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From: Morning Score
Sent: Wed 5/24/2017 2:03:44 PM
Subject: POLITICO's Morning Score: Montana 'closer than it should be' on eve of special, Republicans say — New Handel TV ad, CLF radio ad, DCCC investment in Georgia — Democrats flip Northeastern state legislative seats

By Kevin Robillard | 05/24/2017 10:00 AM EDT

With Elena Schneider and 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>)

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN - "Republicans: Montana special election 'closer than it should be,'" by POLITICO's Elena Schneider and Gabriel Debenedetti: "It's a recurring nightmare of a pattern for Republicans around the country, as traditional GOP strongholds prove more difficult and expensive for the party to hold than it ever anticipated when President Donald Trump plucked House members like Ryan Zinke, the former Montana Republican now running the Interior Department, for his Cabinet. Gianforte is still favored to keep the seat red, but a state Trump carried by 20 percentage points last year became a battleground in the last few months. ... 'I remember talking to people when it first started who said this was a slam dunk, Gianforte's it. And it's not there anymore,' said Jim Larson, the Montana Democratic Party chairman. 'It is a lot closer than people ever thought it would be.' Gianforte has led consistently in polls of the special election, but Quist has narrowed that lead to single digits in recent weeks, according to private surveys." **Full story.**

- **Updates:** Quist has raised more than \$6 million for his campaign as of yesterday, including \$1 million in the past week. Meanwhile, Pence recorded a robo-call for Gianforte. "With Greg Gianforte's help, we will make America great again," he says on the call. **Full story here.**

AND IN GEORGIA - NEW THIS MORNING - On the heels of new Democratic investments, Handel adds a new TV ad: Republican Karen Handel is adding a new TV and digital ad that goes after Democrat Jon Ossoff on "to hide his lack of experience and misleading resume," per a statement from her campaign. "No experience, no record of success, so he intentionally misled us to get our vote," the ad's narrator says. "The problem is, he got caught. Now Jon Ossoff and his liberal allies have been caught lying about Karen Handel too." **Watch the ad here.**

- **CLF releases new radio ad, grows field program in GA-06:** The Congressional Leadership Fund is bringing on 45 new door-knockers, expanding its field program to 135 paid staffers on the ground. It also added a new goal of reaching an additional 100,000 doors. The Republican group is also out with a new radio ad that hits on the same themes as its TV ads: "San Francisco will have Nancy Pelosi as our Congresswoman and Jon Ossoff as our Congressman," the radio ad's narrator says. **Listen to the ad here.**

- The moves come after the DCCC announced they would be spending an additional \$2 million in the district on Tuesday. Of the investment, \$1.5 million would go to television ads, with the remaining half-million aimed at get-out-the-vote digital ads and African-American print and radio ads.

BETA NO MORE - The FEC's beta website is now just its new website. Feast your eyes, fellow campaign finance nerds: FEC.gov

WAY, WAY DOWNBALLOT - Democrats flip state legislative seats in New Hampshire, New York: Let's get the caveats out of the way first - the two Republican-to-Democrat special election flips on Tuesday featured approximately 10,000 voters between the two of them. But Democratic candidates did manage to pull off wins in consistently Republican territory, the type of special election result that is contributing to GOP anxiety ahead of the Montana House race despite the fact that Republican Greg Gianforte has led in every poll of the closely-watched race. In New Hampshire, Democrat Edie DesMarais won a special election and flipped a seat last night in Republican-leaning Wolfeboro, winning a district Trump won with 51 percent of the vote in November. In New York, labor-backed teacher Christine Pellegrino won a normally Republican Long Island seat (Trump won approximately 60 percent there) in the state Assembly. Democrats excitedly noted that they are the first seats to flip this year after a series of special election performances running ahead of the 2016 results but shy of wins. (Republicans, meanwhile, have already flipped a formerly Democratic-held state legislative seat in a Louisiana special earlier this year.)

Days until the 2017 election: 168.

Days until the 2018 election: 532.

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WOMEN RULE PODCAST: Fran Townsend, the former homeland security adviser for President George W. Bush, confirms that the Trump administration has approached her about replacing ousted FBI Director James Comey. In this week's must-listen episode, we hear directly from Townsend about being thrust into the middle of the controversial job search and how her candidacy for the job is itself "history-making." Townsend joins two other prominent women from the Bush White House - Candi Wolff, Assistant for Legislative Affairs, and Julie Cram, Deputy Assistant and Director of the Public Liaison Office - to reflect on their stints in the executive branch and offer up advice for the current Republican administration. Listen and subscribe [iTunes](#) | [Soundcloud](#) | [Stitcher](#)

ROLL TIDE - Strange claims NRA endorsement: Speaking on radio station in Mobile on Tuesday, Alabama Sen. Luther Strange said the NRA informed him earlier in the day that they

are endorsing him in the state's contested special election to permanently replace Attorney General Jeff Sessions. "I just got a letter from the NRA today announcing they've endorsed my campaign for the Senate," Strange said.

TECH UPDATE - "Republicans want to leave you more voicemail - without ever ringing your cellphone," by Recode's Tony Romm: "The GOP's leading campaign and fundraising arm, the Republican National Committee, has quietly thrown its support behind a proposal at the Federal Communications Commission that would pave the way for marketers to auto-dial consumers' cellphones and leave them prerecorded voicemail messages - all without ever causing their devices to ring. Under current federal law, telemarketers and others, like political groups, aren't allowed to launch robocall campaigns targeting cellphones unless they first obtain a consumer's written consent. But businesses stress that it's a different story when it comes to 'ringless voicemail' - because it technically doesn't qualify as a phone call in the first place." [Full story.](#)

- "Top hacker conference to target voting machines," by POLITICO's Edward-Isaac Dove: "Hackers will target American voting machines - as a public service, to prove how vulnerable they are. When over 25,000 of them descend on Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas at the end of July for DEFCON, the world's largest hacking conference, organizers are planning to have waiting what they call 'a village' of different opportunities to test how easily voting machines can be manipulated. Some will let people go after the network software remotely, some will be broken apart to let people dig into the hardware, and some will be set up to see how a prepared hacker could fiddle with individual machines on site in a polling place through a combination of physical and virtual attacks." [Full story.](#)

RANK IN THE TANK - "Maine Supreme Judicial Court rules ranked-choice voting unconstitutional," by the Bangor Daily News' Michael Shepherd: "Maine's high court said Tuesday that the state's first-in-the-nation ranked-choice voting system is unconstitutional, throwing the voter-approved law into jeopardy ahead of the key 2018 campaign when it was supposed to be implemented. In a unanimous, 44-page opinion issued Tuesday, the Maine Supreme Judicial Court's seven justices agreed with Attorney General Janet Mills, Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap and Republican legislators that the system violates a provision of the Maine Constitution that allows elections to be won by pluralities - and not necessarily majorities - of votes." [Full story.](#)

2018 WATCH - "A 'Draft Lynn' for governor campaign surfaces," by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's Greg Bluestein: "'Georgia needs Lynn.' So ends a lengthy plea sent to droves of Georgia Republicans on Tuesday urging former U.S. Rep. Lynn Westmoreland to join the 2018 race for governor. One of the most colorful personalities in Georgia politics, the Coweta County Republican embarked on a 'reconnect tour' after his decision last year not to run for another term in Congress. But he hasn't yet jumped in the race - or ruled it out." [Full story.](#)

ADMINISTRATION SPEED READ - "Trump undermines Senate GOP's Medicaid backers," by POLITICO's Burgess Everett and Adam Cancryn: "By proposing hundreds of billions of dollars in Medicaid cuts in combination with the House-passed health care bill's more than \$800 billion in Medicaid spending reductions, President Donald Trump is effectively

throwing in with fiscal conservatives looking to constrain the program's growth and wind down its coverage as quickly as possible. And that could be perilous for more than a dozen GOP senators who have been meeting for months over how to preserve the law's benefits." [Full story](#).

- **"Pence planning to hold rally in Louisiana,"** by POLITICO's Kyle Cheney: "Vice President Mike Pence on Wednesday has scheduled a free rally in Louisiana on Wednesday that is being promoted by the state's Republican Party. An advisory from the Louisiana GOP says that Pence is headlining the event at Cajun industries in Port Allen, just outside of Baton Rouge, where he's also slated to hold a roundtable with small business leaders." [Full story](#).

- **Pence will also hit the trail in GA-06** on June 9, per the [Atlanta Journal Constitution](#).

CODA - QUOTE OF THE DAY: "I just wanted to congratulate you because I am hearing of the unbelievable job on the drug problem." - Trump to Phillipine President Rodrigo Duterte, according to a leaked transcript of their phone call obtained by [The Intercept](#). Duterte has been widely criticized for human rights abuses in his war on drugs.

To view online:

<http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-score/2017/05/24/montana-closer-than-it-should-be-on-eve-of-special-republicans-say-220479>

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