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From: Morning Score
Sent: Mon 9/25/2017 2:03:31 PM
Subject: POLITICO's Morning Score: War Eagle worries for Luther Strange — Pence PAC rakes in corporate money — Democratic AGs aim to spend \$15M

By Kevin Robillard | 09/25/2017 10:00 AM EDT

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.
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WAR EAGLE - "Strange in trouble in Alabama, White House and GOP fear," by Alex Ienstadt in Birmingham: "Top administration officials and allies of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell have spent days poring over public and private polling that shows Moore consistently leading Strange, though the race has tightened, say those familiar with the numbers. On his way to Huntsville on Air Force One Friday to campaign for Strange, President Donald Trump was joined by a small team of aides that included Rick Dearborn, a veteran of Alabama politics, and Bill Stepien, the White House political director. Both aides, as well as a number of other administration officials, have privately expressed apprehension about the state of the race. Stepien brought a sheaf of the latest polling data. ... Much of the assault [on Moore] has played out on the air. During the final week of the contest, a trifecta of pro-Strange GOP groups - the Senate Leadership Fund, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and National Rifle Association - flooded the state with about \$2.5 million in TV and radio ads. ... Moore was confronting a nearly five-to-one spending deficit on the airwaves, according to media buying totals provided to POLITICO. ... The McConnell-controlled National Republican Senatorial Committee, which has spent over \$1 million on the race, dispatched more than two dozen staffers to Alabama to knock on doors and make calls to voters during the final two weeks of the contest. The NRA, which has a large constituency in the Deep South state, contacted its members and urged them to turn out for Strange while describing Moore as unreliable on gun rights. The group sent out fliers telling them not to 'waste' their vote on Moore." [Full story.](#)

- From the New York Times' Jonathan Martin: "'I think they'll go after that seat,' [Alabama Sen. Richard] Shelby said of the Democrats' approach should Mr. Moore win on Tuesday. That is less likely if Mr. Strange captures the nomination, he said. 'If Luther wins, he's in.' The Senate Democratic campaign arm has lined up a pollster to test Mr. [Doug] Jones's strengths and Mr. Moore's vulnerabilities. And Alabama Democrats are openly rooting for the former judge." [Full story.](#)

-For your radar: Vice President Mike Pence will hold a rally for Strange tonight in Birmingham. Steve Bannon and Phil Robertson of Duck Dynasty fame will appear at a rally for Moore.

- WHAT HAPPENED FRIDAY NIGHT: A Republican source said they distributed 21,437 tickets to the rally, and a fire marshal shut down the event when they reached capacity of 7,513. The crowd in Huntsville heard a lot of campaign punditry from Trump, in addition to the

president's now-famous call for football players who kneel during the National Anthem to protest racism to lose their jobs. Here are some of Trump's thoughts on Strange and Moore: "I might have made a mistake [endorsing Strange]. I'll be honest, I might have made a mistake. ...

I told Luther, and I have to say this, if his opponent wins, I'm going to be here campaigning like hell for him. ...

Luther will definitely win. ...

Roy has a very good chance of not winning in the general election. Luther's going to win easily and Roy's going to have a hard time winning, but I will be backing him if he wins."

- "They love Donald Trump in Alabama - but they still might not vote for his Senate candidate," by the Washington Post's Jenna Johnson in Huntsville: "Many of those who showed up to the president's rally in this northern Alabama city - home to NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center - said they firmly support the president and were excited to see him. But they did not plan to follow his recommendation to vote for Strange. ... 'To attend the rally, you had to confirm that you were voting for Luther Strange. . . . I'm not voting for Luther Strange, I can tell you that right now. I'm voting for Roy Moore,' said Adina Peyton, 55, an enthusiastic supporter of the president who lives in the area and teaches college students. 'I like that [Moore] stands on his principle, even though he had to pay the price for it.' ... The crowd was dotted with red Trump campaign hats but few, if any, T-shirts, stickers or signs promoting Strange." [Full story.](#)

SOMETHING CORPORATE CASH - "Pence group rakes in corporate PAC money," by Maggie Severns and Matthew Nussbaum: "As President Donald Trump pushed away CEOs this summer, Mike Pence quietly pulled big business closer. The vice president's new political group raised money from at least three dozen corporate PACs in July and August. Some, like General Motors and Merck, gave to Pence's Great America Committee just days or weeks before their CEOs moved to dissolve Trump's business advisory councils after his controversial remarks on the violence in Charlottesville. The companies - including giants like AT&T, Boeing, FedEx and General Electric - are eager for access to the vice president and have embraced his leadership PAC as a way to win favor with the White House, according to interviews with a dozen Republican fundraisers and lobbyists with ties to the business community. ... [I]n July, when more than 50 lobbyists and corporate clients huddled in the downtown offices of the lobbying firm BGR Group with Marty Obst, one of Pence's top advisers, to discuss plans for the PAC. The meeting took place just before the unofficial launch of Great America Committee, which Pence hosted on a rooftop steps from the Capitol. BGR clients Eli Lilly and the American Beverage Association are among the corporations whose PACs have since cut \$5,000 checks to Pence's group, the maximum allowed under federal campaign finance laws. ... One lobbyist with corporate clients that have given to the Pence leadership PAC said the vice president has 'done a good job meeting with people, and being that savior in the administration.'" [Full story.](#)

BIG MONEY - "Dems launch \$15M campaign for lawyers to take on Trump," by Edward Isaac-Dovere: "Democratic attorneys general, aiming to take on the Trump administration on a growing number of fronts, are planning to spend \$10 million to \$15 million to elect more of their

own next year. ... The hope, according to sources familiar with the effort, is to catch up to the Republican Attorneys General Association, which ramped up its legal and political work during the Obama years, notching major successes on both counts. RAGA put \$23 million into races in the past two years, helping win and hold 29 of the country's attorneys general offices. In addition to protecting incumbents, Democrats have identified top targets they want to capture - including in Ohio, Wisconsin and Nevada. And, banking on presumed Democratic-friendly trends in 2018, they're eyeing other states that will be tougher to flip." [Full story](#).

Days until the 2017 election: 43. (Updated for 9/22)

Days until the 2018 election: 407.

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.

You can also follow us on Twitter: [@politicoscott](https://twitter.com/politicoscott), [@ec_schneider](https://twitter.com/ec_schneider), [@politicokevin](https://twitter.com/politicokevin), [@danielstrauss4](https://twitter.com/danielstrauss4) and [@maggiaseverns](https://twitter.com/maggiaseverns).

The Doctor-Patient [and Government] Relationship - Join POLITICO for a three-panel event looking at how doctors, patients, caregivers and advocates can navigate complex decision-making - and what policy changes can help make sure that doctors and their patients can decide the best course and get access to innovative and cost-effective therapies. Speakers include **Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.), Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), American Medical Association President David Barbe, M.D.** and more. *Tuesday, Sept. 26 - Doors open at 8:00am - The Newseum. RSVP: [HERE](#).*

HOT TOPIC - Morrissey one of few candidates to weigh in on athlete protests: West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrissey was one of few 2018 candidates to issue a statement after President Donald Trump said players who kneel during the National Anthem to protest racism should lose their jobs. Morrissey, a Republican challenging Democratic Sen. [Joe Manchin](#), wrote: "#NFL players should be down on both knees thanking god they live in country allowing them to make millions while showing such disrespect." Alabama Sen. Luther Strange, in an interview with Fox News, agreed: "I think it was well received, I couldn't agree with the president more."

THE MONEY CHASE - "NRSC raised \$2.1M, spent \$2.8M in August," by Campaign Pro's Kevin Robillard: "The NRSC spent more than it raised for the second month in a row in August, according to FEC records, bringing in \$2.1 million while spending \$2.8 million. The group now has \$15 million on hand, down from \$15.8 million at the end of July and \$16.2 million at the end of June. The group did make a \$250,000 payment on their debt, which is now down to \$10.75 million."

- "Behind New Obamacare Repeal Vote: 'Furious' G.O.P. Donors," by the New York Times' Carl Hulse: "As more than 40 subdued Republican senators lunched on Chick-fil-A at a closed-door session last week, Senator Cory Gardner of Colorado painted a dire picture for his

colleagues. Campaign fund-raising was drying up, he said, because of widespread disappointment among donors over the inability of the Republican Senate to repeal the Affordable Care Act or do much of anything else. Mr. Gardner is in charge of his party's midterm re-election push, and he warned that donors of all stripes were refusing to contribute another penny until the struggling majority produced some concrete results. 'Donors are furious,' one person knowledgeable about the private meeting quoted Mr. Gardner as saying. 'We haven't kept our promise.'" [Full story](#).

-THE COST: One Republican familiar with the committee's fundraising said \$5 million worth of donation pledges went up in smoke because of the committee's failure to repeal Obamacare.

BAWITWOMPWOMP - "RNC chair, Michigan Republicans doubt Kid Rock run," by the Detroit News' Jonathan Oosting: "Kid Rock continues making noise about the U.S. Senate race but has not made any serious off-stage overtures about a run, Michigan GOP officials and activists said Friday at the Mackinac Republican Leadership Conference. ... 'I have not spoken with Kid Rock, and he has not reached out to me,' said Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna Romney McDaniel, who ran the Michigan GOP before President Donald Trump tapped her for the national post. 'I just don't think he's running.' ... Former Ingham County GOP co-chair Norm Shinkle was among a small band of Mackinac conference attendees wearing 'Kid Rock for US Senate' T-shirts Friday but agreed that the potential for a Sen. Kid Rock is highly unlikely. 'Can you see Kid Rock sitting through a three-hour Senate committee hearing?' Shinkle said." [Full story](#).

HOW TO GET THE PRESIDENT'S ENDORSEMENT - "How Bill Schuette scored an endorsement from President Donald Trump in governor's race," by MLive's Lauren Gibbons: "Schuette said the conversation started in February, when he attended a National Association of Attorneys General meeting in Washington, D.C. He said he ended up walking into the Oval Office next to the president, and the subject came up. 'I shared with him some of my plans and how I fought to make sure the election was preserved and that Jill Stein didn't steal it, and that I didn't desert or jump ship. I stuck with our Republican team,' he said." [Full story](#).

OL' VIRGINNY - "IMGE Insights poll gives Northam small lead in Virginia," by Campaign Pro's Kevin Robillard: "GOP firm IMGE Insights and Pfizer are out with a new poll of the Virginia governor's race, giving Democratic Lt. Gov. Ralph Northam 45 percent of the vote to Republican Ed Gillespie's 41 percent. Libertarian Cliff Hyra was earning 4 percent of the vote, and 10 percent were undecided. Northam's favorability is stronger: 42 percent have a favorable opinion of him and 22 percent have an unfavorable one. For Gillespie, those numbers are 40 percent and 28 percent. Gillespie has an advantage in dealing with jobs and the economy, illegal immigration and government spending. Northam's advantages are on education and health care, while neither candidate has an advantage on taxes or combating crime and drugs. ... The mixed telephone and online poll of 1,000 likely voters from Sept. 12 to Sept. 18 has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points." **Full results** [here](#).

-Quick click: A [visualization](#) from the Virginia Public Access Project shows Northam gaining an advantage in television ads in recent weeks.

EARLY POLLING DATA - Hogan approval rating at 62 percent in Maryland: A new poll from Goucher College finds Maryland GOP Gov. Larry Hogan's approval rating remains strong at 62 percent, with just 16 percent disapproval. President Donald Trump's approval rating is just 25 percent, with 71 percent disapproving. The poll also found 43 percent of Marylanders said Hogan has distanced himself "about the right amount" from the president, while 27 percent said they thought the governor hadn't distanced himself enough. Similarly, 47 percent of Marylanders think Hogan is a moderate, 31 percent call him a conservative and 7 percent think he's liberal. Overall, 51 percent of registered voters interested in the 2018 elections said they are either leaning towards or will definitely vote for Hogan, while 42 percent said they are leaning toward or would definitely vote for another candidate. Goucher surveyed 671 Maryland residents from Sept. 14 to Sept. 17 with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.8 percent.

2018 WATCH - "Dino Rossi says he's running for Congress to replace Rep. Dave Reichert," by the Seattle Times' Jim Brunner: "Republican state Sen. Dino Rossi says he'll run for Congress in the Eighth District to replace retiring U.S. Rep. Dave Reichert. Rossi, whose entry into the race had been anticipated for weeks, announced his 2018 campaign at the Washington State Republican Party's annual dinner Thursday night in Bellevue. ... As a well-known politician who has run unsuccessfully three times for statewide office, Rossi's entry into the race could cheer Republicans hoping to retain the Eighth District seat and maintain the status quo in Washington, D.C., where the GOP controls the House, Senate and White House." [Full story.](#)

-Minneapolis Star-Tribune's J. Patrick Coolican reports former Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty is considering a run for his old office: "The most consequential: former Gov. Tim Pawlenty, who is now a Washington lobbyist. When he is asked about returning to Minnesota for a run, the two-term Republican governor gives the same answer: that he's retired from public life. But GOP sources say we're beyond idle speculation, that all the buzz is real, and he's considering it, watching to see if the current field is locking down financial and political support." [Full story.](#)

2020 WATCH - "Biden rips Trump over race in South Carolina return," by Gabriel Debenedetti in Charleston, S.C.: "Former Vice President Joe Biden on Saturday evening urged Americans to stand up to hate groups - and took direct aim at President Donald Trump, who he said 'has publicly proclaimed the moral equivalency of Neo-Nazis, Klansmen and those who oppose their hate.' Speaking at the centennial fundraising dinner for the Charleston branch of the NAACP, Biden said, 'This is a moment for this nation to declare what this president can't with any clarity, consistency or vision: There is no place in America for hate groups.' The speech at the Gaillard Center - across the street from the Mother Emanuel AME church, at which nine African-American churchgoers were murdered in 2015 by a white supremacist hoping to incite a race war - was one of Biden's first since the fatal violence last month at a neo-Nazi march in Charlottesville, Virginia." [Full story.](#)

QUOTE OF THE DAY: "Walker! Welcome to the #cogov race. Please clap." - Colorado Republican George Brauchler, a district attorney running for governor, "[welcoming](#)" state Treasurer Walker Stapleton (a second cousin of Jeb Bush) into the GOP primary to be Colorado's next governor.

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