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From: Morning Score
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Subject: POLITICO's Morning Score: What to watch in Alabama's special election — And Utah's special election! — More Charlottesville fallout

By Kevin Robillard | 08/15/2017 10:00 AM EDT

With Daniel Strauss and Zach Montellaro

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>)

ROLL TIDE - "Five things to watch in Alabama's special election," by Seung Min Kim and Daniel Strauss: "The brutal fight on the Republican side is all but assured to go to a September runoff, with no one expected to reach the 50 percent threshold to win the nomination outright. ... [Sen. Luther] Strange isn't a lock to secure a spot in the runoff. Polls show ex-state Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore consistently leading, while Strange and [Rep. Mo] Brooks are battling for the runner-up position. ...[S]hould Strange somehow not make the runoff - he's consistently placed second in polls, though the margin between him and Brooks is narrow - it would be a huge embarrassment for McConnell and establishment Republicans who have invested millions to help Strange secure the nomination. ... How much Trump's imprimatur matters is unclear, but Strange isn't hesitating to remind voters of it at every turn. To a crowd of Republicans in Homewood, Alabama last week, Strange recounted the phone call with Trump when he informed the senator of the endorsement, when the president told him: 'I've never done this in a contested primary before, I'm sure I'm going to be criticized, but it's important to get my agenda passed and I appreciate what you're going through to get it done.' ... Republican officials expect turnout to be low, which would likely hurt the rest of the field but potentially boost Moore, given his enthusiastic base. At the same time, Moore's campaign is floating the idea that he could exceed expectations and win somewhere above 35 percent but probably below the 50 percent needed to clinch the nomination outright."

- And don't forget about the Democratic primary: "A Democrat hasn't held a U.S. Senate seat in Alabama since 1997 but the party feels it might have an outside shot if the chips all fall their way. Seven candidates are running for the Democratic nomination, but two candidates are really in play: former U.S. attorney Doug Jones and Robert Kennedy Jr., a Navy veteran and business executive who's unrelated to the Kennedy family." [Full story.](#)

-If Strange doesn't make the runoff, "he will become just the second appointed senator since the 1970s to come up short in such a bid," per Smart Politics. "Since 1980, appointees nearly have an unblemished mark with 21 of 22 U.S. Senators receiving their party's nomination, including each of the last 12 aspiring to keep their seat since 1999." [Full story.](#)

- PHONING IT IN - "Trump sends robocall for Strange in Alabama," by Daniel Strauss: "President Donald Trump praises Sen. Luther Strange in a new robocall released by Strange's

campaign Monday, a day before Alabama voters head to the polls for special Senate primaries. ... 'Hi, this is President Donald Trump, and I love the people of Alabama and I hope you go out and vote for Luther Strange for Senate,' Trump says in the call. 'It's so important that you do.'" [Full story.](#)

-Polls close in most parts of Alabama at 8 p.m Eastern, with some counties closing at 7:30 p.m.

BEEHIVE BUZZ - "Tight Race for Chaffetz's Utah Seat Due to Outside Spending," by Roll Call's Bridget Bowman: "It's the Beehive State's first special election for a House seat in nearly 90 years, and the winner could hang onto the 3rd District seat for a while. The three Republican contenders battling it out are Provo Mayor John Curtis, former state Rep. Chris Herrod, and businessman Tanner Ainge. ... A Utah Policy poll from July showed Curtis leading Herrod by nearly 20 points, with half of those surveyed undecided. But a poll from the same outfit released Thursday showed Curtis' lead over Herrod had narrowed to 8 points, 31 percent to 23 percent, with Ainge in third at 15 percent, and roughly a quarter of respondents still undecided. So why are outside groups spending so much money on one House race? 'Whoever we elect - unless he does something dumb personally or misappropriates funds - is going to be there for a decade or more,' GOP strategist Chuck Warren said." [Full story.](#)

-THROWBACK TUESDAY: "Trump invisible in race to replace Chaffetz," by Campaign Pro's Elena Schneider. [Full story.](#)

-Polls close in Utah at 10 p.m. Eastern.

Days until the 2017 election: 84.

Days until the 2018 election: 448.

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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CHARLOTTESVILLE FALLOUT CONTINUES - Nevada Sen. Dean Heller praised Trump's revised statement on Charlottesville: "It was much stronger, it was much stronger. And I think he needed to do it." **When asked if Trump waited too long:** "I don't want to answer that question. I'm just glad he did it."

- Some Democrats pounced on the fallout. Jason Crow, who is running against Colorado GOP Rep. [Mike Coffman](#), said Coffman needs to pressure Trump to fire presidential strategist Steve Bannon and Seb Gorka, whom he called "alt-right sympathizers." Former NAACP President Ben Jealous, who is running against GOP Gov. Larry Hogan in Maryland, said the state should remove statues of Chief Justice Roger Taney, who wrote the Dred Scott decision, in Baltimore

and replace it with a statue of Frederick Douglass.

- **Some Republicans say statues of Confederate generals should stay.** Rep. [Evan Jenkins](#), who is running against Democratic Sen. [Joe Manchin](#) in West Virginia, said on a [local radio show](#) on Monday removing a statue of Stonewall Jackson from the West Virginia capitol grounds would be "scrub[bing] our history," but said it would ultimately be up to the state legislature and governor. South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, who is running for reelection in a GOP primary, said he didn't think Confederate statues in South Carolina would come down soon. "We have been over these issues over the years," McMaster [told the Charleston Post and Courier](#). "I think our people are different."

PRIMARY CONCERNS - "Nine months after 2016 election, Heller finally says he voted for Trump," by the Nevada Independent's Riley Snyder: "In a short statement released to The Nevada Independent, Heller - who is up for reelection in 2018 and is being challenged in a primary by businessman Danny Tarkanian - confirmed that he indeed voted for the Republican nominee during the 2016 election after more than a year of vocal criticism toward the party's nominee. 'Yes, I voted for Donald Trump,' he said in a statement texted to a reporter." [Full story.](#)

- **NEW THIS A.M.: Club for Growth PAC endorses Nicholson in primary:** The Club for Growth PAC is endorsing Kevin Nicholson in Wisconsin's GOP Senate primary. "Kevin is not just a political outsider, he's a strong economic conservative, who understands that free markets and limited government are the engines of economic growth," said Club president David McIntosh. "Kevin will be a great Senator for the Badger State because, unlike out-of-touch liberal Tammy Baldwin, Kevin understands the needs of everyday Wisconsinites." Nicholson is the only declared candidate in the field, but state Rep. Leah Vukmir and businessman Eric Hovde are still considering the race.

HOUSE CANDIDATE WATCH - Paul Davis launches KS-02 campaign: The former state House Democratic leader and 2014 gubernatorial nominee is making his campaign for retiring GOP Rep. Lynn Jenkins' seat official today. Davis took 46 percent of the vote in the 2014 governor's race against Republican incumbent Sam Brownback and carried the 2nd District, which President Donald Trump also won by a 56-37 margin in 2016.

WEB WARS - NRSC attacks Nelson over Venezuela, Cuba, in Spanish-language ads: The National Republican Senatorial Committee is out with a Spanish-language radio ad attacking Florida Sen. [Bill Nelson](#), arguing he is soft on Cuba and Venezuela. "What has our Senator Bill Nelson done? In the past, he has aligned himself with communists and dictators," a narrator says in the ad. "If Bill Nelson supports murderers, I can't support Bill Nelson." [Listen to the ad here.](#)

- **Nelson spokesman Ryan Brown responds:** "These ads are untrue. Sen. Nelson is one of the strongest opponents of the Maduro and Castro regimes. In fact, the Miami Herald has called Nelson one of Chavez's fiercest critics. And earlier this month Nelson called on President Trump to ban at least some imports of Venezuelan oil until constitutional order has been restored in Venezuela. These attacks against Nelson's anti-Castro, anti-Maduro record are false and nothing more than a thinly-veiled attempt to try to distract people from Rick Scott's decision to flip-flop on doing business with Goldman Sachs, which is currently doing business with an arm of the

Maduro regime."

- NEW THIS A.M.: American Action Network to spend \$500,000 pushing tax reform with mobile ads: American Action Network, a nonprofit with ties to House Republican leadership, is out with new member-specific mobile ads pushing tax reform. The ads, including display spots and 15-second videos, will run in 31 congressional districts. The group, which has already spent \$3.5 million on ads advocating tax reform, is spending another \$500,000 on this effort. **Watch the video [here](#). See the list of districts [here](#).**

- NEW THIS A.M.: American Bridge attacks Rauner: Democratic super PAC American Bridge is out with a new web ad attacking Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner as a "bully" for vetoing a school funding package just before the 2017-2018 school year begins. **Watch the ad [here](#).**

A COMPLEX FOR EVERY INDUSTRY - Democratic elections attorney Marc Elias discussed the "'explosion' in election law" in a 15-minute interview with the National Law Journal. **Listen [here](#).**

STAFFING UP - Jordan Russell, communications director for Strategic Partners & Media, is leaving the Republican consulting firm to join Sen. [Marco Rubio's](#) leadership PAC. Russell is also an alum of Sen. [Thad Cochran's](#) reelection campaign.

CODA - QUOTE OF THE DAY: "Peter, you will have to shovel our bodies into the oven, too. Please son, renounce the hate, accept and love all." - The father of Charlottesville protester Peter Tefft, in a letter to the [Fargo Forum](#).

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