



Welcome to the month's edition of the AMA's Very Influential Physician (VIP) Insider. Read on for details about these topics:

- Congressional efforts to address surprise billing continue
- Webinar: What Congress wants from constituents vs professional lobbyists
- August Recess is coming – are you ready?
- VIP Exclusive: 2019 Congressional calendar

Congressional efforts to address surprise billing continue

This week the House Energy and Commerce Committee reported out legislation to protect patients from unanticipated medical bills for services provided by out-of-network physicians and facilities in emergencies and other situations where they had no opportunity to choose an in-network provider. The committee's action follows similar steps taken by the Senate Health Education, Labor and Pensions Committee [last month](#).

An amendment offered by Rep. Raul Ruiz MD (D-CA) and Rep. Larry Bucshon MD (R-IN) was adopted to add an appeals provision. Appeals would be restricted to complex cases with a claims threshold of \$1,250 (indexed to inflation). The threshold is designed to limit the number of appeals and thereby also retain a higher level of savings to offset the cost of other legislation reported out of committee today. The AMA is still seeking to clarify how the opportunity to bundle claims on this \$1,250 threshold would work. Arbitrators would be permitted to consider median contracted in-network rate, provider's level of training, experience, quality and outcomes measurements and acuity of care/services rendered. In order to hold down the budget score of the amendment, the arbitrator would be prohibited from considering billed charges.

While the majority of health care stakeholder groups support the patient protections included in H.R. 3630, the "No Surprises Act," the AMA expressed [its opposition](#) to the bill because of provisions that would resolve payment disputes between physicians and insurers by setting out-of-network payments at the median amount each insurer pays for in-network care.

The addition of an appeals process, albeit imperfect, represents progress. The physician community will have opportunities with two other House committees to make further improvements on this and other elements in the legislation as well as subsequent negotiations both before and during floor action in the House and Senate.

Stay tuned to the [Physicians Grassroots Network](#) for more information and updates on this important issue.

Webinar: What Congress Wants from Constituents vs. Professional Lobbyists

Join our partners at the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) for this webinar on August 6, 2019 at 2:00 PM EDT.

[Register here!](#)

Each year, thousands of Americans meet with their Members of Congress and their staff. Many of these citizen advocates feel unprepared for their meetings because they aren't parliamentary experts and aren't fluent in Capitol Hill jargon. Citizen advocates shouldn't feel they need to know the difference between a budget resolution and budget reconciliation. Instead, they need to be prepared to provide local and personalized information that only constituents can provide.

This program will inform participants about the following:

- The different roles of "professional advocates" and "citizen advocates"
- What information Congress needs constituents to provide
- Effective strategies and tactics that citizen-advocates should use to communicate with their Members of Congress

*Access to this webinar is a VIP membership exclusive.

If you have any questions regarding this presentation, please contact Jaime Werner at CMF at JWerner@CongressFoundation.org.

August recess is coming – are you ready?

Every summer Congress ditches the heat of Washington, DC and heads home for extended in-district work periods or "recesses" if you live inside the beltway. These district work periods provide an excellent opportunity for you to advocate on the issues important to medicine.

There are so many important issues Congress is dealing with right now from surprise billing to prior authorization and drug pricing transparency. Please [visit our advocacy site](#) for more information on the hot-button issues facing the profession today. Many members spend the majority of August back in their districts holding town hall events, meeting with constituents and most importantly listening to the concerns of the people they represent. If you haven't done so already, now is the time to schedule a district meeting or attend a town hall with your elected officials. Simply visit our [congressional directory](#) to find the district office contact information for your legislators or visit [Town Hall Project](#) to easily find when you're member of Congress will be holding a town hall near you.

And don't forget to let us know about your interactions! Please email any photos, names of participants and a brief description of the meeting to political.affairs@ama-assn.org, and we'll mention them in a future issue of the VIP Insider and share through our Physicians Grassroots Network social media followers on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).



Members of the Tennessee Medical Association meet with Rep. Phil Roe, MD (R-TN) to discuss the pressing issue of surprise billing

VIP Exclusive: 2019 Congressional calendar

As a VIP member you now have access to the 2019 Congressional calendar we recently developed for the program. With this downloadable calendar you'll never have to guess if the House and Senate are in session again. Use it to plan your next advocacy event or campaign. [Click here](#) to access your calendar today!