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**From:** Morning Score  
**Sent:** Tue 8/22/2017 2:03:56 PM  
**Subject:** POLITICO's Morning Score: DNC preps 2020 opposition research on Pence, Kasich, Haley — NRSC launches digital ads vs. Rosen, Heitkamp — Abbe Lowell faces his toughest challenge yet in Menendez trial

By Elena Schneider | 08/22/2017 10:00 AM EDT

*With Zach Montellaro 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>)*

**2020 WATCH - "Dems prep for Trump primary challengers in 2020," by POLITICO's Gabriel Debenedetti:** "The Democratic National Committee is conducting full-scale opposition research on multiple Republicans it believes could challenge President Donald Trump for reelection - or are likely to run if he does not. The effort, which began in late spring, covers Vice President Mike Pence, Ohio Gov. John Kasich, United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley, and Nebraska Sen. [Ben Sasse](#), among others. 'With Trump's tumultuous presidency in complete chaos, we are prepared for all scenarios,' said DNC research director Lauren Dillon, confirming the campaign to POLITICO. In the case of Republicans like Pence and Kasich, the team of over two dozen DNC researchers is mostly updating the existing research books they deployed in 2016, according to Democrats familiar with the arrangement. For the others, the operatives are combing through voting and governing records, compiling financial files, searching for conflicts of interest, and saving clips on their relationships with Trump." [Full story.](#)

- "Susan Collins: 'Too difficult to say' whether Trump will be 2020 GOP nominee," via POLITICO. [Full story.](#)

**ABOUT LAST NIGHT - "Trump Advances New Strategy to Seek Victory in Afghanistan," by The New York Times's Maggie Haberman, Eric Schmitt and Michael R. Gordon:** "President Trump on Monday pushed forward with a new strategy for the struggling United States-led campaign in Afghanistan, saying 'the American people are weary of war without victory.' Mr. Trump has been accused by lawmakers of dragging his feet on Afghanistan, and his strategy follows a detailed review that his military officials have said is likely to result in the deployment of up to 4,000 additional troops." [Full story.](#)

- "Trump's challenge: A wall of public skepticism on Afghanistan War," by POLITICO's Steven Shepard. [Full story.](#)

- **And about tonight - "GOP on eggshells as Trump storms into Phoenix," by POLITICO's Alex Isenstadt in Phoenix:** "President Donald Trump faces a decision on Tuesday evening with profound implications for his already strained relationship with the GOP: Whether to attack a vulnerable Republican senator on his home turf. While White House officials won't say exactly

what's on Trump's agenda when he holds a campaign-style rally here, there is a widespread expectation that he will go after GOP Sen. Jeff Flake, a loud critic of the president who recently published an anti-Trump manifesto, 'Conscience of a Conservative.' In the days leading up to Trump's Arizona trip, Senate GOP leaders have implicitly warned Trump that attacking Flake, who faces a treacherous path to reelection, would only serve to further rupture his relationship with a congressional GOP wing that he's grown increasingly isolated from in recent weeks." [Full story.](#)

**NEW THIS MORNING - NRSC launches digital ads vs. Rosen, Heitkamp:** The NRSC is launching new Facebook ads against North Dakota Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) and Nevada Rep. [Jacky Rosen](#), the start of month-long digital buys in both states. The North Dakota ad attacks Heitkamp for opposing President Donald Trump's agenda and "defending the swamp." [See it here.](#) The Nevada ad attacks Rosen for voting with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and calls her "Pelosi's puppet." [See it here.](#)

**2018 WATCH - "Schools superintendent Tony Evers to make run for Wisconsin governor official Wednesday," by the Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel's Jason Stein:** "State schools superintendent Tony Evers will formally announce his gubernatorial run Wednesday, making him the third Democrat to commit to a bid and the first statewide office holder to challenge GOP Gov Scott Walker. Evers, who heads the state Department of Public Instruction, will announce his run at a suburban Madison park for children, according to an email sent to supporters Sunday and obtained by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. The venue at McKee Farms Park in Fitchburg will highlight Evers' main credential for voters - his years working on behalf of children as a local school leader and state education official. ... Evers has won three statewide elections as schools superintendent since 2009, beating challenger Lowell Holtz in April with 70% of the vote." [Full story.](#)

- **Wisconsin GOP attacks with digital ads:** Like it has done with previous Democratic challengers, the Wisconsin GOP welcomed Evers to the race with digital ads attacking him. The ad says Evers "allowed a middle-school teacher found guilty of spreading pornographic material at school to keep teaching students."

- **"Beth Lindstrom, former Mitt Romney aide, says she's running against Sen. Elizabeth Warren in 2018," via MassLive:** "Beth Lindstrom, whose resume includes top posts under former Gov. Mitt Romney and former US Sen. Scott Brown, is launching her US Senate campaign on Monday. Lindstrom joins a field of GOP candidates hoping to take on Elizabeth Warren, the Cambridge Democrat who is up for re-election in 2018." [Full story.](#) [Watch the announcement video here.](#)

**Days until the 2017 election: 77.**

**Days until the 2018 election: 441.**

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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**COURTROOM DRAMA - "Abbe Lowell faces his toughest challenge yet in Menendez trial,"** by POLITICO's Josh Gerstein: "Defense attorney Abbe Lowell, who has emerged as a fixture in criminal cases involving high-profile Washington politicians, is staring down one of his toughest challenges yet: helping a sitting United States senator beat a slew of federal bribery charges. The veteran white-collar Washington lawyer will travel to a Newark courtroom this week to helm the defense of New Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez. The 63-year-old Democrat faces corruption charges over his repeated interventions with the federal government on behalf of a Florida donor." [Full story.](#)

**GUESS WHO'S BACK - Perlmutter announces reelection bid:** "Colorado Rep. [Ed Perlmutter](#) will run for his House seat, doubling back on a promise to not run for reelection after he exited the governor's race last month. 'Over the last few weeks a lot has happened, both for me and in the world. I've taken some time to regroup and recharge, and in so doing I've had many meaningful conversations with friends, neighbors, supporters and family who have encouraged me to run again,' Perlmutter said in a statement. 'And I've come to the conclusion to run again for reelection.'" [Full story.](#)

- **Update:** Two of the four Democrats vying to replace Perlmutter dropped out of the race by Monday evening. State Rep. Brittany Pettersen said she was "disappointed," but she knows the district will be "well represented" by Perlmutter. State Sen. Dominick Moreno tweeted his support for Perlmutter, endorsing him for reelection. State Sen. Andy Kerr and former Obama administration official Daniel Baer have not released statements yet.

**CHARLOTTESVILLE FALLOUT - "Democratic gubernatorial candidates plunge into Confederate fight,"** by Campaign Pro's Daniel Strauss and Negassi Tesfamichael: "The white supremacist march that turned violent in Charlottesville, Va., is spurring a wave of Democratic governors and gubernatorial candidates to call for Confederate monuments in their states to come down. The push offers Democrats an opportunity to take on President Donald Trump and mobilize the base ahead of the 2018 elections - though some strategists say the focus should be on bread-and-butter issues rather than a revived culture war. Democratic candidates in Maryland, Florida, Georgia, New Mexico and Tennessee have all called for Confederate statues or icons to be taken down. In New York, Gov. Andrew Cuomo [tweeted](#) last week that he had asked the secretary of the Army to "remove confederate names from the streets of Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn." In North Carolina, Gov. Roy Cooper said he wanted Confederate monuments around the state to be taken down. And in Montana, Gov. Steve Bullock hailed the Helena City Council's decision to remove a Confederate memorial fountain from a park there." [Full story.](#)

**MORE ON 2020 - "This House Democrat Lost A Leadership Race To Nancy Pelosi. Now He May Run For President,"** by BuzzFeed's Alexis Levinson: "It's still more than three years until the next presidential election, and yet here was Ray Buckley - the chairman of the New Hampshire Democratic Party for the last decade - riding shotgun last Wednesday from Boston to Hopkinton, New Hampshire with Rep. Tim Ryan, the 44-year old Democrat from Youngstown,

Ohio. ... But despite the near-constant ribbing, last week's New Hampshire visit was not just a reunion of old friends. In June, Ryan campaigned for a Democratic candidate in South Carolina. Next month, he'll make his second trip of the year to Iowa. Which begs the question: what the hell is Ryan doing?" [Full story.](#)

**EARLY POLLING DATA - "Kid Rock's favorables approaching Stabenow territory, polls show," by POLITICO's John Lauinger:** "Sen. [Debbie Stabenow](#)'s name recognition in Michigan is only slighter better than that of Robert Ritchie, aka Kid Rock, aka the Michigan-bred rocker who appears to be flirting with challenging the Senate Agriculture Committee's ranking member next year. An NBC News/Marist poll in [Michigan](#), out Sunday, showed that 39 percent of registered voters polled from Aug. 13-17 had a favorable opinion of Stabenow, compared with 32 percent who said they held an unfavorable opinion. More than a quarter of those surveyed - 28 percent - were either uncertain or had never heard of Stabenow, who has been in office since 2001. The line for Kid Rock, by contrast, was 36 percent favorable versus 34 percent unfavorable, with 30 percent unsure or unfamiliar with him." [Full story.](#)

**CODA - QUOTE OF THE DAY:** "You must have been blinded by [#eclipse2017](#) to not see the 'guns' !" - South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham jabbing back at Nebraska's Sasse, who teased him about his "upper arms," on [Twitter](#).

*To view online:*

<http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-score/2017/08/22/dnc-preps-2020-opposition-research-on-pence-kasich-haley-221997>

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