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**From:** Morning Score  
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**Subject:** POLITICO's Morning Score: Obama alumni pour into House races — Brownback ambassadorship upends Kansas governor's race — Kelly out in Pennsylvania Senate race

By Daniel Strauss | 08/02/2017 10:00 AM EDT

With Zach Montellaro, Elena Schneider and Kevin Robillard

*The following newsletter is an abridged version of Campaign Pro's Morning Score. For an earlier morning read on exponentially more races - and for a more comprehensive aggregation of the day's most important campaign news - sign up for Campaign Pro today. (<http://www.politicopro.com/proinfo>)*

**ALUMNI NETWORK - "Obama alumni dive into battle for the House," by Campaign Pro's Elena Schneider:** "About a dozen Obama administration alumni have found a new calling in the early days of the Trump era: running for Congress. Shaken by President Donald Trump's surprising victory last November and motivated by his actions to undo parts of former President Barack Obama's legacy, former White House and agency staffers have moved home and jumped into crowded suburban House primaries, leaning on advice, endorsements and donations from former bosses and colleagues in Obama's campaigns and two terms in the White House." [Full story.](#)

**THE AMBASSADOR - "Brownback appointment could upend Kobach's gubernatorial run," by Campaign Pro's Daniel Strauss:** "President Donald Trump's decision to nominate Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback for an ambassadorship has triggered a domino effect in the race to replace Brownback, one that could set back the ambitions of one of Trump's key allies on immigration ... Kobach's campaign has not put out a definitive statement about whether he intends to stay in the race, though it did send out an email Monday asking supporters to volunteer for the campaign. The White House is also staying mum on the possibility of Kobach becoming DHS secretary. "I'm not aware of any movements for him, but as always, when we have a personnel announcement, I'll be happy to share it with you," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said Tuesday ... Kobach's gubernatorial prospects hinge on whether he can expand his pool of support beyond his established conservative base. He may be the best-known (and most infamous) secretary of state in the country, known for speaking about voter fraud and, more recently, for serving as the vice-chair of Trump's voter integrity commission." [Full story.](#)

**FIRST IN SCORE - Planned Parenthood of Virginia to endorse Ralph Northam. Per Planned Parenthood Federation of America:** "On Thursday, Planned Parenthood Advocates of Virginia will endorse Dr. Ralph Northam for governor of Virginia and Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC will be announcing it's \$3M campaign that reach hundreds of thousands of voters at their doors, online, on the phones, and through the mail."

**NOT RUNNING - "Rep. Mike Kelly nixes run for Senate," by the Sharon Herald's T.L. Miller:** "U.S. Rep. Mike Kelly has decided not to challenge U.S. Sen. Bob Casey in 2018. Kelly,

of Butler, R-3rd District, issued a press release Tuesday announcing his plans to seek a fifth term in the House of Representatives, but he 'will not be pursuing a run for the Senate next year.'"

[Full story.](#)

**Days until the 2017 election: 97.**

**Days until the 2018 election: 461.**

Thanks for joining us. You can email tips to the Campaign Pro team at [sbland@politico.com](mailto:sbland@politico.com), [eschneider@politico.com](mailto:eschneider@politico.com), [krobillard@politico.com](mailto:krobillard@politico.com), [dstrauss@politico.com](mailto:dstrauss@politico.com) and [mseverns@politico.com](mailto:mseverns@politico.com)

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**DAILY ROLL TIDE - "Brooks ad calls Strange the real 'never Trumper,'" by Campaign Pro's Daniel Strauss:** "Rep. [Mo Brooks](#) accuses Sen. [Luther Strange](#) of being the real "never Trumper" in a new campaign ad released today, two weeks before Alabama's special Senate primaries. In the ad, Brooks claims that he did support President Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential campaign and donated to support Trump's campaign ... Strange, throughout the Republican primary for Attorney General Jeff Sessions' former Senate seat, has made a point of closely tying himself to Trump. He's also enjoyed the support of super PACs allied with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. The ad is set to air statewide on cable and regular broadcast TV. Watch the new ad [here](#)." [Full story.](#)

**HEALTH CARE HAVOC - Democrats try to keep focus on issue as GOP pivots to taxes:** Health care is the top issue for 2018 midterm voters in public polling, and Democrats plan to do their best to keep it that way. The DSCC plans to send out press releases today noting every GOP candidate in Pennsylvania, Michigan, Montana, Indiana, West Virginia, Ohio, Missouri and Wisconsin either voted for or is on record supporting the GOP plan to repeal and replace Obamacare. "Every potential GOP candidate backs a toxic health care agenda that will spike premiums by 20 percent, impose an age tax on older Americans and strip away coverage for pre-existing conditions - all to give more tax breaks to big insurance companies and the wealthiest few," DSCC spokesman David Bergstein wrote. "As this race develops we're sure to hear exactly what these Republicans don't like about each other - but they all agree on an expensive, unpopular health care agenda that will force working families to pay more for less care."

**- PPP survey finds Heller and GOP health care plan deeply unpopular in Nevada:** A new survey from Democratic firm Public Policy Polling, paid for by Save My Care, finds GOP Sen. Dean Heller's approval rating at 22 percent, with 55 percent disapproval and 23 percent unsure. The GOP health care bill's approval rating is 35 percent, with 54 percent disapproval. **Full poll [here](#).** (Reminder: [A recent poll](#) for Democratic Rep. Dina Titus showed Heller at 47 percent approval and running close in a matchup with her.)

**CANDIDATE WATCH - Millionaire Democrat jumps into CA-39:** Another Democrat has jumped into GOP Rep. Ed Royce's district, a new battleground after swinging to Hillary Clinton

in the 2016 election. Andy Thorburn, whose campaign announcement touted him as a businessman, nonprofit founder and former classroom teacher, loaned his campaign \$2 million for his launch. Democrats Sam Jammal, a former Obama administration official, Mai-Khanh Tran, a physician, Phil Janowicz, a businessman, and Gil Cisneros, a veteran and lottery winner, are already in the race.

**- Curbelo draws first major challenger in FL-26:** Democrat Debbie Mucarsel-Powell, "who ran a stronger-than-expected state Senate campaign in 2016, will run for Congress. She plans to hold a news conference announcing her candidacy Wednesday," the Miami Herald reported. " ... She claimed Curbelo 'has voted more than 86 percent of the time with Trump,' but also insisted: 'I don't want to focus my entire energy on what's happening with the president.' The bilingual Mucarsel-Powell, 46, was born in Ecuador, where she lived until she was 14. ... Last month, Mucarsel-Powell discussed her likely candidacy in private Washington meetings with Emily's List, which promotes progressive women candidates; the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, and Democratic members of Congress, including Florida Reps. Ted Deutch, Lois Frankel and Stephanie Murphy." Full story.

**- IN THE SENATE - "Republican Indiana lawmaker launching bid for Senate," via the Associated Press:** "Indiana state Rep. Mike Braun plans to join the increasingly crowded Republican primary for U.S. Senate. The Jasper lawmaker said Tuesday that he intends to 'move forward' with a bid, which he will formally announce soon. Braun was elected to the Legislature in 2014 and also owns an auto parts distribution company. He says his business background and experience grappling with federal regulations make him an ideal candidate. U.S. Rep. Luke Messer is already running. Fellow Republican U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita is also preparing a bid and hiring campaign staff." Full story.

**- IN THE STATES - "Donna Lynne: I'm (mostly) in for governor's race," by the Denver Post's Mark K. Matthews:** "Lt. Gov. Donna Lynne took a big step this week toward running for governor, telling The Denver Post that she would file the necessary paperwork Tuesday to campaign and raise money even though she still hasn't committed 100 percent toward pursuing Colorado's top job. It's an unusual maneuver - and one that could complicate her plans to succeed her boss, Democratic Gov. John Hickenlooper. ... Lynne said she's taking this route for two principal reasons: to be upfront about her intentions as she continues her job as lieutenant governor and to ensure she can consolidate the necessary support to mount a competitive campaign." Full story.

**NEW THIS A.M. - NARAL endorses Ryan challenger:** NARAL Pro-Choice America is endorsing Randy Bryce, the ironworker challenging House Speaker Paul Ryan in Wisconsin's 1st District. "As Paul Ryan and Donald Trump have carried out endless cruel and careless attempts to torpedo healthcare, women and families have been the ones who have suffered," NARAL President Ilyse Hogue said in a statement. "But Randy has a plan to counter the GOP's out-of-touch fringe agenda. The momentum Randy is building with his progressive and pro-choice message is proof that people are ready for new leadership." School board member Cathy Myers is also running for the Democratic nomination.

**- NARAL also endorsed Democratic Rep. Jacky Rosen for Senate in Nevada,** calling her "a

true champion for Nevada families."

**- Rosen attacks Heller with 60-second digital ad:** Rosen is out with a digital ad attacking Republican Sen. Dean Heller for supporting the Senate GOP's "skinny repeal" plan to replace Obamacare. "Senator Dean Heller promised to vote no on the Republican health care plan," the ad says. "Then he betrayed us." **Watch the ad [here](#).**

**2020 FORESIGHT - "Cuomo Is Not Running for President, but a PAC Is Already Campaigning Against Him," by The New York Times' Shane Goldmacher:** "A national Republican group that specializes in opposition research targeting prominent Democratic candidates is starting a new initiative on Wednesday to undercut Gov. [Andrew M. Cuomo](#) of New York ahead of his 2018 re-election bid - and sully his image should he run for president in 2020. Mr. Cuomo is the second possible Democratic presidential contender that the Republican group [America Rising PAC](#) has singled out for scrutiny. The other is Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, who is also up for re-election next year and considered a possible 2020 contender ... For now, America Rising is mostly building up its research file on the governor and has filed more than 50 requests of public records so far this year. The group plans to eventually deploy a so-called campaign tracker to film Mr. Cuomo at all his public events, capturing any flubs he makes for future political ads. "That's to come," Ms. Smith said." **[Full story](#).**

**CODA - QUOTE OF THE DAY:** "You know, I won the state by nine or 10 or something, by nine or 10 points, without any governor support, OK?" - President Donald Trump discussing winning Ohio in the 2016 presidential race during an [interview](#) with The Wall Street Journal.

*To view online:*

<http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-score/2017/08/02/obama-alumni-pour-into-house-races-221644>

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