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**From:** Morning Score  
**Sent:** Thur 9/14/2017 2:02:09 PM  
**Subject:** POLITICO's Morning Score: Liberal groups team up for big Virginia digital buy — VA-10 Democrats consider convention — Dem poll has Flake trailing

By Kevin Robillard | 09/14/2017 10:00 AM EDT

*With Zach Montellaro and Maggie Severns*

*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>)*

**OL' VIRGINNY - FIRST IN SCORE - "Liberal groups team up for \$2M digital buy in Virginia," by Campaign Pro's Kevin Robillard:** "A slew of liberal groups are teaming up for a \$2 million digital ad buy aiming to drive Virginia voters to the polls in November and back Democratic Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam for governor. Planned Parenthood Votes and the Planned Parenthood Virginia PAC, the Tom Steyer-backed Next Gen America, Priorities USA, Progress Virginia and the Virginia League of Conservation Voters PAC are all contributing hundreds of thousands of dollars to the effort, which will begin this week and run until Election Day. The ads will aim to reach and turn out more than 1.2 million voters. ... The groups are touting the buy as an unprecedented effort from liberal groups to coordinate their digital spending. The groups are sharing data and working together to develop messaging, voter contact timelines and dividing targeted audiences. Democrats have often worked together to coordinate their television and mail efforts, but digital efforts have sometimes been more scattershot. Priorities, which was the main super PAC backing Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton in 2016, hopes to replicate the effort in other states with competitive races in 2018." [Full story.](#)

**PRIMARY CONCERNS - "Democrats weigh convention instead of primary in top House battleground," by Robillard:** "Democratic officials in one of the nation's most contested House districts are considering picking their nominee through a convention rather than a primary, a step opposed by all but one of the leading candidates: Virginia state Sen. Jennifer Wexton, the only Democratic elected official in the race against GOP Rep. Barbara Comstock. The Democratic committee in Virginia's 10th District met on Sunday to discuss how to pick their nominee to challenge Comstock in 2018. POLITICO obtained an audio recording of a lengthy debate between committee members over whether to hold a regular state-run primary, a more limited 'firehouse primary,' a caucus or a convention. ... Now, nine Democrats have lined up to take on Comstock in 2016. The DCCC touted Wexton's entrance when she declared her candidacy in April, but her fundraising has trailed three main rivals: Obama administration alumni Lindsey Davis Stover and Alison Friedman and Rhodes Scholar and Army veteran Daniel Helmer. Some Democrats in the district think Wexton, the only candidate with experience running elections in the 10th District, may prefer a more insular convention to a more expensive primary." [Full story.](#)

**EARLY POLLING DATA - "Democratic poll: Flake trails Ward in primary, Sinema in**

**general," by Robillard:** "A new poll paid for by Senate Majority PAC shows Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake in deep trouble in both the primary and general election phases of his Senate bid. The poll, conducted by the Democratic firm GBA Strategies, has the incumbent Republican trailing former state Sen. Kelli Ward by substantial margins in the GOP primary. Flake is also behind Democratic Rep. Kyrsten Sinema in the poll's general election matchup. Flake, a staunch fiscal conservative, has faced intra-party attacks for his repeated criticisms of President Donald Trump's behavior and demeanor. Ward leads Flake in the primary test by a wide margin, 58 percent to 31 percent. Only 25 percent of GOP primary voters have a favorable opinion of Flake, while 56 percent have an unfavorable opinion. Just 34 percent approve of Flake's job performance, and 59 percent disapprove. Sinema leads Flake, 47 percent to 40 percent, in the general election matchup. Flake's job approval is at 38 percent among the general election electorate, with 50 percent disapproval. Just 23 percent have a favorable opinion of him, and 48 percent have an unfavorable opinion." [Full story.](#)

**CORRECTION** - A story in yesterday's Score incorrectly stated the American Academy of Dermatology's position on repeal of Obamacare. It opposed repeal of the tanning taxes included in the legislation.

**Days until the 2017 election: 55.**

**Days until the 2018 election: 419.**

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 - Senate Leadership Fund set to spend \$1.6M down the stretch in Alabama:** Senate Leadership Fund has increased its ad buy by about \$200,000 in Alabama. It's now set to spend \$1.6 million over the final two weeks of the GOP primary race, as it tries to boost Sen. [Luther Strange](#) past former state Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore. The group is set to spend about \$3 million during the run-off between the two men.

**READY FOR ROUND TWO - "Heitkamp announces re-election bid for 2018," by the Bismarck Tribune's Amy Dalrymple:** "Democratic U.S. Sen. [Heidi Heitkamp](#) announced Wednesday she is running for re-election in 2018, a decision she says was cemented the night before while attending a dinner with President Donald Trump. 'I really felt last night that there's an opportunity to do some good bipartisan work,' Heitkamp said in an interview with The Bismarck Tribune. 'If I didn't think I was getting things done, I don't know that I'd want to stay here.' ... She cited her efforts to support lifting the oil export ban, responding to concerns about the opioid crisis and fighting to improve lives for Native American children as some of her accomplishments." [Full story.](#)

**TAX TIME - "GOP shudders as Trump courts Democrats on taxes," by Rachael Bade and**

**Burgess Everett:** "President Donald Trump's courtship of Democrats on tax reform is dividing congressional Republicans on the merits of a bipartisan bill - and could upend the party-line strategy that White House and GOP leaders have been pursuing for months. Trump talked tax reform with two bipartisan groups of senators and House members over the past 24 hours, dining with swing-state Democrats and hobnobbing with centrists in the lower chamber. He told them he wants their votes on a tax bill, even entertaining a Democratic request to raise taxes on wealthier individuals. ... Tax decision-makers in the "Big Six" - Speaker [Paul Ryan](#), Majority leader [Mitch McConnell](#), Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, White House economic adviser Gary Cohn and the GOP chairmen of the House and Senate tax-writing committees - opted months ago to pursue a partisan tax bill, all but writing off Democrats. They aim to pursue tax reform via budget 'reconciliation,' a procedural tool that allows them to evade a 60-vote threshold in the Senate, where the GOP controls just 52 seats. Now, GOP leaders and conservative lawmakers are warning that a Trump alliance with Democrats could upend all those plans." [Full story](#).

**WEB WARS - NRSC digital ad attacks McCaskill over plane:** The NRSC is out with a digital ad attacking Democratic Sen. [Claire McCaskill](#) for saying "normal people" can afford a private plane. [Watch it here](#).

**GETTING THE NOD - "Trump nominates James Trainor III to FEC," by Campaign Pro's Maggie Severns:** "President Donald Trump plans to nominate Texas-based lawyer James "Trey" Trainor III to the FEC, the White House said Tuesday night. Trainor is a partner at the law firm Ackerman, where his practice involves campaign finance and elections. According to his website bio at the firm, he has experience working with Trump, both in the general counsel's office for Secretary of Defense James Mattis and as counsel for Trump's presidential campaign. He has also worked in the Texas Secretary of State's office and the Texas state legislature." [Full story](#).

**HAPPENING TODAY -- FEC to discuss Russian Facebook ads:** The Federal Election Commission will meet this morning and is poised to discuss Russia's reported purchasing of Facebook ads during the 2016 election. The commission [posted](#) a letter written last week by Democratic Commissioner Ellen Weintraub to its agenda in which Weintraub asks to discuss the ads and whether the FEC should undertake rulemaking for disclaimers on digital advertisements. "The need for us to act grows more compelling every day," Weintraub wrote in the letter. Weintraub also made clear she plans to ask the commission to restart the rulemaking process-- though other commissioners have in recent months have shown almost no interest in doing so.

**FAMILY TIES - "Chuck Grassley will back Pat Grassley for Iowa Secretary of Agriculture," by the Des Moines Register's Jason Noble:** "U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley left no doubt on Wednesday whether he's backing his grandson, state Rep. Pat Grassley, for the soon-to-be vacant office of Iowa secretary of agriculture. 'I know darn well you expect me to support my grandson, and I am. I hope he'll be appointed,' Grassley, a Republican, said in a conference call with Iowa reporters Wednesday. The statewide elected office is expected to come open later this year or early next following incumbent Republican Secretary Bill Northey's nomination to an undersecretary post at the U.S. Department of Agriculture." [Full story](#).

**QUOTE OF THE DAY:** "Because when I didn't have an alert, I would be in the middle of an interview with someone like you, and they would ask me about something he tweeted, and I would be caught flat-footed." - Ohio Sen. [Rob Portman](#) to [BuzzFeed News](#).

*To view online:*

<http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-score/2017/09/14/liberal-groups-team-up-for-big-virginia-digital-buy-222288>

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