



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

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- Quick hits: President signs the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 – so what's in it?

Countdown to Medicare Sequester

Seven days. That is how much time is left for Congress to act before the moratorium on the Medicare Sequester runs out.

[Support S. 748 Today!](#)

If Congress doesn't take action NOW to extend sequester relief to physicians until the end of the public health crisis caused by COVID-19 an arbitrary, across the board two-percent cut to Medicare payments will go into effect.

This can't happen – America's physicians and their practices have been pushed to the brink in the battle with COVID-19.

To make matters worse the House of Representatives is heading into recess next week, so it is up to the Senate to fix this urgent problem immediately!

Bipartisan legislation in the Senate to prevent these cuts for the duration of the public health crisis, S. 748 "The Medicare Sequester Relief Act," was introduced by Senators Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Susan Collins (R-ME). The bill, recognizes that due to COVID-19 physician practices are already facing a steep decline in revenue and additional payment cuts could jeopardize their operations unless the moratorium on the Medicare Sequester is kept in place until the end of the crisis.

But time is running out - helping the country's physicians during an ongoing pandemic should not be a partisan issue. [Please contact your Senators](#) and urge them to co-sponsor The Medicare Sequester Relief Act" today!

VIP Webinar: Power Shifts in Washington: How Elections Affect Advocacy Strategies

When: Tuesday, March 30, 2021; 3-4 p.m. EDT.

[Register here](#)

Program description: A new Congress means new committee and subcommittee chairs, new alliances, and significant changes in the political terrain on Capitol Hill. When power shifts in Congress from one political party to the other, an advocate who may have been represented by an anonymous backbencher the year before might become the conduit to the most important legislator for their cause. This presentation will show advocates the value of identifying key committee chairs; and why some citizen advocates have more influence than others in specific parts of the legislative process.

This program is based on exclusive and private surveys of congressional staff conducted by CMF and is available only to members of CMF's Partnership for a More Perfect Union – which as a member of the VIP you are!

The webinar is for citizen advocates as part of the Partnership for a More Perfect Union. It will be conducted by Bradford Fitch, President and CEO of CMF, and Seth Turner, Director of Citizen Engagement.

Will Democrats be content to defend in 2022?

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

History dictates that Republicans should have the advantage. But already, they're holding a far-worse hand than their opponents.

One of the most intriguing questions going into next year's Senate races is which party will be playing offense and which will be content to defend. History argues that Democrats will be on defense and Republicans on offense; exposure argues the opposite way, that Republicans will play defense while Democrats look to pick off seats.

Almost everyone uses the post-World War II time frame when comparing midterm elections, but politics has changed a lot during that time. Straight-party voting is much more common, for instance. If we limit our sample to more recent times, exceptions to the rules start to become more common, as when the parties of President Clinton in 1998 and President George W. Bush in 2002 gained seats.

For all its drawbacks, the era since World War II is indeed the best time frame for comparisons—as long as we focus only on elected presidents. Vice presidents stepping into the Oval Office, as Lyndon Johnson did after the assassination of President Kennedy and Gerald Ford did after President Nixon's resignation, simply creates different dynamics. Among elected postwar presidents, the average loss in their first midterm has been three seats in the Senate and 22 seats in the House.

But it is also important to separate first-term midterm elections from those in a second term. While the difference in the House is negligible, (23 losses for the former and 20 seats for the latter), in the Senate it

is massive. The first-term average loss by a president's party is only one seat; in second-term midterms, that average swells to seven seats—a distinction with a real difference.

Of course with the Senate currently split 50-50, any net loss for Democrats is fatal, so they have to beat the averages to hang on.

There's little if any ticket-splitting in presidential years. Readers will recall that 2016 was the first election since the advent of direct election of U.S. senators in which every single Senate race was won by the same party that carried that state in the presidential race. In 2020 it was all but one—Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine being the lone survivor in a state won by Joe Biden.

But of the 35 Senate races held in 2018, in the most recent midterm election, seven Democrats managed to win in states that Donald Trump had carried two years earlier: Kyrsten Sinema in Arizona, Debbie Stabenow in Michigan, Jon Tester in Montana, Sherrod Brown in Ohio, Bob Casey in Pennsylvania, Joe Manchin in West Virginia, and Tammy Baldwin in Wisconsin. Four Democratic incumbents lost in states Trump had won two years earlier: Bill Nelson in Florida, Joe Donnelly in Indiana, Claire McCaskill in Missouri, and Heidi Heitkamp in North Dakota.

Republicans lost the only seat they held in a state where Hillary Clinton had prevailed, the Nevada seat held by Dean Heller. They also lost an open seat they were defending in Arizona, a state that had backed Trump in 2016 (although Arizona did flip to Biden in 2020 and Republicans lost another Senate seat there that night).

What about the previous midterm? In 2014, no Democrat won a state that Mitt Romney had carried two years before, and Republicans managed to win in two states that had voted to reelect President Obama: Colorado (Cory Gardner) and Iowa (Joni Ernst). Of course, the former lost reelection last year when the state voted Democrat for president yet again; the undertow was too great to hold the Senate seat. The Iowa that had voted for Obama in 2012 was gone, with Trump taking the Hawkeye State in both 2016 and 2020, and Joni Ernst winning reelection last year by a stronger-than-expected margin.

Let's put history aside for a moment and look at exposure, or how many seats a party must defend. The GOP has 20 seats up to just 14 for Democrats—numbers which make the case that Republicans may end up on defense. Worse yet for Republicans, five of those 20 seats are open, whereas thus far Democrats have zero open seats to worry about. Over the last 20 years, 86 percent of Senate incumbents seeking reelection have won. Incumbents' worst year since 2000 was a 78 percent win rate; the best, 91 percent. So you'd much rather defend a seat that's occupied than one that's not.

So will Democrats be playing offense or defense? At this point, the answer is probably "yes"—that it will be a knock-down, drag-out fight for every single seat, any one of which could tip or hold the Senate. How much fun is this going to be?

President signs the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 – so what's in it?

On March 10, the House of Representatives voted to adopt the Senate's amendments to the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, and President Biden signed it into law on March 11. This extensive piece of

legislation provides wide reaching relief for our nation's public health workforce and works to provide additional resources to combat COVID-19, provide economic relief and care for the most vulnerable in our country.

The following are some of the provisions in the legislation:

- Provides significant funding increases for community health centers, teaching health centers, Medical Reserve Corps, National Health Service Corps Repayment Program and establishing, expanding and sustaining a public health workforce.
 - Adds an additional \$8.5 billion dollars to the Provider Relief Fund.
 - Gives an option for states to provide 12-month post-partum coverage under State Medicaid and CHIP.
 - Offers community grants for rural health and nutritional-related infrastructure and distribution critical to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Sustains funding for federal nutrition assistance programs including WIC and SNAP.
 - Contains designated provisions for COVID-19 vaccine delivery and education activities to improve the vaccination rate.
 - Gives funding for COVID-19 treatment, testing and contact tracing to help state and local public health departments.
 - Supplies funding for grants that support community mental health and substance use disorder treatment, training of health care professionals and for health care providers to promote mental health among the health care workforce.
 - Directs for the utilization of the Defense Production Act to boost domestic production of PPE, vaccines and onshore production of rapid COVID-19 tests.
 - Expands and extends federal unemployment benefits.
 - Provides a temporary (two-year) 5% increase in the Medicaid FMAP to states that enact the Affordable Care Act's (ACA) Medicaid expansion and covers the new enrollment period per requirements of the ACA.
 - Invests nearly \$35 billion in premium subsidy increases for those who buy coverage on the ACA marketplace.
 - Expands the availability of ACA advanced premium tax credits (APTCs) to individuals whose income is above 400% of the federal poverty line (FPL) for 2021 and 2022.
 - Invests in trust and treaty obligations to provide essential safety-net programs that serve Native communities, which were historically underfunded prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Increases funding to waive copays for veterans during the pandemic and to provide support to veterans, including COVID-19 vaccine distribution, expanded mental health care, enhanced telehealth coverage, extended support for veterans who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless and PPE and supplies for VA clinical employees.
 - Adds \$15 billion in new funding for Targeted Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) Grants to provide hard-hit, underserved small businesses with increased flexible monetary relief.
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