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**Subject:** POLITICO's Morning Score: Strange pummels Brooks ahead of Alabama primary — Brooks defends running ad on Scalise shooting — McCain to make dramatic return for Obamacare vote

By Elena Schneider | 07/25/2017 10:00 AM EDT

*With Zach Montellaro and Daniel Strauss*

*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>)*

**THREE WEEKS OUT - "Strange pummels Brooks ahead of Alabama primary," by Campaign Pro's Daniel Strauss:** "Rep. [Mo Brooks](#) is the center of attention - and not the good kind of attention - with three weeks to go until Alabama's special Senate primaries. Sen. [Luther Strange](#) and his allies have singled Brooks out of the crowded Republican primary to complete Attorney General Jeff Sessions' Senate term, highlighting inconsistencies in his record and airing ads making Brooks out as a flip-flopper and an opponent of President Donald Trump - a cardinal sin among Alabama Republican voters. One would be forgiven for thinking Brooks was Strange's only opponent given the intense blast of news, TV ads and other attacks targeting the congressman. But it's a reflection of the theory that while former state Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore's supporters are fairly locked in, Brooks is the other main competitor for a slot in a September top-two primary runoff, and one of Strange or Brooks is considered most likely to miss out." [Full story.](#)

**- ICYMI - "Brooks defends campaign ad on Scalise shooting," by Campaign Pro's Daniel Strauss:** "Alabama Rep. [Mo Brooks](#) on Monday defended a new ad from his Senate campaign that used footage of the aftermath of the shooting rampage that wounded House Majority Whip [Steve Scalise](#) last month. Brooks, who is running in the Aug. 15 special Republican primary for Senate in Alabama, told POLITICO that [the ad](#), which features sounds of gunshots and shouts before playing clips of a Brooks interview, was meant to highlight his support for the Second Amendment. ... But Scalise's chief of staff, Brett Horton, [tweeted](#) that the spot made his 'stomach turn,' as Brooks faced criticism for politicizing a tragedy." [Full story.](#)

**IDENTITY ISSUES - "Democrats sidestep social issues in new economic push," by POLITICO's Heather Caygle and Elana Schor in Berryville, Va.:** "Congressional Democratic leaders descended upon this rural Virginia town Monday to unveil a progressive economic package they say can win back working-class voters next November, even in red states. And noticeably missing, amid the talk of raising wages and reining in corporate interests, were the left-leaning stances on social issues that help form the backbone of the party, including immigration, abortion and LGBT rights. Senate Minority Leader [Chuck Schumer](#) (D-N.Y.) vowed that his party's red-state incumbents would largely embrace the new agenda - which, he acknowledged, purposefully avoids the social issues that have already opened a rift this year between the party's liberal base and centrist bloc." [Full story.](#)

**ON THE HILL - "McCain to make dramatic return for Obamacare vote," by POLITICO's Burgess Everett, Seung Min Kim and Jennifer Haberkorn:** "The Senate GOP bid to kill Obamacare - itself left for dead as of Monday morning - saw a flicker of life late in the day after a furious pressure campaign by President Donald Trump and Mitch McConnell heading into a critical Tuesday vote. McConnell spent the day cajoling his members and meeting with Vice President Mike Pence to plot strategy. The majority leader was still short of the votes to even open debate, and Republicans still don't know what they'd be voting to allow debate on if they agree to go along with McConnell on the procedural vote. But Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), recently diagnosed with brain cancer and recovering from surgery, announced that he would return to the Senate on Tuesday, giving GOP leaders a critical vote in the up-and-down battle over repealing Obamacare. But the Senate leader isn't being counted out." [Full story.](#)

**Days until the 2017 election: 104.**

**Days until the 2018 election: 468.**

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**Playbook Exchange Denver** - Join POLITICO Playbook co-authors Anna Palmer and Jake Sherman for a special Playbook Exchange event in Denver with Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper. Aug. 1 - 5:30 p.m. MDT / 7:30 p.m. EDT - S&P Global, 1800 Larimer St., 2nd Floor, Denver. RSVP: [Here](#). Watch it live: [Here](#).

**2020 WATCH - "Sherrod Brown thinks he could have helped Democrats win in 2016. But what about 2020?" by The Washington Post's Ben Terris:** "...It's not out of the question that in 2020, if nothing changes, Democrats could win the popular vote by 5 million and lose the electoral college because of the Great Lakes states,' Brown said. So, because many of his constituents voted for Trump - and, frankly, because it seemed like a good reelection strategy - Brown's first instinct was to work with the president. ...He certainly is one of the Senate's most endangered Democrats. And if he loses, it could be the last anyone will hear from Sen. Sherrod Brown. But, if he wins ... 'We are constantly being asked by others if he'll run for president in 2020,' Schultz said. 'In a way that we never have before.'" [Full story.](#)

**MONEY, MONEY, MONEY - "Democratic House Freshmen Show Fundraising Edge Over GOP Classmates," by Roll Call's Sean McMinn :** "With their first two fundraising deadlines behind them, Democratic newbies in the chamber are demonstrating their ability to out-raise their Republican colleagues. Among first-term lawmakers in the chamber who will likely run for re-election next year, Democrats have taken in, on average, about 50 percent more in receipts per member than Republicans, according to a Roll Call analysis of Federal Election Commission filings. The margin between the two parties was largest during the first quarter of

the year, when Democrats raised an average of \$348,000 per freshman member, compared to \$226,000 among Republicans. The disparity shrank slightly in the second quarter, but Democrats kept a sizable advantage." [Full story.](#)

**- The RGA is donating another \$2 million to Republican Ed Gillespie's campaign in Virginia:** The cash infusion follows \$1 million delivered to the campaign shortly after he won the GOP primary.

**- POLLING DATA - Monmouth poll finds Gillespie 44, Northam 44:** "Democratic Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam and Republican Ed Gillespie are tied in the latest poll of Virginia's race for governor, with President Donald Trump dragging voters away from the Republican, according to [a new survey from Monmouth University](#). Northam and Gillespie each earned 44 percent of the vote in the survey. Libertarian Cliff Hyra got 3 percent and 9 percent were undecided." [Full story.](#)

**FUNNY BEDFELLOWS - First Family lawyer keeps donating to Democrats:** Jamie Gorelick, a Democratic lawyer [who is representing Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump](#) (and getting some grief from Democratic friends for doing so), has continued to donate to a handful of congressional Democrats in 2017, even as those candidates heavily criticize the Trump administration. Gorelick gave \$1,000 to one House candidate, Lindsey Davis Stover, who's running to take on GOP Rep. Barbara Comstock in northern Virginia. Gorelick also gave to Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Montana Sen. Jon Tester.

**SHOW-ME SHOWDOWN? - "Missouri state rep eyes run against McCaskill after encouragement from Wagner," by the Kansas City Star's Bryan Lowry:** "Missouri state Rep. Marsha Haefner says she's weighing a run for U.S. Sen. Claire McCaskill's seat after being encouraged by U.S. Rep. Ann Wagner. Haefner, a St. Louis Republican, said she plans to travel to Washington, D.C., in the near future to meet with national party officials about her interest in a run. 'I would hope that the Republican Party would support someone who is not a white male,' said Haefner, a 66-year-old grandmother who owns a greenhouse and garden center. ... Haefner had been planning to run for Wagner's congressional seat if Wagner had pursued a run against McCaskill, the incumbent Democrat, as most political observers in Missouri expected." [Full story.](#)

**ADMINISTRATION SPEED READ - "Trump tests the loyalty of the Ohio Democrats he won," by POLITICO's Annie Karni:** "Down-and-out Youngstown, Ohio, last year became emblematic of the power of Donald Trump's campaign. With his populist message targeting white working-class voters, he outperformed every GOP nominee since Richard Nixon won the Democratic stronghold of Mahoning County. Today, the blue-collar town represents one of the looming challenges of Trump's presidency, six months in: how to keep the support he won as a populist candidate, when he flipped disgruntled Democrats and independents to his side of the ledger, while in many cases governing like a plutocrat who has so far failed to deliver on many of his campaign promises. Trump will test the waters Tuesday night when he takes the stage in Youngstown at the Covelli Centre, a large arena that typically hosts events like ice hockey games, WWE wrestling matches, and monster truck tours. The campaign rally is designed to energize the president, excite his base, and offer Trump a chance to tack away from the Russia

scandal that never stops brewing in Washington - one that his advisers claim no regular, outside-the-beltway Americans really care about." [Full story](#).

**CODA - QUOTE OF THE DAY:** "Who the hell wants to speak about politics when I'm in front of the Boy Scouts?" - President Trump, who later talked about politics, [POLITICO](#) reported.

*To view online:*

<http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-score/2017/07/25/strange-pummels-brooks-ahead-of-alabama-primary-221505>

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