



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

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- The Future of Citizen Engagement: Coronavirus, Congress and Constituent Communications
- The fight for the Senate is not over yet
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It's time for Congress to act on COVID-19 relief funding

With Washington gridlocked over the next round of COVID-19 relief legislation, members of Congress have once again returned home for the next two weeks.

As the nation continues to struggle with the pandemic and provisions of the CARES Act are beginning to run out, NOW is the time to act!

There is still time – these next two weeks provide a perfect opportunity for you to make your voice heard with your U.S. Senators and U.S. Representative.

Are you ready to step up to the challenge? [Sign-up for a virtual meeting](#) and a member of the AMA grassroots team will follow-up with you on next steps to ensure you have policy materials and talking points on these issues, in addition to whatever support is required to connect you with your legislators and secure a meeting via phone, Zoom, Microsoft Teams or other online virtual technology.

Much has been done in the battle to curb the pandemic, but the catastrophic damage has taken an undeniable toll and additional steps are urgently required. Congress must act now to protect America's patients and those that are on the front lines taking care of them!

The Future of Citizen Engagement: Coronavirus, Congress, and Constituent Communications

Recently our partners at The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) released the first in a series of reports on the relationship between Senators, Representatives and those they represent - [The Future of Citizen Engagement: Coronavirus, Congress, and Constituent Communications](#).

Exclusively for VIPs you can access the report [here](#).

The report provides insight into the impact COVID-19 and work from home orders have had on House and Senate constituent communications and Member office operations. Based on a survey of senior staffers conducted in May and June, the report discusses changes that have already occurred and what might be different after the pandemic is over and provides a few models and ideas (including some from folks in this group) congressional offices—and the institution—could consider as they continue to react to the “new normal.”

Stay tuned for future reports which will discuss the landscape before COVID-19 and provide insight into what the future could hold for Member-constituent engagement.

The fight for the Senate is not over yet

By Stuart Rothenberg

There are good reasons for Democrats to be upbeat about their chances of netting at least three Senate seats in the fall, which, combined with a Joe Biden presidential victory, would flip the chamber.

But while Democrats are on the offense in more states than a year ago, they haven't quite locked down the four overall takeovers they need. (Or three, plus a Democratic vice president to break ties.)

In a June 4, 2019, column, I wrote, "The Senate is broadly 'in play,' but Democrats need things to break just right to flip the chamber."

In a Sept. 4, 2019 column, I wrote that the "Senate landscape hasn't shifted dramatically, but the small change benefits Democrats. They currently have about a 4-in-10 chance to net at least three seats and win the presidency."

On April 20, 2020, I observed significant developments had occurred and Democrats no longer need an upset or two to win the Senate. The presidential race was looking better for them, newly developing Senate opportunities appeared interesting, and "the Democrats' initial top prospects have succeeded in proving their fundraising mettle and have taken advantage of Donald Trump's GOP."

That column argued that while the Senate was still a toss-up, "Democrats may just have the slightest of advantages."

Democrats have a growing list of opportunities. President Donald Trump's continued weakness, Democratic fundraising strength and issues such as the coronavirus and social justice continue to undermine Republican Senate hopes.

Four minus two

Two GOP Senate seats still appear to be at the greatest risk and already headed to the Democrats: Colorado and Arizona.

I've written repeatedly about Colorado Sen. Cory Gardner and Arizona Sen. Martha McSally's problems, so there is little reason to go over them again.

Gardner may have shaved a point or two off former Gov. John Hickenlooper's lead, and the senator is the better campaigner. But Colorado looks increasingly blue, and Hickenlooper will have to make multiple further mistakes to turn this contest into a real fight.

McSally trails by the low to mid-single digits against a challenger who has no lengthy voting record to attack. Arizona polling has been consistent, with McSally trailing Democrat Mark Kelly in public and private surveys.

Republicans have not given up on these races, but no incumbent wants to be behind at this point — especially where Biden is certain (Colorado) or likely (Arizona) to win.

The GOP firewall

The Republican Senate firewall always boiled down to North Carolina and Maine, though it's increasingly looking like a one-state firewall: Maine.

North Carolina Democrat Cal Cunningham leads Republican Sen. Thom Tillis in polling and is running ahead of Biden in the swing state. Some of Cunningham's margins in public polls seem exaggerated, but Tillis, who bet his reelection on aligning with Trump, is not where an incumbent should be this close to November.

Maine appears to be the GOP's best chance to win one of the top four races and maintain control of the Senate.

Republicans acknowledge that Collins started with a big lead, but the race tightened. They now insist she has rallied and holds a lead in the mid- to high single digits. They dismiss public polling in the state conducted by PPP, a Democratic firm, and by Colby College (my alma mater), both of which show a narrow but clear lead for Democrat Sara Gideon.

Democrats point to the trendline in the ballot test and argue that Collins' initial lead has evaporated. They say she trails Gideon (on the ballot test but also on key questions), though the race remains too close to call.

Trump is running very poorly here, even though he lost the 2016 statewide vote by only 3 points. That cannot be good for Collins, a veteran with deep connections in the state who finds herself in trouble because she did not confront Trump as strongly as many former supporters expected.

This is one of those races where you simply have to decide which side you believe. Both sides have veteran, credible consulting teams, and it isn't clear why the two parties have such different data or perceptions of the contest.

Both candidates still have some work to do, but Trump likely will be even a larger factor. Given the national dynamics and his poor Maine numbers, it's easier to believe the Democratic numbers than the Republican ones.

Second tier?

Iowa probably belongs in the same category as Maine and North Carolina now.

Democrat Theresa Greenfield was an afterthought a year ago, but strong fundraising, grassroots enthusiasm, and public and private polls suggest Iowa is now a toss-up. A June 7-10 Des Moines Register poll found Greenfield leading GOP Sen. Joni Ernst by 3 points, and Democrats have a similar assessment.

Greenfield's lack of a voting record is a problem for the GOP, and Ernst's falling job approval has given the Democrat an opening. Additional polling should clear up questions here, but Trump's weakness in the state (both in rural areas and in blue-collar, working-class parts of eastern Iowa) suggest a toss-up.

Montana's race is also close, with Gov. Steve Bullock competitive with Republican Sen. Steve Daines. But Montana is tougher territory for the Democrats, in spite of polls showing Biden and Trump close. Bullock must run far ahead of Biden to win, which makes Montana more difficult than Iowa for Democrats.

Democrats are not ready to throw the towel in on Alabama Sen. Doug Jones, who won a 2017 special election against widely mocked Republican Roy Moore. But Alabama's strong GOP bent — and Trump's expected comfortable victory — makes Jones an underdog.

Three other races deserve mention.

Kansas state Sen. Barbara Bollier is a strong candidate for the Democrats there, regardless of her opponent from a long-divided state Republican Party.

In Georgia, Republican incumbent David Perdue leads Democrat Jon Ossoff by the mid-single digits in public polls, but Trump and GOP Gov. Brian Kemp's mishandling of COVID-19 could hurt Republicans, and turnout is always a huge factor. Democrats probably need a national wave to flip this seat.

Finally, Democrats are watching Alaska, because of (1) its quirkiness and (2) the appeal of independent Al Gross, who has Democratic support against GOP Sen. Dan Sullivan.

Republican targets have all but dried up with Trump's problems. That means Democratic seats in Michigan, New Hampshire and Minnesota don't appear to be at risk.

The bottom line

Democrats have multiple paths to a Senate majority. Just as importantly, Trump defines the election, a headache for Republicans and a boost for Democrats.

The Senate cake is not yet baked, but the dynamics of the presidential contest, Democratic fundraising and the states in play suggest the Senate is tilting toward the Democrats.

What Can Soccer Teach Us About Lobbying?

By Seth Turner from The Congressional Management Foundation

Like other parents, I fell into the travel-soccer trap. I spent a lot of time thinking about the ins and outs of soccer all those countless hours watching their games from the sidelines. One day, it struck me that there's a lot of overlap between their sport and the "sport" of advocacy. I realized that there are three lessons that soccer can teach us about advocacy.

Lesson 1: It's hard to score.

Americans commonly criticize soccer games for their low scores. Advancing the ball all the way up the field and getting it into the net takes foot skills, discipline, teamwork, adaptability, and strategy. If you grew up like I did, watching "Schoolhouse Rock" every Saturday morning, you watched "*I'm Just a Bill*" make the journey from the hopper to the President's desk in three short minutes. The reality is that it takes an average of seven years to advance a bill through Congress' complex decision-making process. In fact, I was involved in an effort that spanned from 2003-2014 to pass a job-training reauthorization bill. That's an **11-year journey from the hopper to bill signing**, and without the groovy music.

Lesson 2: You need a goalie's mindset.

Both my teenaged children are soccer goalies. Last year, my son's team lost to a much stronger team. The final score was 1-4, and he had a right to feel frustrated afterward. He was upbeat instead. "Dad, today's score doesn't show it, but I won today," he explained. "My team took three shots on goal, and their goalie stopped two. The other team took 50 shots on me and I stopped 46."

Advocacy requires a goalie's mindset. The reality is that for every one law you help pass, you stop hundreds of bad ones. For example, in February 2013, a rescission bill (H.R. 1) threatened to eliminate all federal funding for employment services and job training. It would have turned out so much worse if job-training proponents hadn't fought so hard. While a small portion of funding was cut, the preponderance was saved.

Even if it didn't feel like a victory and it didn't get a drop of ink in any newspaper, we won.

Lesson 3: You won't get to play in the championship if you don't play hard all season.

Years ago, my son's team dominated its league. With an undefeated record late in the season and their top ranking almost guaranteed, they faced a team they had badly beaten weeks before. In the

first half, they played like they didn't need to make an effort to win. They got a reality check at halftime and narrowly won the game. After the final whistle blew, they celebrated that meaningless victory like it meant everything.

In advocacy, the big wins and the small victories can both have far reaching and long-lasting effects. Take H.R. 1 for example. Last Friday (Aug. 7, 2020), the Department of Labor released [July's monthly jobs report](#). There were 24 million unemployed (16.3 million) and jobless (7.7 million) people last month. That long-forgotten victory in 2013, made a difference for those people who filed for unemployment insurance benefits to help pay some bills and/or participated in training that will help them learn skills they need and employers seek.

Final Lesson: You will lose some, but you can't win if you don't participate.

Thomas Jefferson made this case better than I ever could when he said, "We in America don't have a government by the majority. We have a government by the majority who participate."