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From: Morning Score
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Subject: POLITICO's Morning Score: Summer retirement watch is on — Hawley forms Senate exploratory committee — End Citizens United endorses Rosen — Hurd gets first major challenger in TX-23

By Daniel Strauss and Scott Bland | 08/03/2017 10:00 AM EDT

With Elena Schneider, Maggie Severns, Kevin Robillard 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>)

RETIREMENT WATCH - August and September 2017 will be key months for the 2018 House landscape: Rep. Diane Black's (R-Tenn.) gubernatorial campaign launch on Wednesday means that there are now 18 House members who have announced they will leave their seats open in 2018 - a number that is sure to rise. That's partly because some not-quite-official Senate candidates, like GOP Reps. [Todd Rokita](#) and [Lou Barletta](#), have not yet made things official, while GOP Rep. [Jim Bridenstine](#) of Oklahoma has said in the past that this would be his last term and is not raising money but hasn't spoken about it recently. But mostly, it's because of the biannual tradition that some members simply come back from recess and decide that they don't want to run again.

- Retirements will shape the battle for the House more than almost any other factor, apart from the president's approval and the general national environment. Republican incumbents showed much more ability to separate from Trump than open-seat candidates in 2016, and while that could fade now that he's president, their experience (and bank accounts) will come in handy with Republicans facing down a potentially forbidding political environment, especially in the 23 GOP districts that Hillary Clinton carried last year. So far, a plurality of the retirements have come from Republicans in safe seats. Democratic retirements by reps running for higher office have actually exposed two true swing seats (MN-01 and NV-03) versus just one for the GOP so far (FL-27). Whether those numbers shift, and by how much, is the big thing students of the House are watching with the end of summer already on the horizon.

MO-VING CLOSER - "Hawley forms exploratory committee for U.S. Senate run against McCaskill," by McClatchy's Lindsay Wise and Bryan Lowry: "Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley is creating an exploratory committee to run for U.S. Senate against Democrat Claire McCaskill. 'As part of Josh's process to consider becoming a candidate for the United States Senate, this week he is filing paperwork to launch an exploratory committee with the Federal Election Commission,' said Hawley's spokesman, Scott Paradise, in an email...Former U.S. Sen. Jack Danforth, Republican megadonor David Humphreys and other prominent Missouri Republicans published an open letter months ago urging Hawley to jump into the race for U.S. Senate in 2018." [Full story.](#)

PRIMARY COLORS - "Justice Democrats raised almost \$1M. What's next?" by Campaign Pro's Maggie Severns: "The anti-incumbent PAC Justice Democrats raised \$923,803 during the first six months of this year ... [and] has endorsed a dozen candidates and started pushing a Medicare-for-all platform in Washington that will be a main focus this year. The group has raised enough money to make a big splash in a few selected primaries, if it decided to, but it has not elected to use the money as a traditional outside-spending or bundling PAC. ... Justice Democrats disclosed paying \$429,850 for 'strategic consulting' to Brand New Congress, an affiliated LLC that is also led by Chakrabarti, during the first six months of 2016. Chakrabarti said the funds went to payroll and other expenses for Justice Democrats staff who are employed by both organizations. Brand New Congress is also offering itself as a consulting firm and hub for candidates endorsed by Justice Democrats." [Full story.](#)

FIRST IN SCORE - End Citizens United endorses Jacky Rosen in Nevada: The campaign finance reform group End Citizens United is the latest group to throw its support to Democratic Rep. Jacky Rosen in the race against GOP Sen. Dean Heller. ECU president Tiffany Muller said in a statement the Nevada Senate race will be "a top priority for ECU this cycle." ECU spent \$2 million boosting now-Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto in 2016 and spent \$150,000 for Rosen during her congressional race. The group found signs it thinks is promising in polling last cycle in Nevada: key groups of Nevada voters, including independents, were more swayed by messages with a money in politics theme than by other generic messaging.

Days until the 2017 election: 96.

Days until the 2018 election: 460.

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HOUSE WATCH - "Rep. Will Hurd gets first major Democratic challenger for 2018," by the Texas Tribune's Patrick Svitek: "Gina Ortiz Jones, a former Air Force intelligence officer, is entering the race Wednesday, wading into a potentially crowded primary field for a shot at Hurd ... Jones said she was inspired to come home to San Antonio and run for Congress after witnessing up close the opening months of Donald Trump's presidency as a director in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative ... Jones attended Boston University on a ROTC scholarship and served in the Air Force from 2003-2006, deploying to Iraq. After a stint in the private sector, she went to work for the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency in 2008, ultimately becoming a special adviser to the deputy director." [Full story.](#)

- DIGITAL ADS - NRCC attacks Democrats with digital ads on single-payer, via Campaign Pro's Elena Schneider: The NRCC is out with digital ads targeting House Democrats in eight states on single-payer health care, as they return to their home districts during the August recess. The [ad](#), which starts today, attack Democrats for supporting a single-payer

health care system, "a new plan, brought to you by the same Democrats who gave us Obamacare," the ad's narrator says. It also splices together news footage about Charlie Gard, a British infant with a rare condition who died, as his parents fought to take him to the United States for experimental treatment.

- REFORMA FISCAL - American Action Network launches Spanish-language radio ads on tax reform: The American Action Network's new tax reform push is launching Spanish-language radio spots in the districts of six vulnerable Republican lawmakers: Arizona's Martha McSally, California's Jeff Denham, Steve Knight, and David Valadao; Florida's Carlos Curbelo, and Texas' Will Hurd. "America's tax code is sabotaging our economy," an announcer says in the 60-second ad. "U.S. small businesses face the highest tax rates in the industrialized world - giving competitors in places like China an unfair advantage. So working families get left behind. But things, are about to change." The ad then praises the congressman for working to "make America's tax code simpler, fairer, and pro-growth." The ads will run throughout recess. **Listen to ad [here](#).**

FIRST IN SCORE - PPP survey: Flake, health care repeal unpopular in Arizona, per Democratic poll: Another new survey from the Democratic firm Public Policy Polling shows a Republican senator up for reelection in 2018 in bad shape after months of congressional health care battles. This poll shows Arizona Sen. Jeff Flake with an 18 percent approval rating among voters and 62 percent disapproving of his job performance. In a generic ballot test, 47 percent said they would back a Democrat, versus 31 percent who said they'd back Flake. Another 22 percent said they were undecided. On the Senate health care bill, which died last week, 55 percent said they did not support it, while 31 percent backed it. Meanwhile, Trump's approval rating hovers at 44 percent. (Unlike yesterday's [Nevada poll](#), there isn't much other data to compare this one to, so consider it with that caveat in mind.) "Drive for Our Lives," a coalition of liberal groups that are touring the country to target GOP on health care, released the poll. **Read the full polling results [here](#).**

- "Drive for Our Lives" bus tour is scheduled to stop in Phoenix and Tucson, Ariz., on Aug. 4 and 5, with appearances from former Rep. Gabby Giffords and Mark Kelly.

GUESS WHO'S BACK - Trone enters MD-06: Millionaire wine retailer David Trone jumped into the Democratic primary to replace Rep. John Delaney, who's now running for president. "With your help, I'll pick right up where John leaves off," Trone, who lost a primary for a neighboring district in 2016, said in a campaign announcement released Wednesday. Trone said he would "fight President Trump and Congress's attempts to gut health care," along with promising to reject any contributions from corporations, lobbyists and PACs. Trone spent upwards of \$13 million of his own money on his 2016 race, and he's expected to spend heavily again in the expensive district. **Watch the announcement video [here](#).**

- GUESS WHO'S BACK, PART II? - "Sources: Michael Grimm eyes return to Congress," by NY1's Grace Rauh: "Sources told NY1 that Grimm is beginning to let a small number of political leaders on Staten Island know that he intends to run for Congress. Any campaign would be a challenge for someone in Grimm's position; he spent seven months in federal prison for tax fraud, and he was released in May of 2016. ... Grimm on Wednesday afternoon ... insisted he has

not made any decisions yet on his political future. But he did say that there are people who would like to see him run, and he said he plans to return to public office one day. Grimm's entry into the race would mean a Republican primary challenge for incumbent Congressman Dan Donovan." [Full story.](#)

TECH INVESTMENT - "Progressive Campaign Tech Innovator Makes Nearly \$1.5M Initial Investment in First 10 Groundbreaking Companies ... Higher Ground Labs, the leading innovative incubator and accelerator for progressive political and campaign technology, has deployed nearly \$1.5 million to 10 groundbreaking companies that will begin supercharging progressive campaign technology...The first round of 10 companies HGL is investing in include: Voter Circle ... Qriously ... GroundGame ... BallotReady ... Mobilize America ... Victory Guide ... Tuesday Strategies ... Hope ... Field Day ... Hustle ... "

STILL NOT RUNNING? - "Zuckerberg hires former Clinton pollster Joel Benenson," by POLITICO's Annie Karni: "Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, have hired Democratic pollster Joel Benenson, a former top adviser to President Barack Obama and the chief strategist to Hillary Clinton's failed 2016 presidential campaign, as a consultant, according to a person familiar with the hire. Benenson's company, Benenson Strategy Group, will be conducting research for the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, the couple's philanthropy. The organization - whose mission statement, according to its website, is 'advancing human potential and promoting equality' - is endowed with the couple's Facebook fortune." [Full story.](#)

- And speaking of possible candidates - our Playbook colleagues Anna Palmer and Jake Sherman interviewed Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper at a Playbook Exchange event and he didn't rule out a run in 2020, either for president or to challenge Sen. Cory Gardner. More from their interview [here.](#)

NO BROTHERLY LOVE - "Pa. Dems file ethics complaint over Barletta TV interview," by the Morning Call's Laura Olson: "The Pennsylvania Democratic Party has filed an ethics complaint against U.S. Rep. Lou Barletta over a television interview this week in which the Republican congressman stood in his district office answering questions about the Senate bid he's expected to announce soon. The complaint, filed with the U.S. House's Office of Congressional Ethics and signed by Democratic Party spokesman Max Steele, alleges that the interview's location violates House rules and potentially federal law ... Barletta's political consultant, John Brabender, responded that the comment came during an interview set up to discuss health care policy. He described the complaint as revealing anxiety among Democrats over someone who has not yet joined the Senate race." [Full story.](#)

CODA - QUOTE OF THE DAY: "Some of you have asked if this challenge means I'm running for public office" Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg [wrote](#) on his Facebook in May. "I'm not."

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