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From: Morning Score
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Subject: POLITICO's Morning Score: Early voting sites open for Georgia special election — New ad from House Majority PAC — Pence plans campaign push to help GOP — Q&A with Evan Jenkins

By Elena Schneider | 05/30/2017 10:00 AM EDT

With Scott Bland

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>)

BALLOT CHASE - In-person early voting kicks off in Georgia House special: Election Day in the GA-06 special election is three weeks from today, which means in-person early voting sites are opening Tuesday morning across the suburban Atlanta district. Interest in the race is incredibly intense and both parties are making a major push to bank votes for Republican Karen Handel and Democrat Jon Ossoff - over 7,200 people already cast absentee ballots by the end of last week, according to Georgia's voter file. By contrast, fewer than 2,000 people voted by the end of the first day of in-person early voting before the April 18 primary.

- 1,193 of those absentee voters did not vote in the primary, yet have already banked their votes for the two campaigns . Of that group, 339 voted in the GOP primary during the 2016 presidential race, versus 105 who pulled Democratic presidential primary ballots on March 1, 2016. Turnout in round 1 was already near midterm levels - about 193,000 on April 18 compared to 210,000 in November 2014. But both parties are seeking to expand the electorate further in ways that will help them. While Democrats are focusing on thousands of newly registered voters, Republicans have a bigger pool of friendly-looking occasional voters to mine. The Republican analytics firm Optimus Consulting found there were 35,000 voters who cast Republican ballots in the March 2016 presidential primaries but didn't vote on April 18, versus about 11,000 Democratic primary voters. Indeed, the NRCC has been urging groups involved in GA-06 to target "38,000 high propensity Republicans [who] did not vote on April 18 but are able to vote in June."

- These relatively small numbers could ultimately make the difference in a tight race. Remember: Ossoff fell 3,612 votes short of winning the seat with a majority in the primary.

- ICYMI - "Ossoff raised \$6.9M online in April." Full story.

- NEW THIS A.M. - Democratic super PAC ad hits Handel on government spending: House Majority PAC and Patriot Majority have partnered on a new TV ad in the special election, backed by a half-million dollars on Atlanta broadcast TV. The ad opens by noting that Handel has run "six campaigns for five different offices," before the narrator says: "But politician Karen Handel never changes, always taking taxpayers for a ride." The ad notes spending by Handel's office as secretary of state on items like a Lexus SUV and "taxpayer-funded air travel," themes

in other Democratic ads in GA-06, too. **See the ad [here](#).**

MEET THE CANDIDATE - "POLITICO Pro Q&A: Rep. Evan Jenkins," by Campaign Pro's Daniel Strauss: "GOP Rep. Evan Jenkins is vying to defeat Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin in West Virginia in 2018. And to do it, he is framing the race as a proxy battle against Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer and Sen. Elizabeth Warren. ... Jenkins discussed his case against Manchin, the possibility of a primary, and more in an interview with POLITICO. The transcript has been lightly edited for length and clarity. ... **Manchin has a primary challenger and there are a lot of Democrats who say Manchin is not really a Democrat. What exactly are your problems with his voting record?** I think reporters' analysis is that Manchin has a 84, 85 percent voting record with Harry Reid. He has a 76, 77 percent voting record with Elizabeth Warren. I'm certainly not Joe Manchin's political consultant, but Joe Manchin will say one thing and will do another in his voting behavior in Washington." **[Full story.](#)**

Days until the 2017 election: 161.

Days until the 2018 election: 525.

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HELP FROM MIKE - "Pence to make campaign push amid GOP concerns over Trump," by POLITICO's Alex Isenstadt: "Vice President Mike Pence is embarking on a cross-country summer campaign tour amid rising fears that the GOP, reeling from a barrage of Trump-fueled controversies, is headed for a midterm election disaster. Pence is mapping out a schedule that will take him through several Midwestern battlegrounds and to traditionally conservative southern states like Georgia, where an unexpectedly competitive June special election runoff is alarming party strategists. The vice president will also attend a series of Republican Party events that will draw major donors and power-brokers, where talk about 2018 is certain to be front-and-center. The push comes at a time of growing consternation among senior Republicans who say the White House has given them little direction on midterm planning. ... the early intensity of Pence's tour underscores the sudden urgency confronting Republicans. With Trump's campaign under federal investigation, his approval ratings at record lows, and his agenda badly stalled, once-despondent Democrats have been jolted back to life - and are waging a serious bid to seize control of the House. Some Republicans view Pence's activity as an effort to calm the waters." **[Full story.](#)**

... AND HELP FROM JOE - "Biden backs Phil Murphy, says N.J. governor's race 'most important' in nation," by POLITICO New Jersey's Ryan Hutchins: "Former Vice President Joe Biden blessed the campaign of New Jersey gubernatorial candidate Phil Murphy on Sunday, describing the upcoming election to succeed outgoing Gov. Chris Christie as the 'single most important' of the next three years - even eclipsing the 2018 midterms. In what was largely a repudiation of President Donald Trump, Biden said Democrats haven't done enough to

acknowledge the problems faced by many in middle-class America and said he viewed Murphy - a former Goldman Sachs executive who served as U.S. ambassador to Germany during the Obama administration - as the man to do so." [Full story.](#)

SIGN OF THE TIMES - "How Trump is already shaking up the Georgia governor's race," by The Atlanta Journal Constitution's Greg Bluestein: "...A fight is already under way on the GOP side of the ticket between candidates pledging to 'drain the swamp' vying against more mainstream Republicans with long records of experience in public office who aren't tying themselves directly to Trump's presidency. The battle lines have already been drawn: Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle didn't mention Trump at his campaign kickoff, while Secretary of State Brian Kemp's official announcement practically oozed Trump-ian themes. ... A pair of Democratic rising stars - state Reps. Stacey Abrams and Stacey Evans - both figure to put their opposition to Trump at the center of their bids." [Full story.](#)

DEBATE NIGHT - "Pragmatism vs. populism at cordial final debate in Va. Democratic gubernatorial race," by The Washington Post's Fenit Nirappil: "The two Virginia Democrats locked in a tight race for their party's gubernatorial nomination were cordial in their final debate but offered competing visions for a swing state where Republicans control the legislature. In a 30-minute debate televised Sunday, Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam touted his experience and relationships in Richmond, saying they make him the ideal choice to shepherd through pragmatic policies to help working families. Former congressman Tom Perriello urged a more dramatic approach, saying the state's next leader needs to champion an expansive progressive platform, complete with new social programs funded by tax increases on the wealthiest, even if it faces opposition from Republican lawmakers." [Full story.](#)

YEP, THAT'S A LOT - "22 candidates crowd into race to replace Chaffetz - so far," by The Deseret News' Lisa Riley Roche: "Candidates crowded into the race to replace Rep. Jason Chaffetz, R-Utah, with 15 Republicans, four Democrats, two Independent American Party members and one Libertarian signing up to run by Friday's 5 p.m. filing deadline. ...There could end up being even more names on the ballot for voters to choose from because unaffiliated candidates - those not running as a member of a political party - have until June 12 to file with the state Elections Office." [Full story.](#)

OPERATIVE TURNED CANDIDATE - Democratic strategist Buffy Wicks has [formed a campaign committee to run](#) for state Assembly in California next year. Wicks was Hillary Clinton's California state director during the 2016 presidential primaries and previously held senior roles in the Obama White House, his two presidential campaigns, and Priorities USA Action.

CHOOSING PRIORITIES - Priorities poll finds Russia hurting Trump, not GOP Congress: "A new polling memo from a leading Democratic super PAC argues that the ongoing investigation into Russian meddling in American politics is dragging down President Donald Trump's approval numbers, but health care is having a greater impact on the popularity of the Republican-controlled Congress." [Full story.](#)

ADMINISTRATION SPEED READ - "Investigation Turns to Kushner's Motives in

Meeting With a Putin Ally," by The New York Times' Matthew Rosenberg, Mark Mazzetti and Maggie Haberman: "Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and senior adviser, was looking for a direct line to President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia - a search that in mid-December found him in a room with a Russian banker whose financial institution was deeply intertwined with Russian intelligence, and remains under sanction by the United States. Federal and congressional investigators are now examining what exactly Mr. Kushner and the Russian banker, Sergey N. Gorkov, wanted from each other. The banker is a close associate of Mr. Putin, but he has not been known to play a diplomatic role for the Russian leader. That has raised questions about why he was meeting with Mr. Kushner at a crucial moment in the presidential transition, according to current and former officials familiar with the investigations." [Full story.](#)

CODA - QUOTE OF THE DAY: "I guess we could be more concerned if she was the wife of the president. Hopefully, this is just her issue." - Patti Strand, president of the National Animal Interest Alliance, on Lara Trump, wife of Eric Trump, who hopes to champion beagle adoption, which is "a little problematic," [POLITICO](#) reported.

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