

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

- Expansion of telehealth services must be sustained
- What activities help promote members' visibility most in the district?
- Charlie Cook's 2022 look ahead: Senate
- The Senators who have not committed to running in 2022

Expansion of telehealth services must be sustained

By AMA President Gerald Harmon, MD

The rapid growth and large-scale adoption of telehealth services over the past 18 months has allowed physicians to deliver a broad range of badly needed services to patients nationwide in an innovative, cost-effective manner. Now it's time to cement that success by making permanent the temporary easing of restrictions that brought the full potential of telehealth into focus.

Congress can brighten this picture by passing legislation already introduced into the current session that enjoys bipartisan support. Among other steps that need to be taken, the pending legislation—CONNECT for Health Act of 2021 (S 1512) and the Telehealth Modernization Act (HR 1332)—would strip away all geographic restrictions placed on telehealth services and allow Medicare recipients to receive this care in their own homes, rather than being forced to travel to an authorized health care center to receive it.

[Support making expanded telehealth services permanent.](#)

Although this provision has been waived for the duration of the public health emergency triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to provide telehealth services directly to patients regardless of their location will be lost unless Congress acts. Physicians and their patients who have witnessed firsthand the immense benefits and value of telehealth services must not be forced to stop using these widely available tools for better health simply because the pandemic is over.

The benefits of telehealth are obvious. Telehealth enables physicians to strengthen continuity of care, extend access outside of normal clinic hours, and ease the impact of clinician shortages in rural areas and

among underserved populations.

By increasing the quantity and quality of communication between patients and physicians, telehealth has strengthened the trust that lies at the center of this relationship. Telehealth can slice overall health care costs by helping physician practices and health care systems better manage diabetes, heart disease and other chronic illnesses while increasing the overall quality of care and patient satisfaction.

This technology can also prevent patients from delaying care for conditions that, if undetected and untreated, can trigger emergency department visits or lengthy hospital stays. Wide-ranging case-study examples of the comprehensive value that virtual care can provide are featured in the AMA's Return on Health research issued in May.

And let's not forget the value of telehealth services to patients with impaired mobility, the immunocompromised, frail or elderly individuals who require the aid of a caregiver to travel, and those who cannot arrange the transportation or child care they need to receive care. The enhanced opportunities telehealth affords to assess the impact of patients' social determinants of health lays the groundwork for better treatment and improved health outcomes for historically marginalized and minoritized communities.

The widespread expansion of telehealth services we have witnessed serves all of these patient populations and others in an efficient and cost-effective manner that must be sustained. While the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services has expanded its coverage for telehealth services during the pandemic, only action by Congress will ensure that Medicare beneficiaries will enjoy full access to those services once the pandemic is behind us.

The expansion of telehealth covered by Medicare at payment parity with in-person services during the COVID-19 public health emergency includes more than 150 services, including emergency department visits, hospital admissions and discharges, critical care and home care, to name just a few. Offering this equivalency remains a critical factor in ensuring that physician practices can cover the additional costs tied to virtual care provision.

[Read more.](#)

What Activities Help Promote Members' Visibility Most in the District?

Our partners at The non-partisan Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) wanted to identify the activities that Members use most to be visible in their districts or states. To find out, CMF asked House District Directors the following question.

"When your Member is trying to be visible throughout the district, how important are the following activities?"

What we learned: When Members want to be visible in their districts and states, the bigger the audience – the better! District directors who responded to the survey said activities, including speeches to large groups (98%), events where the media is present (96%), community events (95%), and site visits (95%)

are “somewhat important” or “very important.” By comparison, only 70% said meetings with constituents and 64% said meetings with interest groups’ representatives are somewhat or very important.

Scheduling how Members spend their time in the district is a delicate balance. Members of Congress (even high-ranking ones) know they need to be consistently visible in their districts if they want to keep their jobs. Yet Members feel smaller venues, like meetings, are more important for understanding constituents’ views and opinions. Being politicians, Members want to say “yes” to scheduling requests for both public and private engagements. Yet if forced to choose between conflicting invitations to speak in public or meet privately with a few constituents, many Members will opt to accept the invitation that promises to put them in the public eye. Many advocacy groups encourage their supporters to meet privately with their Members of Congress during the congressional August recess. Constituents who provide options (i.e. numerous dates and times) when making their scheduling requests improve their odds for getting an audience with their Members.

Charlie Cook's 2022 Look Ahead: Senate

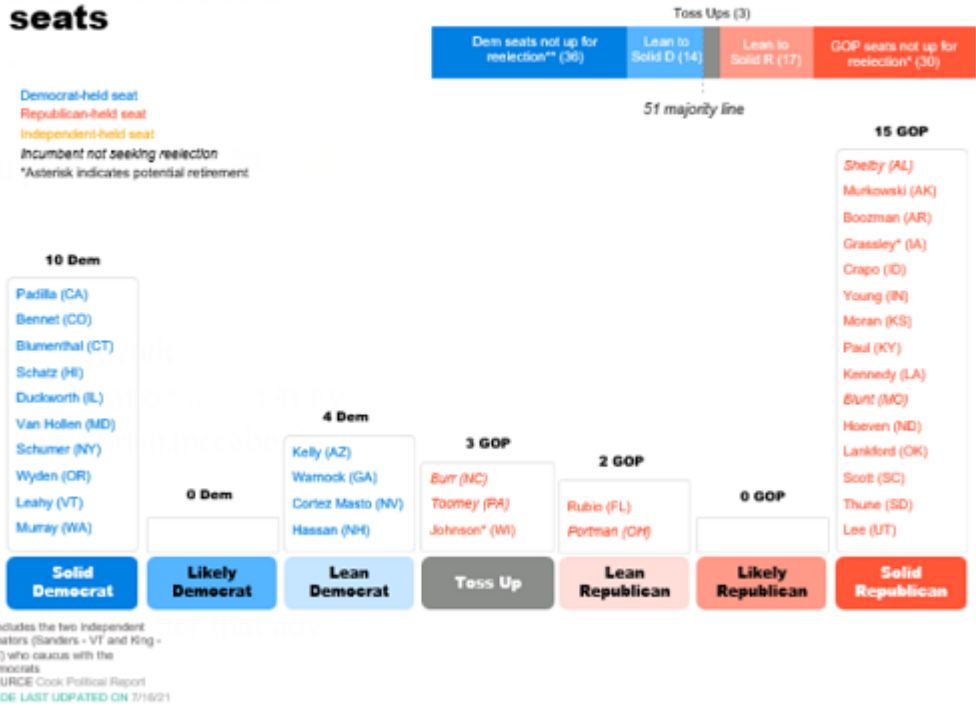
The National Journal’s professional political handicapper takes a never-too-early look at the political environment for the 2022 Senate elections, including race ratings in the following slides by the Cook Political Report.

Most recent rating change:

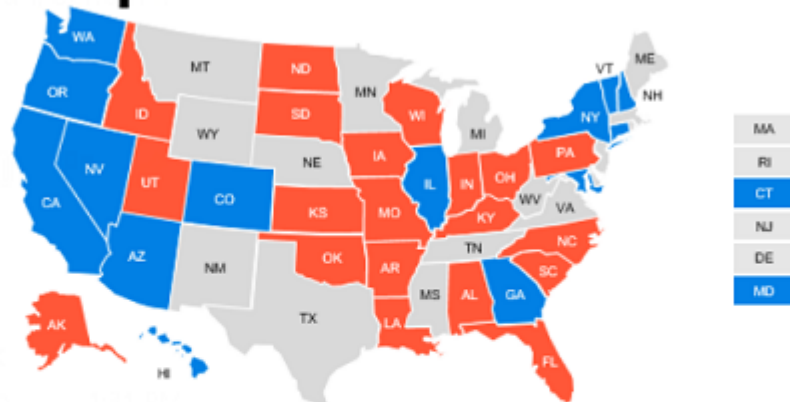
- Florida: Likely to Lean Republican
- Nevada: Likely to Lean Democratic
- New Hampshire: Likely to Lean Democratic
- Wisconsin: Lean Republican to Toss Up

Cook Political Report ratings of 2022 Senate seats

Democrat-held seat
 Republican-held seat
 Independent-held seat
 Incumbent not seeking reelection
 *Asterisk indicates potential retirement



Senators up for re-election in 2022



Democrats (14)			Republicans (20)			
Alex Padilla (CA)	Catherine Cortez Masto (NV)	Mark Kelly (AZ)	Lisa Murkowski (AK)	Jerry Moran (KS)	John Thune (SD)	OPEN (Shelby) (AL)
Michael Bennet (CO)	Maggie Hassan (NH)	Raphael Warnock (GA)	John Boozman (AR)	Rand Paul (KY)	Mike Lee (UT)	OPEN (Blunt) (MO)
Richard Blumenthal (CT)	Chuck Schumer (NY)		Marco Rubio (FL)	John Kennedy (LA)	Ron Johnson (WI)	
Brian Schatz (HI)	Ron Wyden (OR)		Mike Crapo (ID)	John Hoeven (ND)	OPEN (Burr) (NC)	
Tammy Duckworth (IL)	Patrick Leahy (VT)		Todd Young (IN)	James Lankford (OK)	OPEN (Portman) (OH)	
Chris Van Hollen (MD)	Patty Murray (WA)		Chuck Grassley (IA)	Tim Scott (SC)	OPEN (Toomey) (PA)	

SOURCE: United States Senate; Class 11 Roster, Ballotpedia
 SLIDE LAST UPDATED ON 3/9/21

The senators who have not committed to running in 2022

By Max Cohen and Christian [Hall of Punchbowl News](#)

The midterm elections are 16 months away, but the fight for control of the Senate looms over the nation's capital every day. In an evenly divided Senate, every single vote matters. This has become exceedingly clear after the failed battles over the For The People Act, gun control and a minimum-wage increase, as well as a huge Democratic win on Covid relief. And as President Joe Biden tries to pass his ambitious legislative agenda, it will get even bigger.

Overall, the 2022 Senate map looks like a promising one for Democrats once again. There are 20 GOP held seats up for reelection next year, versus only 14 Democrats.

And Senate Republicans already face a slew of retirements, including Ohio, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Alabama, and Missouri. There haven't been any big Democratic retirement announcements yet.

However, a number of senators in both parties still haven't formally announced whether they're running again. These are the senators to watch as we move through the dog days of summer and the two parties clash over taxes, spending and reconciliation once again.

Prominent Republicans who have not officially declared their reelection include:

- Senate Minority Whip John Thune of South Dakota, a potential successor to Minority Leader Mitch McConnell. Thune had nearly \$14 million in cash on hand at the end of March.
- Sen. Chuck Grassley (Iowa) at 87 is the longest serving Senate Republican. Grassley has said he won't make any announcement until the fall.
- Sen. Lisa Murkowski (Alaska), who is being targeted by Trump after voting for his impeachment following the Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol.
- Sens. Mike Crapo (Idaho), Ron Johnson (Wis.) and Mike Lee (Utah) have also kept quiet on their official reelection plans. Of these, Johnson holds a swing seat that Democrats badly want, and it will be targeted for pickup whether he stays or goes.

On the Democratic side:

- Sen. Pat Leahy of Vermont, the Appropriations Committee chair and president pro tem of the Senate. Like Grassley, his octogenarian GOP counterpart, Leahy won't make a decision until later this year. Leahy is the last of the Watergate senators, having first been elected in 1974. Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland has also not formally declared.



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