

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

- A perfect storm of Medicare cuts is coming
- New CMF report outlines problems with how Congress communicates with constituents
- Redistricting spotlight: Iowa
- One year out - history is not on the side of Democrats

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### **A perfect storm of Medicare cuts is coming**

As Congress continues to fight over reconciliation, infrastructure and raising the debt ceiling there is a looming Medicare payment crisis that, if not addressed, could have devastating consequences for Medicare patients and our health care system.

On January 1, 2022 the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will drastically reduce payments for certain health care providers. If Congress does not act to stop these cuts, it will further strain practices that are still struggling to keep their doors open during the ongoing pandemic.

### [Tell Congress to cancel Medicare cuts today!](#)

In what amounts to a “perfect storm” of payment cuts going into effect on January 1, physician practices face the following stack of Medicare financial hits amounting to a 9.75 percent cut. These include:

- Expiration of the current reprieve from the repeatedly extended 2 percent sequester stemming from the Budget Control Act of 2011. Congress originally scheduled this policy to sunset in 2021 but it will now continue into 2030.
- Imposition of a 4 percent Statutory PAYGO sequester resulting from passage of the American Rescue Plan Act. Should lawmakers fail to act, it will mark the first time that Congress has failed to waive Statutory PAYGO.
- Expiration of the Congressionally enacted 3.75 percent temporary increase in the Medicare physician fee schedule (PFS) conversion factor to avoid payment cuts associated with budget neutrality adjustments tied to PFS policy changes.
- A statutory freeze in annual Medicare PFS updates under the Medicare Access and CHIP Reauthorization Act (MACRA) that is scheduled to last until 2026, when updates resume at a rate of 0.25% a year indefinitely, a figure well below the rate of medical or consumer price index inflation.

These cuts if allowed to go into effect would lead to fewer primary care providers, limited access to specialists, a disruption in care and additional barriers to life-saving treatment.

In the face of this looming threat Congress had remained focused on a number of other issues until recently when Reps. Ami Bera, MD (D-CA) and Larry Bucshon, MD (R-IN) circulated a “Dear

Colleague” letter highlighting the financial uncertainty within the Medicare payment system and the dangers facing the physician community if Congress fails to enact legislation to address these problems. Within a matter of weeks 245 of their colleagues showed their support for fixing the problem by co-signing the letter.

Now is the time to build on that momentum and demand that Congress take action to address these devastating Medicare cuts before it's too late - [Please take a moment and contact your Senators and Representative to tell them to cancel the cuts!](#)

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### **New CMF report outlines problems with how Congress communicates with constituents**

Our partners at the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) recently released a report on the problems Congress faces with communicating with constituents. The dominant systems and practices used by Members of Congress and their constituents to interact and communicate are failing to address the primary needs and goals of either group in American democracy, according to a pioneering report from the Congressional Management Foundation. [The Future of Citizen Engagement: Rebuilding the Democratic Dialogue](#) details the current obstacles to robust and inclusive public engagement with Congress and proposes pragmatic principles to guide efforts to modernize the relationship between Senators and Representatives and their constituents.

The report documents how Congress lacks the capacity to meet the demands of a 21st century constituency and has been slow to embrace new technology. Additionally, grassroots organizers—associations, nonprofits, and companies who facilitate the vast majority of emails flooding Congress—focus most of their resources and advocacy strategies on easy and efficient methods rather than strategies that are proven more effective, but harder to implement. As a result, constituents do not feel like they are being heard, and Congress is spending countless hours and millions of dollars engaged in practices that have been largely unchanged for decades.

“Congress' thinking and practices about the democratic dialogue got stuck somewhere in the 1970s,” said Bradford Fitch, President & CEO of CMF, a nonpartisan nonprofit with a 44-year history of working with Congress. “Constituent communication has become an overwhelming administrative burden in a lot of congressional offices, as the volume of communications has increased ten-fold. They check a box that they've responded, but those responses are just formulaic. Few offices are rethinking their engagement with constituents to facilitate inclusive opportunities to invite constituents to contribute substantively to public policy. Congress needs to change its thinking and goals—engage in a paradigm shift from just ‘answering the mail’ to building trust in our democratic institutions,” he said.

The report offers ten principles to drive the modernization of Member-constituent engagement, many of which harken back to our fundamental democratic values, including:

- Congressional engagement should foster trust in Members, Congress, and democracy.
- Congress should robustly embrace and facilitate the People's First Amendment Rights.
- Senators and Representatives should strive to engage with a diverse sample of their constituents, not just those who vote for them or seek to influence them.
- The People should be honest and transparent in their engagement with Congress.
- Constituent advocacy must prioritize content and quality over medium and quantity.

The Future of Citizen Engagement: Rebuilding the Democratic Dialogue also provides examples Congress can look to in civil society; state and international governments; and Congress itself for inspiration in rethinking democratic engagement. The report highlights state and international efforts to use websites and technology to facilitate different workflows for public engagement, including public comment on draft legislation, submitting input into committee proceedings, creative uses of telephone/virtual town hall meetings, and submitting official petitions to the chamber.

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## Redistricting spotlight: Iowa

By J. Miles Coleman of Sabato's Crystal Ball

Since the 1980 round of redistricting, Iowa's congressional districts have been drawn by staffers of its nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency. Though the legislature is not obligated to accept the LSA's recommendations, lawmakers have nonetheless signed off on its plans. Still, with Republicans in full control of state government for the first time in decades, it seemed that the tradition of deference to the LSA would be put to the test — under Iowa law, if legislators rejected 2 LSA plans, they'd be free to draft their own proposals.

For a time, it seemed like the legislature would indeed end up snubbing the LSA. In mid-September, the LSA's [initial](#) redistricting plan reconfigured the current map, that features 4 Trump-won seats, to the benefit of Democrats: it turned Rep. Cindy Axne's (D, IA-3) Des Moines area seat into a narrow Biden district (Trump barely won the current version), while creating a new blue-leaning seat in eastern Iowa. Legislators voted down the plan, although they seemed to complain most, at least in public, that the state legislative maps double-bunked too many incumbents.

A few weeks later, the LSA released its second draft. This time, the [status quo](#) was essentially preserved: while IA-4, anchored in the rural northwestern part of the state, was kept as a deeply GOP-leaning seat, the other 3 districts would have favored Trump by lesser margins. The second plan passed the legislature and was signed into law by Gov. Kim Reynolds (R-IA).

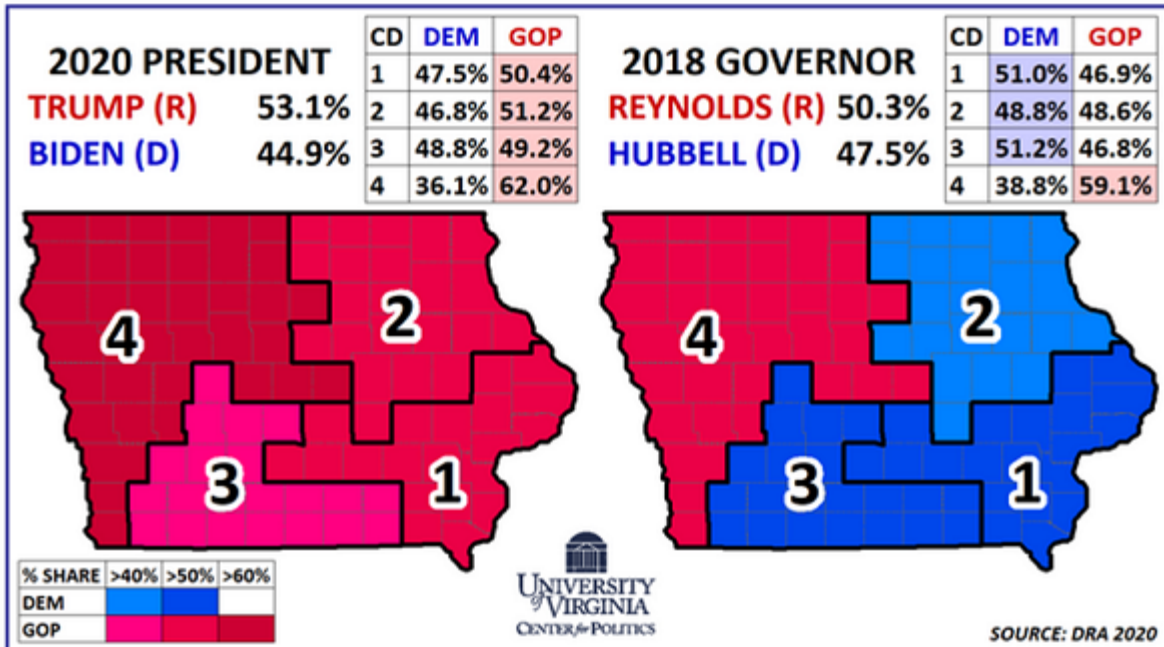
Though the newly enacted plan is basically similar to last decade's plan, there are some differences. First, at a purely cosmetic standpoint, the numbering of the two eastern districts is swapped. The new IA-1 includes Iowa's portion of the Quad Cities, while IA-2 is situated in the northeastern corner of the state — though the last two decades marked a departure from this, the new map marks something of a return to the map that was [in place](#) until the 2000 census.

At a more logistical level, though first-term Republican Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks' home county, Wapello, was moved into Axne's IA-3, she'll be [running for reelection](#) in the new IA-1. Geographically, IA-1 has more in common with her current IA-2 — and it is slightly more Republican than IA-3. Miller-Meeks' move is not without precedent: since the LSA doesn't take incumbent residences into consideration, some members have had to similarly adjust in previous cycles.

We'd rate IA-1 as Likely Republican and IA-3 as a Toss-up. While Democrats seem to be excited about their candidate in IA-2, state Sen. Liz Mathis, we'd rate Rep. Ashley Hinson (R, IA-1) as a favorite, and would call that contest Likely Republican. Finally, in IA-4, there is little question that Rep. Randy Feenstra (R, IA-4) will secure a second term.

Though Republicans could well sweep the delegation on this functionally minimal-change map, this plan also leaves them room to fall. In a blue, or even neutral, cycle and if Democrats are competitive statewide, they could limit Republicans to just IA-4. This was the case in 2018: the Democratic nominee for governor, Fred Hubbell, took 47.5% statewide but carried 3 districts. The congressional split mirrored that breakdown, and the new plan retains 3 Hubbell-won districts.

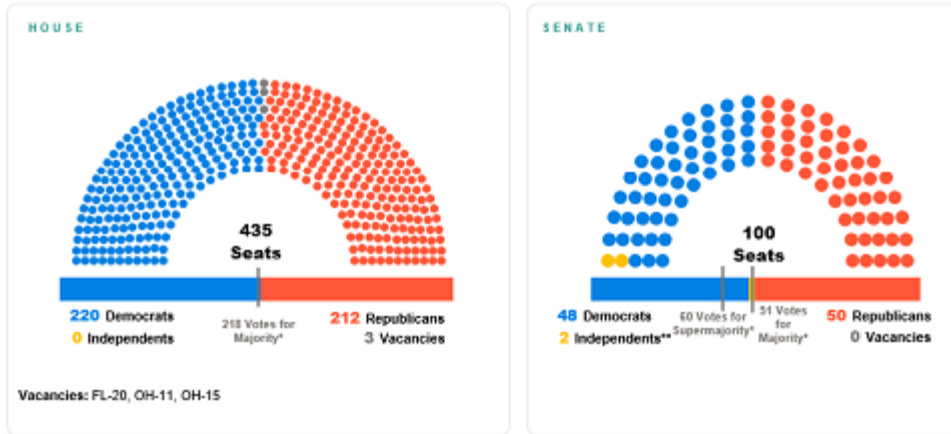
Map 1: Iowa 2020 president and 2018 governor by 2022 districts



**One year out - history is not on the side of Democrats**

Recently our friends at the [National Journal](#) released some updated slides illustrating the historic headwinds that face the President's party in the midterm elections. While there is still time to turn things around, if history is any indication, Democrats could be in for big losses in 2022.

## Democrats hold narrow congressional majorities going into 2022



\*If no vacancies and all members vote \*\*The two independent senators (Sanders - VT and King - ME) caucus with the Democrats

SOURCE US House Press Gallery United States Senate.  
SLIDE LAST UPDATED ON 8/2/21

## Historically, the president's party loses seats in midterm elections

### President's party gain/loss of seats in House

MIDTERM ELECTIONS, 1946-2018

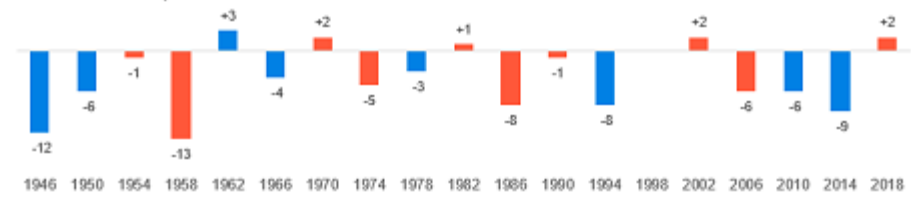
■ Democrats ■ Republicans



### President's party gain/loss of seats in Senate

MIDTERM ELECTIONS, 1946-2018

■ Democrats ■ Republicans



SOURCE The American Presidency Project.  
SLIDE LAST UPDATED ON 6/4/21

**The last four presidents have lost Senate and House majorities; seven of those eight chambers were lost in midterm elections**



**President Bill Clinton (D)**

Republican gains in the 1994 midterms:  
**52 seats** in the House  
**8 seats** in the Senate



**President George W. Bush (R)**

Democratic gains in the 2006 midterms:  
**30 seats** in the House  
**6 seats** in the Senate



**President Barack Obama (D)**

Republican gains in the 2010 midterms:  
**63 seats** in the House  
**6 seats** in the Senate

Republican gains in the 2014 midterms:  
**13 seats** in the House  
**9 seats** in the Senate



**President Donald Trump (R)**

Democratic gains in the 2018 midterms:  
**40 seats** in the House  
**-2 seats** in the Senate

Note: Trump's Senate loss in 2016 was the only loss of a chamber in the past four presidencies to not occur during a midterm.

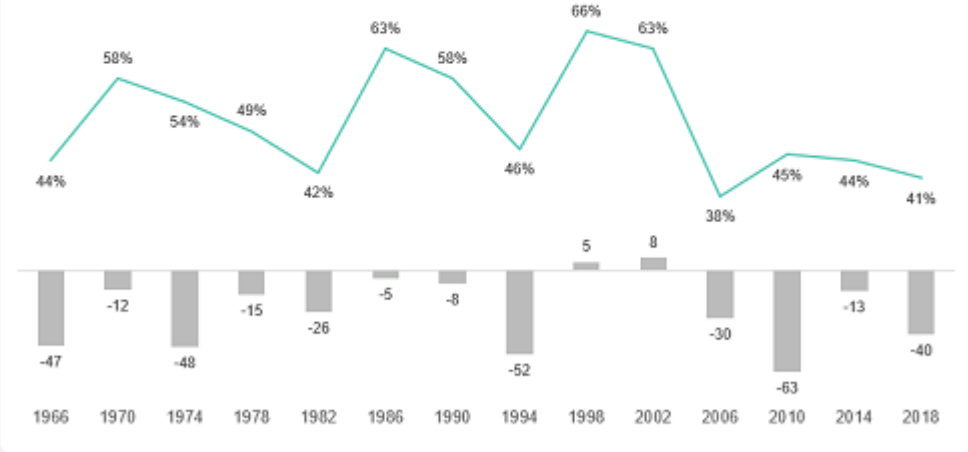
SOURCE The American Presidency Project  
 SLIDE LAST UPDATED ON 7/15/21

## Presidents with a sub-50% approval rating lose an average of 36 seats in the midterms

Presidential job approval vs. midterm results since 1966

■ Gallup presidential approval the week before the midterm  
 ■ Seats gained/lost by president's party in the midterm

JOB APPROVAL	AVERAGE CHANGE
Over 60%	+3 Seats
50%-60%	-12 Seats
Under 50%	-40 Seats



SOURCE Gallup.  
 PRESENTATION CENTER 11/1/21

