



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

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AMPAC hosts 2018 Candidate Workshop in Washington, DC

Everyone knows the words of the famous Postal Service Creed; "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." Well, unfortunately this famous creed doesn't mention anything about wind or doctors – Washington, DC was struck by a massive wind storm on Friday, March 2, which was also the start to the 2018 AMPAC Candidate Workshop, leaving many traveling participants stranded with canceled flights and massive delays. Those who were able to make it, including one member who drove from Indianapolis after his flight was canceled, had some harrowing tales to tell.

Of the 24 registrants, 16 were able to take part in the one and a half day AMPAC Candidate Workshop at the Washington, D.C. office of the AMA. Participants came from across the country to learn what it takes to be a successful candidate for public office. Over the course of the workshop all the elements of a competitive political campaign were discussed by a bipartisan team of campaign and political experts. The topics included: campaign plan and messaging, polling, grassroots organization, leveraging direct mail, internet and social media, how to leverage television and radio ads, and fundraising.

The workshop provides intensive political training to AMA members, spouses, and state medical society staff members. For more information on the workshop or other political education programs please visit the [AMPAC website](#).



2018 Candidate Workshop Graduates

AMA rolls out refresh to Physician's Grassroots Network site

The AMA recently launched a refresh of the [Physicians' Grassroots Network](#) site. This includes updated content, a new visual and feel, and a new way to experience the content as you navigate the site. We have also updated our list of key advocacy issues allowing you to learn more about the key issues facing medicine today and what the AMA is doing to make sure the concerns of physicians are being heard on Capitol Hill. As you navigate the new site, you can share your stories or take action on the issues that matter most to you and your practice. You can even refer your colleagues to sign up for the VIP program online helping us amplify the voice of medicine. [Visit the new and improved PGN website to learn more.](#)

AMA, Anthem try new tack: Working together to improve health care

The AMA and Anthem announced last week they are working together to figure out mutually agreeable ways to improve patients' access to health care that is timely, high quality and affordable. This year, the AMA and Anthem—whose health plans cover more than 40 million people—will pursue collaboration in four key areas to:

- Enhance consumer and patient health care literacy.

- Develop and implement value-based payment models for primary and specialty care physicians.
- Improve access to timely, actionable data to enhance patient care.
- Streamline or eliminate low-value prior-authorization requirements.

"Physicians caring for patients across the country have many ideas about how we can reduce health care costs and administrative burdens while improving clinical outcomes, and collaboration with Anthem and other health plans can produce wins for patients, physicians and payers.," AMA Board Chair Gerald E. Harmon, MD, said. "The AMA looks forward to finding common ground on ways to improve the delivery of affordable, high-quality, patient-centered care."

Anthem Chief Clinical Officer Craig Samitt, MD, said collaboration between physicians and payers "is critical in order to evolve and advance our health care system to one that is simpler, more accessible and more affordable for our consumers."

This collaboration signals a new type of dialogue and engagement between insurers and physicians. In a letter to the AMA last week, Anthem's Dr. Samitt announced the insurer's decision to not proceed with a planned cut in payments for significant, separately identifiable evaluation-and-management (E/M) services billed with a Current Procedural Terminology modifier 25 that are provided on the same day as a procedure or a wellness exam. This policy was set to take effect March 1, but Anthem reconsidered following strong advocacy efforts by the AMA and other physician organizations.

Of note, Dr. Samitt's letter also expressed a commitment to continuing to work with the AMA, state medical associations and national medical specialty societies to address physician concerns with other policies and guidelines. Organized medicine has raised concerns regarding Anthem's policies on the retrospective denial of payment for emergency department visits, restrictions on advanced imaging in hospital outpatient facilities, and the denial of payment for monitored anesthesia care or general anesthesia for cataract surgery. [Read more at AMA Wire®.](#)

Join us for the latest in CMF webinar series: New Social Media Research Revealed

On April 5 at 1:00 PM EST our partners at CMF will discuss new research on the evolving use of social media by congressional offices and how to leverage this knowledge in your advocacy campaigns.

[Register here!](#)

During this program, participants will learn the following:

- How do staffers favorably and negatively perceive social media?
- How does Congress use social media to communicate Members' views?
- When should advocates use social media vs. other forms of communication?

This webinar is made available to members of the Very Important Physicians as part of

our partnership with the Congressional Management Fund.

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

Troubling Signs for the GOP on the Electoral Horizon

By [Charlie Cook](#) of the *National Journal*

It's hard to remember a week when there were so many interesting or important political developments. Some are getting less attention than warranted, others perhaps too much.

In no particular order, let's start with Tuesday's Texas primaries and the 84 percent increase in Democratic turnout compared to the last midterm election in 2014. That jump was yet another metric of heightened Democratic enthusiasm and intensity, key elements when partisan wave elections occur. Having said that, some Democrats are overhyping what happened, forgetting that Texas is still Texas, and that for every two Democrats who voted, three Republicans cast ballots. GOP turnout increased as well, by 13 percent. Democrats represented 29 percent of the primary electorate in 2014 and 31 percent in 2010; this year, it was about 40 percent, according to calculations by David Wasserman, House editor of *The Cook Political Report*. The Democratic increase was substantial but hardly gargantuan; it turned out to be somewhat less than some had expected.

This uptick is similar to the over-performance by Democratic candidates in five congressional special elections in GOP-held districts last year. All five districts were very strong Republican areas, all won by both Mitt Romney in 2012 and Donald Trump in 2016. According to Wasserman's figures, Democrats over-performed by 6 points in Georgia's 6th and Utah's 3rd districts, by 7 points in South Carolina's 5th District, 8 points in Montana's at-large seat, and by 12 points in Kansas's 4th District. But while Democrats beat the point spread by an average of 7.8 points, they didn't pick up any of the five. They did capture the Alabama Senate seat, but for the House, as they say, close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades; beating the point spread is a moral but not electoral victory.

This coming Tuesday, Democrats will have an opportunity in the special election in Pennsylvania's 18th District to finally get a pickup.

Conor Lamb, the Democratic nominee and a 33-year-old Marine veteran and former prosecutor, is given a narrow edge over Republican state Rep. Rick Saccone, a former Air Force counterintelligence officer, in this Pittsburgh suburban District. There is little doubt that Saccone is an underwhelming candidate while Lamb is much stronger than Democrats are usually able to field in a district like this. But the fact that Donald Trump won it by 19.6 percentage points in 2016, and Mitt Romney beat President Obama by 17 points in 2012, means that even with a lousy candidate, Republicans should win this one. If Democrats pick this seat up, a lot of Republican House members sitting in districts that they have thought of as fairly safe may not be so safe after all.

Some Republican strategists are privately worrying that there are quite a few GOP House members who don't really understand how much danger they are in. Of the 238 Republican members of the House, 174 were elected after 2006, meaning they were not in the House for President George W. Bush's second-term midterm election—the last time that Republicans faced a substantial headwind. Bush's 38 percent Gallup job-approval ratings going into that midterm election were roughly what Trump's are now (39 percent), and the GOP lost both their House and Senate majorities that year.

Republicans benefited from gale-force tailwinds in both 2010 and 2014, years when it was relatively easy for a Republican to prevail in many districts. These are members who have never had to swim with a substantial undertow and may have far more confidence than is warranted. If anywhere near what happened in the five special congressional elections last year occurs in November, with Democrats running almost 8 points better than normal, we are looking at a bloodbath.

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