A good offense may be best defense for House GOP

On the roster: A good offense may be best defense for House GOP – Dems despair over backlash to bully tactics – Trump gets bump on economy – House to vote on immigration bill despite Trump – Don't mess with iguanas before they get their coffee

A GOOD OFFENSE MAY BE BEST DEFENSE FOR HOUSE GOP

Republicans are going to spends lots of time and money trying to protect their 23-seat House majority. There are almost 60 districts where the GOP is on defense, so the numbers look pretty grim for the Red Team.

But the secret to Republican effort to save the House may come down to the handful of seats where they are actually playing offense.

There are just seven seats currently held by Democrats where Republicans look to have a chance to actually make gains. Given the fact that it looks like, for now, that control of the House will come down to a narrow decision, these seven are taking on special significance for the GOP.

With immigration at the fore front of the current debate, several of these races look even more interesting. Rep. **Tom O'Halleran**, D-Ariz., is a good example. His district covers part of the Phoenix suburbs and then a huge swath of the lightly populated expanse of Grand Canyon State.

A Republican turned Democrat, O'Halleran is the kind of candidate who Democrats like in swing districts. He's a former police officer and a moderate who can take tougher lines on issues like immigration.

Republican state Senator **Steve Smith**, though, is no doubt hoping that anger and anxiety over border security in the district could help him knock off freshman O'Halleran, who won in 2016 in a grueling and costly race with former Sheriff **Paul Babeu**.

Immigration will also be a big deal in Nevada where Democrats are stuck with two vacant seats. One is held by **Jacky Rosen** who is running for Senate with a

good chance to unseat incumbent Republican Sen. **Dean Heller**. That leaves her suburban Las Vegas district up for grabs.

Republicans have again nominated **Danny Tarkanian** who only barely lost to Rosen in 2016 in what was one of the costliest House races in the country. Democrats have chosen education activist **Susie Lee** for what promises to be a rough and tumble contest.

It will be more challenging for Republicans in the adjacent 4th District where incumbent **Ruben Kihuen** dropped his re-election bid following allegations of misconduct by a female staffer. The district is more Democratic than the 3rd.

The contest pits two former congressman against each other, former Rep. **Crescent Hardy** was the man Kihuen beat in 2016 and also the Republicans' pick to retake the seat. He will, fittingly, be facing the member *he beat* eight years ago, **Steve Horsford**.

This is a district where the immigration issue could be a serious drag for Republicans since the current administration's policies make it so easy for Democrats to mobilize the growing number of Hispanic voters in the district.

Immigration will also be a big issue in Florida's 7th District, where moderate Democrat **Stephanie Murphy** is looking to hold on to a seat she snagged in 2016 by beating longtime incumbent **John Mica** in this metro Orlando district. The district is evenly divided politically, but **Hillary Clinton** won here by a mile in 2016.

Republican frontrunner state Rep. **Mike Miller** is already raising considerable cash ahead of his party's August primary.

Given the political geography of this central Florida district, you can guarantee that this will be a fight to the finish.

New Hampshire's first House district is always one of the most competitive in the country. Rep. **Carol Shea-Porter** first won election to the seat from the traditionally Republican district in 2006, but got bounced out in 2010 by **Frank Guinta**. Two years later, she beat Guinta and took the seat back. Two years after that, Guinta beat her. Then, you guessed it, Shea-Porter ran again in 2016 and

reclaimed the seat for a third time.

But for the first time in over a decade neither Guinta nor Shea-Porter will be running and the field looks wide open in both parties for the September primary. But whoever wins it will be a dog fight.

One seat the Republicans can pretty well put in the bag right now is from Pennsylvania's 14th District, currently represented by Rep. **Conor Lamb**. The upset winner of the closely watched special election in the western Pennsylvania district in March knew that under the commonwealth's congressional redistricting.

While the new map overall is helpful for Democrats, not in this case. Republicans have picked **Guy Reschenthaler**, a state legislator and former judge. Democrats have chosen **Bibiana Boerio** who faces long odds in the lopsidedly Republican district.

Republicans have two pick up opportunities in Minnesota in traditionally Democratic districts that saw strong showings for **Donald Trump** in 2016.

The president's visit to campaign for candidate **Pete Stauber** in Duluth shows just how high a priority the party is placing on these races.

With lots of blue collar voters and Trump Democrats, the open seat being vacated by retiring Rep. **Rick Nolan** may be one of the GOP's best opportunities this cycle. It's a similar story in the state's first district, which covers the southern border with Iowa. Incumbent **Tim Walz** is giving up the seat for a gubernatorial run in a district that went overwhelmingly for Trump two years ago. Keep an eye on the August primary to see how things shape up.

THE RULEBOOK: GET ON WITH IT

"How far the sacrifice is necessary, has been shown. How far the unsacrificed residue will be endangered, is the question before us." – ***James Madison**, Federalist No. 45*

TIME OUT: GOOOAAALLLL

History: "On this day in 1950, an American team composed largely of amateurs defeated its more polished English opponents at the World Cup, held in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Dubbed the 'Miracle on Green,' the game is considered one of

the greatest soccer upsets of all time. The English team at the time, known as the 'Kings of Football,' boasted a record of 23 victories, four losses and three draws in the years since World War II ended. … The Americans, by contrast, had lost their last seven international matches. Hastily assembled just days before the match against England, the U.S. team included a dishwasher, two mailmen, a teacher and a mill worker. The Belfast Telegram described them as 'a band of no-hopers drawn from many lands,' ostensibly because some of the men were recent immigrants to the United States. By the time the two teams squared off at Belo Horizonte, bookies had given the Brits 3-1 odds to take the World Cup, compared to 500-1 for the Americans."

Flag on the play? – Email us at HALFTIMEREPORT@FOXNEWS.COM with your tips, comments or questions.

SCOREBOARD

Trump job performance

Average approval: 42 percent

Average disapproval: 51.2 percent

Net Score: -9.2 points

Change from one week ago: down 1.4 points

[*Average includes: CNBC: 41% approve – 47% disapprove; Quinnipiac University: 43% approve – 52% disapprove; USA Today/Suffolk University: 43% approve – 51% disapprove; CNN: 41% approve – 54% disapprove; CBS News: 42% approve – 52% disapprove*.]

Control of House

Republican average: 41.6 percent

Democratic average: 49 percent

Advantage: Democrats plus 6.4 points

Change from one week ago: Democratic advantage down 1.6 points

[*Average includes: Gallup: 48% Dems – 43% GOP; USA Today/Suffolk University: 45% Dems – 39% GOP; Quinnipiac University: 49% Dems – 43% GOP; CNN: 50% Dems – 42% GOP; Monmouth University: 48% Dems – 41% GOP.*]

DEMS DESPAIR OVER BACKLASH TO BULLY TACTICS

WaPo: "In just the past week, both Homeland Security Secretary **Kirstjen Nielsen** and White House senior adviser **Stephen Miller** have reportedly been

heckled at Mexican restaurants over the family-separation policy. Then came Florida Attorney General **Pam Bondi** (R) being accosted at a screening of a Mister Rogers documentary (of all things). Then came the Sanders-Red Hen incident. Then came Rep. **Maxine Waters** (D-Calif.) calling for these public confrontations to continue and essentially urging liberals to harass Trump administration officials. … Waters's comments have been roundly denounced, including by House Minority Leader **Nancy Pelosi** (D-Calif.), and some will argue she's a fringe figure in the party who doesn't speak for most Democrats. But what she said is a logical extension of the debate and the questions raised over the Red Hen incident. Plenty cheered such harassment of Nielsen and Miller, such was their anger over the family-separation policy."

Threats against Homeland Security officials intensify – ABC News: "Department of Homeland Security employees are seeing violent threats with greater frequency because of the president's immigration policy, according to an official with knowledge of a recent threat assessment. The department determined that there was a 'heightened threat against DHS employees' in response to recent government actions surrounding immigration, according to a letter sent to employees over the weekend. … Around two dozen threat reports were issued in the past few days, primarily against Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers, according to the same official. Each of these reports is generally related to a specific online threat. All employees are personally contacted by DHS security if they are the target of a violent threat, the official said. In one example, a senior DHS official living in the Washington. D.C. area found a burnt and decapitated animal on his front porch, according to an official with knowledge of the incident."

Mike Huckabee accused of race baiting – USA Today: "Former Arkansas Governor and presidential candidate **Mike Huckabee** was criticized on Twitter Saturday after tweeting a photo of five tattooed Hispanic men using what appears to be MS-13 gang hand signals. '**Nancy Pelosi** introduces her campaign committee for the take back of the House,' the tweet said. MS-13, a gang present in the United States, Mexico, Central America and Canada, mostly has members from Central America, particularly El Salvador. The group has been a flashpoint for Americans concerned about undocumented immigrants committing crimes in the U.S., including President **Donald Trump**, who regularly refers to members of the gang as 'animals' and has also accused democratic leaders of leaving the

nation's borders vulnerable."

TRUMP GETS BUMP ON ECONOMY

CNBC: "For the first time since President Donald Trump took office, the CNBC All-America Economic Survey shows more than half the public approving his handling of the economy, and it appears to be having some impact on his overall job approval rating. The president's economic approval rating surged 6 points to 51 percent with just 36 percent of the public disapproving, a 6 point drop from the March Survey. His overall approving rating rose 2 points to 41 percent from the first quarter survey, but the percentage of Americans who disapprove dropped 10 points to 47 percent, the lowest recorded by CNBC during his presidency. Trump's approval rating remains negative, at minus 6, but it's also the lowest negative rating recorded since he took office. The survey suggests that the recent controversy over the president's decision to separate children from their parents at the border has had little effect either way."

What worries Republicans – Axios: "A source close to Republican leadership emails about the biggest political clouds hovering over the rest of the year: 'Only thing that matters now is a) how bad they get crushed on ACA premium increases; b) the final Mueller verdict; and c) how crazy Trump gets with the CR.' Between the lines: Republicans are worried about the potential for health insurance premiums to skyrocket in September, shortly before the midterms. Democrats are seizing on health care as their number one issue. Senior Democratic sources say their polling shows voters are now blaming their dissatisfaction with health care on the party that controls the House, Senate and White House rather than the party that implemented the Affordable Care Act. The final Mueller verdict speaks for itself: it would take a new revelation of the most explosive kind to persuade any Republican senators to vote to impeach Trump. And the CR — or continuing resolution — refers to the government spending bill that's due to expire at the end of September."

McMaster hoping Trump visit will buoy his chances in S.C. runoff – Fox News:"South Carolina Gov. **Henry McMaster** is hoping that the full-fledged support of the Trump administration will be enough to sway voters in the Palmetto State to go to the polls for him in his runoff against businessman **John Warren**. McMaster — who ascended to his post after Trump picked his predecessor, **Nikki Haley**, to be the United States ambassador to the United

Nations – saw the majority of South Carolina Republicans vote against him in this month's gubernatorial primary, while Warren has won the support from the third- and fourth-place finishers in the race and Republican Rep. **Ralph Norman**. But The White House is throwing everything at its disposal into the race to save McMaster, who went out on a political limb for Trump at a crucial point in the 2016 Republican presidential primaries."

Arrington vows to continue campaign despite crash – Fox News: "Republican congressional candidate **Katie Arrington** plans to stay in the race to represent South Carolina's 1st District after sustaining severe injuries in a car crash over the weekend that left her in critical condition. During a press conference Monday with Sen. **Tim Scott** and doctors at the Medical University of South Carolina, Arrington spokesman **Michael Mule** said she would continue her campaign. Arrington, who ousted incumbent Rep. **Mark Sanford**, R-S.C., in the June 12 primary, was seriously injured on Friday in a car wreck that left one person dead. In a statement posted to Facebook on Saturday, her campaign said that she underwent surgery after she was injured when a driver traveling in the wrong direction hit her car. A friend who was also in the car was seriously injured."

Cruz keeps small lead over O'Rourke – Texas Tribune: "Republican **Ted Cruz** leads Democrat **Beto O'Rourke** 41 percent to 36 percent in the general election race for a Texas seat in the U.S. Senate, according to the latest University of Texas/Texas Tribune Poll. **Neal Dikeman**, the Libertarian Party nominee for U.S. Senate, garnered 2 percent, according to the survey. And 20 percent of registered voters said either that they would vote for someone else in an election held today (3 percent) or that they haven't thought enough about the contest to have a preference (17 percent). In the governor's race, Republican incumbent **Greg Abbott** holds a comfortable 12-percentage-point lead over Democratic challenger **Lupe Valdez** — the exact same advantage he held over Democrat **Wendy Davis** in an early-summer poll in 2014."

Maryland Dems down to the wire after contentious primary – WaPo: "The two front-runners in the Maryland Democratic gubernatorial primary went home to their bases this weekend after spending much of the past week reaching out to undecided voters in areas of the state where they are less known. Prince George's County Executive **Rushern L. Baker III** crisscrossed his county trying to shore

up votes before Tuesday's primary, while his chief rival, former NAACP president **Ben Jealous**, did the same in the Baltimore area. At a circus, festivals, small receptions and church services, the candidates shook as many hands, took as many selfies and covered as much ground as they could before voters cast their ballots. Analysts say the race between Baker and Jealous could be decided by who has the best ground game, especially since polls in early June showed many likely voters had not closely focused on the race."

Bitter end for unlikely Staten Island GOP primary brawl – WSJ: "A bitter Republican primary in a conservative New York congressional district will be the latest test of the value of an endorsement from President Donald Trump. Tuesday's GOP primary in the 11th Congressional District pits Rep. **Dan Donovan**, a former district attorney, against his predecessor, **Michael Grimm**, a former Federal Bureau of Investigation agent and a felon. Mr. Grimm previously held the seat for about four years before resigning in early 2015 and pleading guilty to tax fraud related to his restaurant business. Now Mr. Grimm, who was released from federal prison in 2016 after serving seven months, is attempting a comeback in the district covering Staten Island and a slice of Brooklyn. While Mr. Trump has endorsed Mr. Donovan, a recent poll from Siena College showed Mr. Grimm leading by 10 points."

HOUSE TO VOTE ON IMMIGRATION BILL DESPITE TRUMP

The Hill: "The House is gearing up to vote on its compromise immigration legislation later in the week after tweaks to the legislation were worked on over the weekend. The bill — introduced by Reps. **Jeff Denham** (R-Calif.), **Carlos Curbelo** (R-Fla.), House Homeland Security Chairman **Mike McCaul** (R-Texas) and House Judiciary Chairman **Bob Goodlatte** (R-Va.) last week — was initially scheduled for a vote on Thursday and was then pushed back to Friday. It was then further delayed after a conference meeting Thursday evening to allow time for whipping efforts and changes to be made. Following the conference meeting, conservatives said there was discussion of including provisions on an agricultural guest worker program and a requirement that employers use an electronic verification system, known as E-verify, to ensure workers are legal. The compromise bill was written after weeks of negotiations between conservatives, centrists and House GOP leadership. It provides a pathway to citizenship for 'Dreamers,' who were brought to the U.S. illegally as children; $25 billion for Trump's border wall and other security measures; an end to the diversity visa

lottery program; and limits on family-based migration."

PLAY-BY-PLAY

DOJ gives House GOP Russia documents – AP

Lawmakers frustrated with White House silence on protecting 2018 vote – Politico

Harley-Davidson plans to move production overseas due to EU tariffs – WSJ

McCaskill suffers cracked rib after Manchin performs Heimlich maneuver on her – Fox News

Stanley Greenberg: 'Riling Up the Base May Backfire on Trump' – NYT

*Former Missouri secretary of state, **Jason Kander**, confirms run for Kansas City mayor* – Kansas City Star

AUDIBLE: BETTER NOT

"If you get me one more glass of wine, I'll tell you stuff only **Bob Mueller** and I know." – *Sen. **Mark Warner**, D-Va., joked Friday night during a dinner he hosted at his Martha's Vineyard home. The dinner was part of the DSCC's annual Majority Trust retreat.*

FROM THE BLEACHERS

"Agreement can be over-rated. One of the (many) things I admired and enjoyed about [**Charles Krauthammer**] was that he *challenged my precepts and changed my opinions.* I went to him to hear *his* views, not to confirm mine. He was not, in a sense, a conservative but a profound thinker on many subjects and his conservative views were formed on the basis of his thinking …not through the narrow prism of his conservatism. An important distinction? I have read from 'Things That Matter' every day since I bought it soon after publication. It has challenged my thinking and changed my views. I, too disagreed with him occasionally but every time I did I had to sit back and really think about *why* I did. Not surprisingly, he seems to have had that impact on large numbers of people around the world. That's quite something. Take care mate." – ***Greg Cary**, Gradys Creek, NSW, Australia*

[*Ed. note: The highest praise I can think of for any thinker is just what you said about Charles. He challenged us to be sure of our thinking and test our own*

assumptions about things. While he was certainly conservative, he was no rank partisan.]

"Hi Chris, As always, I look forward to the Half Time Report. Since Trump has become President, I have never noticed so much corruption within our government. It's like the termites are coming out and the government is imploding. As far as intellectual nutrition, I thought that was a clever term. However, the news and chaos reminds me of binging & purging. We can't get enough then we feel like throwing up. It reminds me of reality TV, The Real Lies of Washington DC. Stay tuned. I always look forward to seeing you on Fox and keeping it real. Thank you!!!" – ***Janet Shrieves****, Covington, Wash.*

[*Ed. note: Realness keeping is important work, so thank you very much for saying so! One of the big challenges we face today is staying focused. The good part about social media is that, done correctly, it provides us with a less-filtered view of the world. But as it turns out, individuals tend to prefer their information flow to be flattering to their own beliefs. A little bit of bubble dwelling for partisans is not too terribly harmful. But when it gets away from you, as is certainly the case in our culture now, bad things happen. When we lose our capacity to see things clearly and with the appropriate degree of emphasis we become particularly distractible. That's why I always maintain that it is very important to consume news from across the political spectrum.*]

Share your color commentary: Email us at HALFTIMEREPORT@FOXNEWS.COM and please make sure to include your name and hometown.

DON'T MESS WITH IGUANAS BEFORE THEY GET THEIR COFFEE

Palm Beach Post: "A woman stopped by a Starbucks in Boca Raton Saturday and captured an unexpected battle between two iguanas. **Shannon Moskoff** was driving behind a Starbucks around 10 a.m. when she thought she saw a large tree branch — and that's when it moved. She rushed to grab her iPhone and started filming. The video shows two large iguanas going toe-to-toe in the parking lot. **Jaime Margolin-Croft**, a high school friend of Moskoff's, happened to be in the Starbucks parking lot at the same time and witnessed the duel. Margolin-Croft, a New Jersey native who resides in Florida now, said: 'Only in Boca!' It is unclear whether the iguanas were fighting or mating but it was quite the standoff nonetheless."

AND NOW, A WORD FROM CHARLES…

"This project for the inculcation of proper human feelings through behavioral technique is either sinister or idiotic. It is sinister when it works, as in Communist China, where they have learned how to break one's character through extremes of corrosion, deprivation and torture. These means are not yet available to American educators and family therapists, which explains their low success rate." – ***Charles Krauthammer*** *in the Washington Post, April 2, 1993.*

Chris Stirewalt *is the politics editor for Fox News.* ***Brianna McClelland*** *contributed to this report. Want FOX News Halftime Report in your inbox every day? Sign up here.*

Chris Stirewalt joined Fox News Channel (FNC) in July of 2010 and serves as politics editor based in Washington, D.C.

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