of our efforts on spearheading a volunteer mission in our community to collect items and provide assistance to those in need, to include our elderly citizens, our healthcare workers, our police officers, our firefighters, our medics, and all others who need our help right now."

— from a 03/26/20 article from the [Levittown Now](#) titled "[Congressional Candidate Self-Quarantining, Other Pausing Campaigning During COVID-19.](#)" The Congressional candidate referenced in the article title as self-quarantining is Christina Finello.

"This Federal Medical Station is critical to our region's ability to address urgent and expanding medical needs in our districts... COVID-19 is rapidly spreading across the country and is disproportionately impacting our counties in southeastern Pennsylvania. Given the urgency of this matter, we are pleased to report that the request for the FMS at Glen Mills School represents a collaborative effort within the region, reflects the counsel of the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and has the support of our County Departments of Emergency Services and the regional Health Care coalition."

— an excerpt from a 03/26/20 letter to the FEMA Administrator, as cited in the *Delco Times* article titled “[Scanlon secures FEMA action at Glen Mills.](#)” This letter was sent by Se. Bob Casey, Sen. Pat Toomey, Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, Rep. Dwight Evans, Rep. Madeleine Dean, Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon and Rep. Chrissy Houlahan

“Prescription drug costs have been skyrocketing in recent years, adversely affecting every American. One of the most afflicted groups has been seniors, a majority of whom are on a fixed income and need medication to get through the day. I’m proud of the work we have done in this bipartisan bill, and I look forward to continuing to fight for our seniors.”

— from a 03/19/20 article in *The Center for BioSimilar*s titled “[New Bills on Biosimilars Access Are Introduced in Congress](#)”

Fact-checker takes on Fitzpatrick

Volunteer CC was kind enough to transcribe Rep. Fitzpatrick’s interview responses from a [03/23/20 appearance on the Dom Giordano Show](#) on 1210 WPHT. Reading, or listening to, Fitzpatrick’s full interview with conservative talk radio is key to understanding this situation. Minute markers are provided on the Fitzpatrick answers in case you want to find and listen to these quotes for yourself.

Dom Giordano: “Rand Paul tested positive.... Is there a heightened sense of that in Congress?”

Rep. Fitzpatrick: (01:14) “Well, I think to be honest, Dom, given the past couple weeks when we were down in the Capitol complex right during the middle of appropriations season when all these groups do their, what they call fly-ins, it’s just jam packed. It’s the busiest time of the year in the Capitol -- I think most people assume there was some level of exposure in that complex. We’re just trying to be careful and process and maintain our distance. To my colleagues who tested positive, we wish them well, we hope they’re doing well. They’re young, healthy adults. They’ll get through it, hopefully.

Yeah, I’m concerned, among staff as well, which is why we’re just trying to maintain our distance and work remotely to the extent we can.”

Dom Giordano: “What’s on your radar screen? The economy is on my mind. Is that the thing that takes up most of your time?”

Rep. Fitzpatrick: (02:10) “It’s both. We have two simultaneous crises going on at the same time and you have to focus on both simultaneously. You can’t focus on one and ignore the other because you’re not solving the problem. The way we’re looking at it on the federal side, right after I get off the phone with you I have a call with Senator Toomey and members of our Pennsylvania delegation to give our input on what should be included in this bill.

But there’s really three big buckets. Number 1 is the healthcare demand side; second is the healthcare supply side and third is the economic piece. Healthcare demand is obviously everything we’ve been doing, trying to flatten the curve: distancing, sanitation, keeping people home to try to slow the spread, as the president says. [02:59] On the healthcare supply side, you know that’s really where we have the challenge and what we’re trying to avoid is an avalanche, a spike that comes quickly and all at once on top of the healthcare systems. The healthcare model in this country, on a normal day, is 75–80% capacity, of ICU facilities, ICU beds. It’s just not in the healthcare model in this country to have excess space for unexpected events like this. They don’t have what is called “surge capacity,” which is why we’re talking about—and already in some states—deployed the Army Corps of Engineers and some of our DOD components, because these are people who are prepared in war zones to deal with mass and unexpected influxes of patients.”

Rep. Fitzpatrick: (03:43) “So that’s on the supply side, and then on the economic side obviously that’s what’s being debated now. I am always frustrated by how complicated they need to make these things. I will tell you, Dom, I have spent 12 hours a day every day the past week on the phone with employees and small business owners. From my vantage point, there’s a very simple fix here. [04:03] What’s causing the consternation is that all these businesses have insurance. You buy it for unexpected instances like this. They also have something called business interruption insurance, and the insurance companies have creatively carved out an exception for pandemics, or the word they use is pathogens, which is why these small business, the restaurants, the health clubs, particularly the direct service where you have to interact with the customer, they’re being A) forced to shut down by the government and B) told by their insurance company that it’s not covered, so that puts them in a terrible position. [04:42] So I think, and one of the things I’m going to advocate to Senator Toomey and the House leadership is: Why not have Covid losses covered provided that businesses furlough but not terminate their employees and, to the extent that they had health insurance coverage, maintain that coverage and that way we can just come to the rescue of one industry, the insurance industry. We don’t have to pick winners or losers or the airlines vs. the cruise ships vs. the restaurants vs. the theme parks — and that’s what the battle is right now. That’s why Nancy Pelosi has [05:16] walked away from the table, temporarily, although I think she’ll be back very quickly, because I did speak to Kevin McCarthy yesterday. There’s only two people in the House side of the Capitol right now, Kevin McCarthy and Nancy Pelosi, so if she says she’s crafting up her own bill she’s got no one there to craft a bill with.”

Dom Giordano: “What is she trying to get? ... Did you know the Wolf administration is accepting waivers to be under life-sustaining... I hear about bringing this to the insurance company. What would Pelosi object to?”

Rep. Fitzpatrick: (06:15) “Well, she’s not objecting to that. In fact, I’m trying to get that into the bill. I don’t believe it’s currently in it in that form. What I think the objection is, from what I can tell, and I’ll have more information when I speak to the senator in a minute here, is the balance between the payments directly to the employees vs. the bailouts for the businesses. Obviously, it’s important to do both. You’ve got to get direct and immediate financial relief to the employees, but you also have to make sure that the employees have a job to go back to when this is all over, and if the businesses go belly up, you can give all the direct payments in the world to the employees but their jobs are gonna be gone, so we’ve got to focus on both of those.”

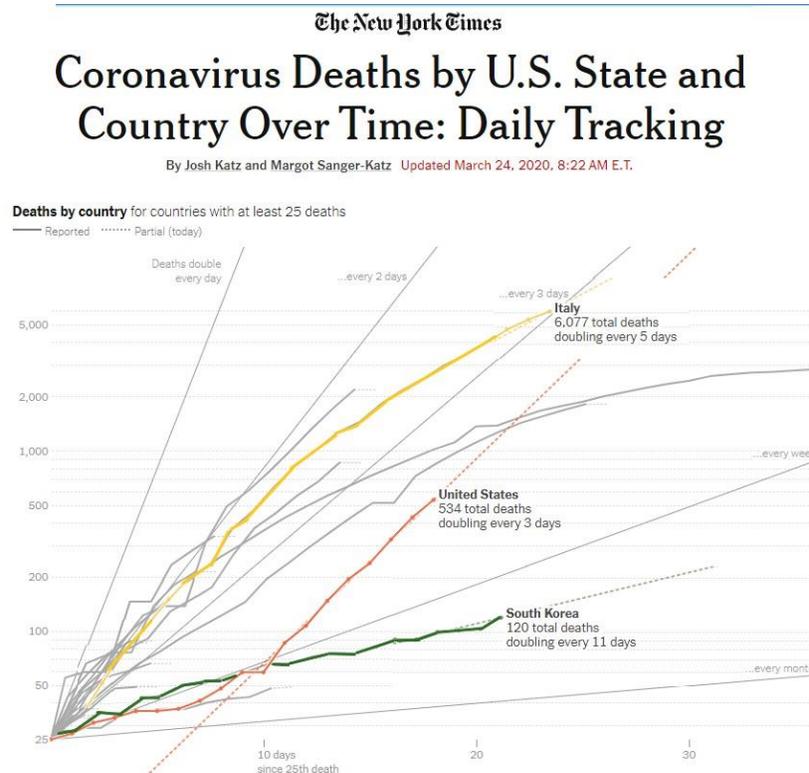
Dom Giordano: “(insurance angle) makes sense to me”

Rep. Fitzpatrick: (07:20) “And I will tell you, Dom, I heard a consistent theme throughout last week from small businesses and their employees, was really what they want is certainty. The thing that they’re struggling with the most right now is, they get that we’re in a health crisis for sure right now, they get what they need to do, but they need somehow to plan for the future. They need to know roughly how long this is gonna go on for, and if we’re going to be telling certain businesses they can stay open and others they can’t, and there’s mixed messages about whether it’s going to be enforced or not and, if so, criminally or civilly, and who’s gonna enforce it? So there’s a lot of uncertainty. And some business owners try to do the right thing and then they see somebody down the street doing something different, it creates a lot of confusion, so I just think we need to simplify this, **we’ve got to give the American public a rough estimate of how long we think this is going to take based mostly on the South Korean model which seems to be the trajectory that we are on, thankfully, and not the Italian model.** And give people some sense.... You know we can’t know for sure how long this is going to last but we can tell them that we hope to get on the other side of this curve within a month, and we’re going to require the health insurance companies, business interruption insurance, to cover your business on the caveat that you maintain your employees’ status, that you don’t fire them, and then, for the short term, we can then provide that direct cash infusion to the workers, particularly the ones who need it, the hourly employees, the tip wage earners, to make sure that they can go through the next month without going into default on any of their bills.

I think that's the simplest way to do it and that's what everybody's asking us to do."

Emphasis was added by MoCTrack.

Let's put that statement about disease trajectory in context as well. This information was published in the *New York Times* about 12 hours after the Fitzpatrick interview was aired, using information that was available at the time Fitzpatrick made his statement about trajectories. Compare that orange line (the US) to the yellow (Italy) and (green) South Korea and make your own assessment....



In the wake of the interview, a number of PA-01 activists (including your MoCTrack editor) began imploring Jessica Calefati, the new Politifact fact-checker embedded with the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to take on the misleading statement from Fitzpatrick about coronavirus modelling and disease trajectories.

[03/25/20, from @BucksCoKierstyn](#) - "Hi, @Calefati! Think you might fact check the quote at 7:54 in this talk radio interview with #PA01's @RepBrianFitz? He's on the House #coronavirus Caucus and on Monday he was telling folks the US infection curve looked more like South Korea than Italy."

[03/25/20, from @jgcOCANADA](#) - "Yes, @Calefati, if you listen to this local conservative radio link, near the end of the interview, you will hear how @RepBrianFitz tells this Trump-primed audience that "thankfully" we look more like South Korea than Italy. Fitzpatrick would never, I am certain, volunteer this opinion to a mainstream, fact-based media source for quote. Here Rep Fitzpatrick is goosing the voter split in comprehension, seen in surveys where GOP trust Trump on COVID19 handling by majority, but Dems are the flip."

[03/25/20, from @RonaldAGrump1](#) - "1. trajectory comment isn't consistent w/ data.

2. Biz owners want certainty is spot on...we're not getting certainty from WH leadership...we are getting smoke screens/lies.

3. Lastly...main objection from @SpeakerPelosi is transparency & accountability."

Upon receiving this tip, Jessica Calefati replied, "I'll check this out. Thank you!" on the same day. And her article, "[A Pa. congressman said the U.S. coronavirus trajectory is more like South Korea than Italy. Is that true?](#)" was published in the 04/01/20 *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

In the piece, Calefati notes that she heard back from Will Kiley, Representative Fitzpatrick's spokesperson. Of that encounter, Calefati wrote, "when Fitzpatrick made those remarks, he was comparing the three countries' case fatality rates, said Will Kiley, his spokesperson. That's 'the key metric we're all watching,' he added."

But the piece also notes "the curve epidemiologists keep talking about depicts the number of coronavirus patients and hospitals' capacity to care for them — not deaths caused by the virus. "Flattening the curve" means slowing the virus' rate of transmission and reducing the number of new cases so that fewer sick people need to seek treatment all at once." So, when Fitzpatrick spoke of curves, models and trajectories, he was playing into a language that people were using for a different purpose.

This is the [final ruling](#) from the fact checker:

Fitzpatrick said the spread of the coronavirus in the United States matches the spread of the virus in South Korea, not Italy. The U.S. and South Korea have similar case fatality rates — Italy's is higher — but all three countries have age-specific mortality rates that are about the same.

In addition, public health experts say the fatality rate wouldn't be the only or the most important metric used to determine when businesses may reopen.

The growth in cases and hospitals' capacity to treat new patients is the most important factor, and in that department, the United States looks more like Italy than South Korea. We rate this statement Half True.



Here at MoCTrack, we think that rating was quite generous, and it did not take into account the politics of the situation. As pointed out by one of the original commenters on Twitter (@jgcOCANADA) Congressman Fitzpatrick was speaking to a deeply right-wing talk radio audience. He was working with a listener base that makes up a large part of the primary voting base in PA-01, voters who will soon be faced with a choice between a Trump loyalist (Andrew Meehan) and incumbent Fitzpatrick. Accordingly, our politically savvy congressman opted to repeat a refrain that had been reiterated often by the Trump Administration and Fox News - a downplaying the severity and the impact of the pandemic. He was using a disinformation tactic to endear him to the audience. In our opinion, Brian Fitzpatrick lied about the coronavirus trajectory to a low information voter base that was most familiar with the talking points of President Trump and his cronies to help his chances with the Republican primary voters of Bucks and Montgomery Counties.

We'll give the last words on this to our two PA-01 Democratic Congressional candidates.

[Skylar Hurwitz](#), from 11:00 AM on 04/02/20, via Facebook/his website:

Workers Need COVID-19 Answers, Not Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick's Denial

10 million Americans have filed for unemployment in the past two weeks alone. It is likely we will see the unemployment rate climb into the double digits by this summer. The loan program that was meant to save small businesses across the country is faltering before its launch and while rent was due yesterday, the one-time \$1200 checks from the stimulus are still 3 weeks away.

27 million Americans had no health insurance prior to this crisis - now that number is skyrocketing. Projections show we should expect upward of 100,000 American lives to be claimed by COVID-19 this year. The virus has already killed more Americans than the attacks on 9/11.

Yet, this past week, my opponent in the race for Pennsylvania's 1st Congressional District, incumbent Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, was on Dom Giordano's local radio talk show dangerously downplaying the risks of the virus by saying its death rate in the US was more similar to South Korea than Italy.

The median age in South Korea is 41.5 and for the United States it is 38.1. It is therefore reasonable to expect a virus that has a higher mortality rate in elderly populations would hit Italy harder with a median age of 45.5. That said, deaths will not be evenly distributed across the US - older populations will still get hit harder.

It is, therefore, essential we remember our district and the demographics of PA-01. Bucks County's median age is 44, far above the national average in the US and much closer to Italy's. This means our district, above and beyond most others, must take particular care in respecting social distancing and the state-wide stay at home order.

It is disappointing that as a founding member of the Coronavirus Task Force in Congress, Rep. Fitzpatrick decided to significantly downplay the risks posed to Bucks and Montgomery constituents by the ongoing pandemic.

Voters of Bucks and Montgomery Counties need to hear the truth from their representatives. When we are fighting a new virus and staring down the barrel of 20-30% unemployment by this summer, voters must trust that a comprehensive solution is on the way. Denying reality is how this situation became so deadly in the first place.

My campaign has put forward a Fair Tax Platform that puts workers and families first by funding a 21st Century Economic Bill of Rights. Providing healthcare, a jobs guarantee and affordable housing, as well as immediate debt relief by cancelling medical bills for more than 78 million Americans and student debt for more than 44 million Americans is possible with targeted taxes that ensure workers making under \$250,000 and couples making under \$500,000 see a net increase in disposable income each year.

Rep. Fitzpatrick has downplayed the problem. I have built my candidacy around a comprehensive solution. It is time for fresh leadership with a bold vision of what America is capable of to take power in Washington.

[Christina Finello](#), from 8:00 PM on 04/02/20, via Facebook/Twitter:



Christina Finello @FinelloForPA · Apr 2

Statements like these are not only unhelpful and misleading, they can hurt mitigation efforts and put the public in danger. Leave the predictions to the experts, @RepBrianFitz.



Pa. congressman says U.S. coronavirus trajectory is like South Korea's. Is...
Brian Fitzpatrick is right that the coronavirus fatality rate in the U.S. roughly matches South Korea's and is far lower than Italy's. But an ...
[inquirer.com](https://www.inquirer.com)

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A Note from the MoCTrack Editor

If you've been watching television these past few weeks (who hasn't?), you'll notice that advertisers are all using the phrases "this age of uncertainty" and "this uncertain time." It feels like a cliché, but it does hold true for us at MoCTrack. We just don't know when Congress will return to Washington to work on a Phase Four coronavirus response legislative package, and we don't know when and if there will be news to report on from a legislative perspective. We at MoCTrack like having a weekly report for you, but "in this uncertain time" we aren't sure when our next report will be.

We wish you well, we hope that you are staying safe and healthy, and we'll be back when there is a new batch of bills to recap for you!

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

| | |
|------------|----------------------------|
| CC | Elayne Baker |
| Gary Garb | Helen aka @ElastigirlVotes |
| Linda Houk | Kierstyn Piotrowski Zolfo |

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!