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From: Morning Score
Sent: Tue 9/19/2017 2:07:51 PM
Subject: POLITICO's Morning Score: Top Gun, Ironstache: House candidates try to go viral — DCCC tops NRCC in August fundraising, as NRCC brings in \$3.8M — AAN out with new digital ads on tax reform

By Elena Schneider | 09/19/2017 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>)

ABOUT THAT AD - "Democratic House candidates seek viral boost in primaries," by Campaign Pro's Elena Schneider: Dan Helmer is one of nearly a dozen Democrats elbowing their way for the chance to take on Virginia Rep. Barbara Comstock, one of the most vulnerable Republicans in the country. And now, thousands of people know him as the guy who poorly sang a "Top Gun" parody to a Comstock impersonator. And that's the point. Helmer got a dose of teasing on social media; one Twitter user called his video 'worryingly bad.' A Democratic consultant said using pop culture references is 'overwrought and tortuous,' adding that the ad 'doesn't make any sense in the context of the plot of the movie.' But with Democrats piling into House primaries by the dozen in districts across the country, some candidates are looking to boost their campaigns by releasing the must-watch ad of the week, attracting critical attention and donations from a tuned-in Democratic base - even if their ads don't meet traditional standards or have a big TV buy behind them. VoteVets Chairman Jon Soltz shot back against the critics of Helmer's web video, saying that 'the fact that everyone is writing about it is a win - whether they like it or not, that's irrelevant.'" Full story.

FIRST IN SCORE - NRCC raises \$3.8M in August, versus \$6.2M for the DCCC: The DCCC topped the NRCC in last month's fundraising by a \$2.4 million margin. But the NRCC continues to lead with a cash on hand advantage, finishing the month with \$36.3 million in the bank, while the DCCC has just under \$25 million. In 2017, the NRCC has brought in \$67.7 million, while the DCCC has raised \$72.4 million over the last year.

NEW NUMBERS IN VIRGINIA - TIGHTENING RACE - A new poll from Suffolk University in Boston has Democrat Ralph Northam and Republican Ed Gillespie deadlocked in the Virginia gubernatorial race, with each candidate receiving 42 percent of likely Virginia voters polled. The libertarian candidate has 3 percent, and the remaining 12 percent are undecided. Meanwhile, a second poll from the University of Mary Washington gives Northam a slight lead among likely voters. He is up over Gillespie 44-39, which is within the poll's margin of error. The most recent poll before yesterday's polls tracked by RealClearPolitics was one from Roanoke College that was in the field in mid-August. It gave Northam a 7 point edge.

- More numbers out of Virginia: "A new poll from the University of Mary Washington gives

Democratic Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam a 5-point lead over Republican Ed Gillespie in Virginia's gubernatorial race. Among likely voters, Northam earns 44 percent of the vote to Gillespie's 39 percent. Libertarian Cliff Hyra gets 3 percent." [Full story.](#)

- **"Megadonors pour money into Virginia governor's race ahead of home stretch," by Campaign Pro's Kevin Robillard:** "Tom Steyer, the Koch brothers and other megadonors in both parties are pouring millions of dollars into Virginia this month, hoping to set the tone in the most symbolic political race of 2017: the state's gubernatorial contest. That race hits the home stretch Tuesday when Democratic Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam and Republican Ed Gillespie engage in a high-profile debate, seven weeks before voters choose between them in a contest that has often been a political bellwether for presidents one year into their terms and foreshadowed the results of the next year's midterm elections. ... Steyer, the Democratic megadonor whose group NextGen America is investing millions in Virginia including heavy spending on registering and organizing college students and immigrants, described the governor's race as 'the most important political race in America in 2017.' 'This will be perceived as a test of where Americans want to go,' he said in an interview." [Full story.](#)

HACK ATTACK - "Political campaigns prep for battle with hackers," by Campaign Pro's Daniel Strauss and Scott Bland: "Candidates are quizzing prospective campaign managers on anti-hacking plans. Democratic committees like the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, which was breached last year, have switched from email to encrypted messaging apps internally. And both parties are feverishly trying to spread advice and best practices to new campaigns before they become targets. The political world is officially obsessed with cybersecurity in 2017 - especially the Democrats burned by the hacking of their committees and operatives during the 2016 election. Much of the Democratic Party's permanent apparatus has already changed its day-to-day operations as a result, while beginning the slow process of persuading its decentralized, startup-like campaign ecosystem to follow suit. House Democrats' top strategists have urged consultants working on their campaigns to start using Wickr, the end-to-end encrypted messaging app used inside the DCCC - but the consulting community has been slow to give up email and embrace the program, say three Democratic consultants involved in House races. Security measures vary widely from race to race, leaving many still vulnerable to hacking, and members of both parties say they are still seeking centralized clearinghouses of anti-hacking information and services."

- "... The [DCCC] ran seminars with outside Democratic operatives teaching them to use Wickr - but many are still using email on their campaigns. ... Party committees have a particularly strong interest in securing their communications that individual campaigns may not share, said another consultant. Later in the 2018 election cycle, the DCCC will ask candidates to share their own highly sensitive "self-research" - opposition research done against themselves to help the campaign and the party prepare for attacks. Hackers stole some of that delicate information from the DCCC's central file during the last election." [Full story.](#)

Days until the 2017 election: 49.

Days until the 2018 election: 413

Thanks for joining us! You can email tips to the Campaign Pro team at sbland@politico.com, eschneider@politico.com, krobillard@politico.com, dstrauss@politico.com and mseverns@politico.com.

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NEW THIS MORNING - AAN out with new digital ads on tax reform: American Action Network Middle Class Growth Initiative released a new round of digital ads today in 41 Republican-controlled House districts, "urging lawmakers to prioritize tax cuts for working families and small businesses," per a memo from the group. The ad buy totals \$500,000. The ad asks Congress to pass a "simpler, fairer tax code." **Watch the ad [here](#). Check out the list of lawmakers [here](#).**

DAILY WAR EAGLE - "Pence to campaign for Luther Strange next Monday," by Campaign Pro's Daniel Strauss and Matt Nussbaum: "Vice President Mike Pence will campaign for Sen. Luther Strange next Monday in Alabama, a senior administration official and two top political operatives involved in the Alabama Senate race confirmed to POLITICO. Pence's appearance in Alabama will come a day before the runoff between Strange and former Alabama chief Judge Roy Moore. President Donald Trump tweeted over the weekend that he planned to hold a rally in Huntsville the Saturday before Pence's appearance in support of Strange. Pence will headline a get-out-the-vote rally for Strange." **[Full story](#).**

- **"Donald Trump And His Allies Take A Surprisingly Larger Role In The Alabama Senate Race," by BuzzFeed's Henry Gomez:** "A political nonprofit loyal to President Donald Trump will spend nearly \$500,000 to boost interim Alabama Sen. Luther Strange in a high-stakes Republican runoff election next week. America First Policies will pay for pro-Strange digital ads, direct mail pieces, and get-out-the-vote phone calls between now and next week's vote, a spokesperson confirmed to BuzzFeed News." **[Full story](#).**

- **"Moore laments racial division between 'reds and yellows,'" by The Hill's Ben Kamisar:** "Alabama Senate candidate Roy Moore, one of two Republicans competing in a primary runoff next week, appeared to use racially insensitive terms to describe Native Americans and Asians during a campaign speech." **[Full story](#).**

SWITCHEROO - "Epstein drops out of Michigan Senate race; will run for MI-11," via Campaign Pro's Kevin Robillard: "Republican businesswoman Lena Epstein is dropping out of the GOP primary to take on Michigan Democratic Sen. [Debbie Stabenow](#) and will instead run to replace retiring Rep. [Dave Trott](#) in the House. Epstein, a 35-year-old who served as co-chair of President Donald Trump's winning campaign in the state, said she was switching races to ensure Republicans hold on to Trott's seat." **[Full story](#).**

ANOTHER ONE - "Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz joins Democratic race for governor," by The Baltimore Sun's Pamela Wood: "Kamenetz, 59, said his experience running Maryland's third-largest jurisdiction will translate to success running the state. 'As county executive, I've gotten real results,' Kamenetz told The Baltimore Sun. 'I've created jobs.

I've improved schools. I've protected the environment - all without raising the tax rates." [Full story.](#)

WEB WARS - NRCC targets 10 House Democrats with digital ads: "The NRCC is targeting 10 House Democrats in a six-figure digital ad buy "for their weak position on national security," per a statement from the committee. ...The ads go after Rep. Tom O'Halleran (AZ-01); Rep. Collin Peterson (MN-07); Rep. Rick Nolan (MN-08); Rep. Stephanie Murphy (FL-07); Rep. Josh Gottheimer (NJ-05); Rep. Carol Shea-Porter (NH-01); and Rep. Peter DeFazio (OR-04). The ads will also air in three open seats, Minnesota's 1st District, Nevada's 3rd District and Florida's Republican-held 27th District." [Full story.](#)

- **"Democrats urge FCC to look into reports of Russia's Sputnik's election meddling," via POLITICO's Ashley Gold:** "House Democrats asked FCC Chairman Ajit Pai to investigate whether the Russian government used U.S. airwaves to influence the 2016 presidential election. The lawmakers cite a New York Times Magazine [report](#) suggesting Sputnik, a news outlet funded by the Russian government, was used to sway voters in the election. They write that suggests that the U.S. radio station airing Sputnik is "directly violating the public interest standard of the Communications Act."

QUOTE OF THE DAY: "We cultivate the pheasants." - Excerpts from the Menendez trial, [POLITICO](#) reported.

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