

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

- Congress must pass phase four COVID-19 relief funding before the August recess
- The Hotline's newly updated Top 5 House Power Rankings
- What should advocates do to strengthen their relationships with Congress?
- Is there a doctor in the House (or Senate)?

Congress must pass phase four COVID-19 relief funding before the August recess

Congress is currently considering the next round of coronavirus legislation as the nation continues to struggle with the pandemic. There is precious little time to pass this much needed relief package before Congress adjourns for its August recess.

With the country and our health care system facing a once in a generation health crisis now is the time for Congress to lead by passing legislation that will:

- Continue the expansion of and add flexibility for Medicare accelerated and advanced payments to give physicians greater ability to deal with the current crisis
- Better address Medicare and Medicaid payment policy to account for the lack of positive updates to further assist America's doctors caring for patients during the pandemic
- Include direct financial support to help sustain physician practices through the COVID-19 crisis including additional emergency relief fund grants and access to small business loans
- Permanently lift the geographic and site restrictions on telehealth technologies so all Medicare beneficiaries have access to telehealth services, including from home, regardless of where they live
- Institute broader liability protection for physicians and clinicians as they continue their front-line fight against COVID-19
- Provide federal assistance for the purchase of personal protection equipment (PPE) for America's health care workers

Will you help us make a difference? Simply follow these three steps and together we can continue to fight the pandemic head on!

1. [Learn about the latest with COVID-19 legislation developments](#) (PDF)
2. [Contact your federal legislators](#)
3. [Participate in a virtual meeting with your legislators over the August recess](#)

Much has been done in the battle to curb the pandemic, but the catastrophic damage has taken an undeniable toll. Stimulus relief to date has helped, but is far from sufficient and every day that goes by without Congress passing a complete package and sending it to the President's desk is a stark reminder of how much more must be done to protect America's patients and those that are on the front lines taking care of them.

The Hotline's newly updated Top 5 House Power Rankings

By Kirk A. Bado, Leah Askarinam and Josh Kraushaar

Democrats' funding, polling, and presidential candidate put them in a strong position not only to defend their House majority, but to expand it by pressing their advantages among suburban voters.

A slew of partisan polling shows President Trump losing ground in districts that voted for him in 2016, especially in the suburbs, as the global health crisis drags into its fifth month. Democrats are all but guaranteed to flip two seats in North Carolina, which aren't included in Hotline's rankings because they're not competitive. Republicans need to flip 17 seats to retake the majority, and that appears to be an increasingly narrow path four months out from Election Day.

Democrats maintain that health care is the priority for voters, while some Republican strategists who spoke with National Journal believe centering messaging around cultural wedge issues—Confederate statues, “cancel culture,” and calls to defund the police—will turn voters away from the Democratic Party.

The following is a snapshot of the race as it stands right now, which in these uncertain times is sure to change. Our findings are based on an analysis of candidate recruitment, demographics, fundraising, polling, and interviews with party strategists.

1. Texas's 23rd District: Open (R) -

The Republican primary runoff is still too close to call, but whoever emerges faces a tough opponent in the well-funded Democratic nominee, Gina Ortiz Jones. Despite raising twice as much money as Air Force veteran Raul Reyes and garnering the support of President Trump, Navy veteran Tony Gonzales is leading by fewer than 100 votes, a showing that has not inspired much confidence in the general election. Republicans, once hopeful they had found a strong replacement for Rep. Will Hurd, have all but written off this district.

2. Georgia's 7th District: Open (R) ↑

Carolyn Bourdeaux came within 500 votes of flipping the seat from retiring Rep. Rob Woodall in 2018. This time around, she is banking on investments from national groups like the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee and EMILY's List to put this race away early. If she does flip the district, it will be thanks to Gwinnett County, a rapidly diversifying suburb of Atlanta. With presidential and Senate candidates jockeying for expensive airtime, Bourdeaux's cash-on-hand advantage over physician Rich McCormick will play an important role. A June PPP poll found Joe Biden leading Trump in the district, 50-44 percent, while Bourdeaux led McCormick, 42-39 percent.

3. New Mexico's 2nd District: Rep. Xochitl Torres Small (D) ↑

National Republicans might not have gotten their preferred candidate to challenge Torres Small, but they are confident that Yvette Herrell can get over the line after coming within a point last cycle. With Trump struggling in the suburbs, this rural New Mexico seat could be one of the few bright spots for Republicans. National groups plan to invest heavily in the district in what many GOP strategists told National Journal is the best pickup opportunity on the map. But they will have their work cut out for them. Even though Trump carried the majority-Hispanic district by 10 points in 2016, Torres Small enters the general election with a nearly \$4 million war chest. Herrell had \$380,000 in cash on hand.

4. Oklahoma's 5th District: Rep. Kendra Horn (D) ↓

State Sen. Stephanie Bice qualified for the Republican runoff despite the Club for Growth PAC spending more than \$300,000 in ads opposing her. She or her GOP opponent, entrepreneur Terry Neese, will have little time after the Aug. 25 runoff to regroup for the general election but should nonetheless be well positioned in a district where Hillary Clinton failed to crack 40 percent in 2016. Horn does have a huge fundraising advantage over her would-be Republican rivals, with \$2.6 million on hand at the end of June, and she is already on TV with an ad boasting that she "stood up against" her party in opposing a \$3 trillion coronavirus relief bill.

5. South Carolina's 1st District: Rep. Joe Cunningham (D) ↓

Despite Trump carrying the district by 13 points in 2016, Democrats have reason to be hopeful. Cunningham made the case plainly in his latest TV ad, which featured the grandson of Gen. George Patton telling viewers, "I'm a Republican, and I never voted for a Democrat in my life, except for Joe." Meanwhile, Nancy Mace, one of the GOP's top recruits, and Republican groups have hammered Cunningham for failing to live up to his bipartisan promises from 2018. The DCCC has already committed to a \$420,000 ad buy in the Charleston market, and nearly \$4.4 million in TV, digital, cable, and radio ads have been funneled into the state for the Republican primary.

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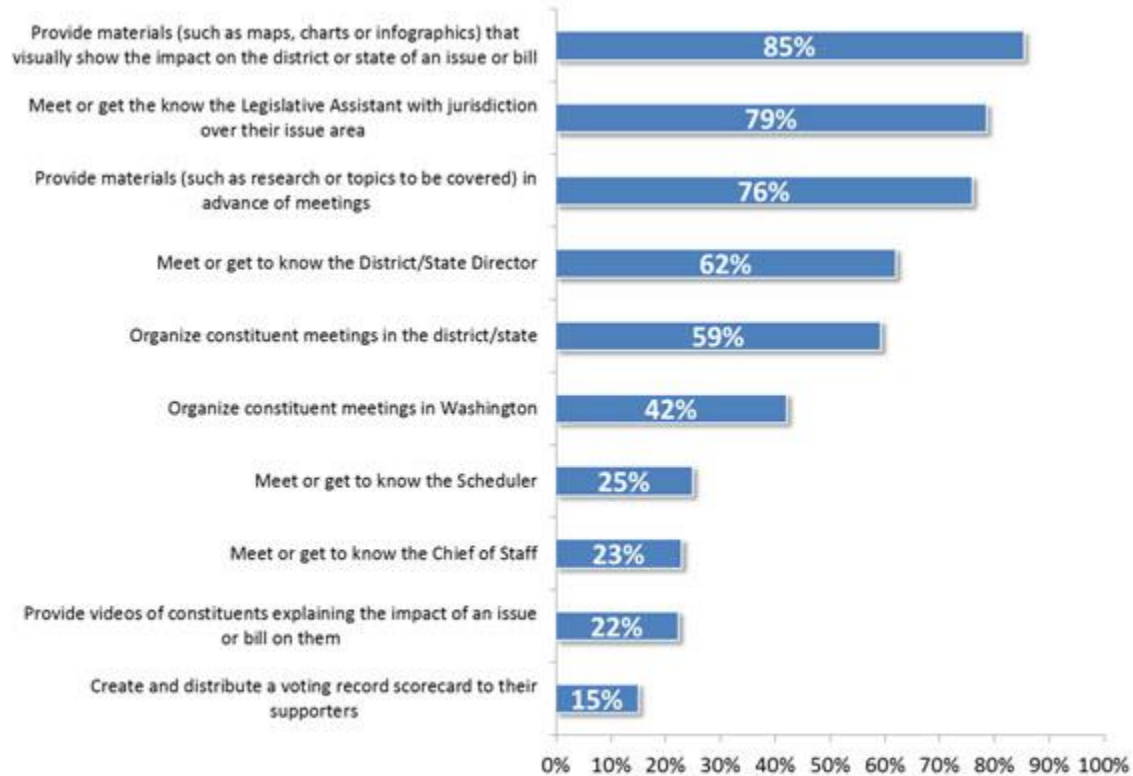
What should advocates do to strengthen their relationships with Congress?

Our partners at The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) studied the most effective ways to communicate with Congress. They wanted to better understand how best to form and build relationships with congressional offices.

They asked: "In thinking about constituents and the groups that represent them (e.g., associations, nonprofits, companies), what should they do more or less of to build better relationships with your office and your Member/Senator?"

They learned: Congressional staff want constituents and advocacy organizations to do more of the following.

- Provide information about how bills/issues impact the district or state. (85%)
- Get to know legislative assistants with jurisdiction over the issue area (79%)
- Get to know the district/state director (62%)
- Think "send ahead" vs. "leave behind" by providing meeting materials in advance of meetings (75%)











Copyright – Congressional Management Foundation
 Source – 2015 Perceptions of Citizen Advocacy

Is there a doctor in the House (or Senate)?

After a brief dip in recent years, the number of physicians in Congress has been on the rise culminating with 17 physicians in the 116th Congress. Our friends at the National Journal highlight these physician-legislators in the slides below. With the November elections just a few months away, there are a number of strong physician candidates on the ballot across the country and we're hopeful that we'll see that number grow in the 117th Congress!

[Learn more about what the AMA and AMPAC are doing to help physicians run for office](#)

Background on members of Congress with a medical degree

 <p>Rep. Ralph Abraham (R-LA-05) <i>Specialty:</i> Family Medicine # of sponsored health bills: 0 # of co-sponsored health bills: 26</p>	 <p>Rep. Scott DesJarlais (R-TN-04) <i>Specialty:</i> Family Medicine # of sponsored health bills: 1 # of co-sponsored health bills: 15</p>
 <p>Rep. Mark Green (R-TN-07) <i>Specialty:</i> Emergency Medicine # of sponsored health bills: 3 # of co-sponsored health bills: 20</p>	 <p>Rep. Neal Dunn (R-FL-02) <i>Specialty:</i> Urology # of sponsored health bills: 0 # of co-sponsored health bills: 21</p>
 <p>Rep. Larry Bucshon (R-IN-08) <i>Specialty:</i> Thoracic surgery # of sponsored health bills: 4 # of co-sponsored health bills: 42</p>	 <p>Rep. Ami Bera (D-CA-07) <i>Specialty:</i> General Practice # of sponsored health bills: 6 # of co-sponsored health bills: 47</p>
 <p>Rep. Michael Burgess (R-TX-26) <i>Specialty:</i> OB/GYN # of sponsored health bills: 9 # of co-sponsored health bills: 28</p>	 <p>Rep. Andy Harris (R-MD-01) <i>Specialty:</i> Anesthesiology # of sponsored health bills: 1 # of co-sponsored health bills: 41</p>

Sources: Congress.gov, Patients Action Network.

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Background on members of Congress with a medical degree



Rep. John Joyce (R-PA-13)
Specialty: Dermatology
of sponsored health bills: 1
of co-sponsored health bills: 42



Rep. Kim Schrier (D-WA-08)
Specialty: Pediatrics
of sponsored health bills: 7
of co-sponsored health bills: 56



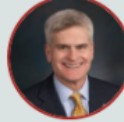
Rep. Roger Marshall (R-KS-01)
Specialty: OB/GYN
of sponsored health bills: 4
of co-sponsored health bills: 70



Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY)
Specialty: Orthopedic Surgery
of sponsored health bills: 4
of co-sponsored health bills: 32



Rep. Greg Murphy (R-NC-03)
Specialty: Urology
of sponsored health bills: 1
of co-sponsored health bills: 29



Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-LA)
Specialty: Gastroenterology
of sponsored health bills: 16
of co-sponsored health bills: 35



Rep. David "Phil" Roe (R-TN-01)
Specialty: OB/GYN
of sponsored health bills: 4
of co-sponsored health bills: 63



Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY)
Specialty: Ophthalmology
of sponsored health bills: 5
of co-sponsored health bills: 16



Rep. Raul Ruiz (D-CA-36)
Specialty: Emergency Medicine
of sponsored health bills: 15
of co-sponsored health bills: 52

Sources: Congress.gov, Patients Action Network.

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