



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

- Update on the August recess – tell Congress there is still much work to be done
- Act now - deadline to register for AMPAC Campaign School is fast approaching
- Citizen advocate webinar: How to Remedy "Advocate Apathy"
- Hotline's Senate power rankings – the top five seats that could flip in November

Update on the August recess – tell Congress there is still much work to be done

The August recess is in full swing, and your members of Congress are currently back in their districts meeting with—and listening to—you, their constituents. Now is the perfect opportunity for you to remind them that there is still much work to be done before the November elections on important health care issues, including looming cuts to physician Medicare payments and fixing the cumbersome prior authorization process.

Tell Congress to get our health care system back on track by clicking the issue links below!

[Physician Medicare payment cuts](#)

Late last year, physician advocates from across the country united to successfully persuade Congress to delay a “perfect storm” of Medicare payment cuts that, if enacted, would have severely impeded patient access to care.

Unfortunately, if Congress does not act by the end of the year, these delayed cuts, and some new ones, will take effect in 2023 and cause serious disruption to physician practices.

It's clear that Congress must work with the physician community to develop long-term solutions to the systemic problems with the Medicare physician payment system and preserve patient access by passing legislation. In the meantime, policymakers need to address the immediate problem.

Before the end of the year, we are asking Congress to:

- Extend the Congressionally enacted 3 percent temporary increase in the Medicare physician fee schedule
- Provide relief for an additional 1.5 percent budget neutrality cut that is planned for 2023
- End the statutory annual freeze and provide an inflation-based update for the coming year

- Waive the 4 percent PAYGO sequester necessitated by passage of legislation unrelated to Medicare

Prior Authorization

Physicians complete an average of 41 prior authorizations per week. This unnecessary burden amounts to roughly 13 hours weekly that physicians and their staff must spend on administrative work instead of seeing and treating patients. If an insurance plan covers a treatment that would benefit a patient, physicians should not have to waste time ensuring access to it.

Further complicating matters, the criteria used for prior authorizations are unclear. Physicians rarely know at the point-of-care if the prescribed treatment requires prior authorization, only to find out later when a patient's access is delayed or denied. This ineffective system can cause unnecessary tension in the physician-patient relationship and negatively impact patient health.

Luckily Congress has already taken steps to address this by introducing the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act (H.R. 8487) which would require Medicare Advantage plans to adopt transparent PA programs that adhere to evidence-based medical guidelines and hold plans accountable for making timely PA determinations and providing rationales for denials.

Momentum is building on H.R. 8487 and, with enough grassroots pressure in August, we can get it across the finish line when Congress returns in the fall.

With only a handful of legislative days left this year, please join us in the fight to get our health care system back on track. Take action on these critical issues and look for opportunities to get in front of your members of Congress and their staff over the August recess. Visit physiciansgrassrootsnetwork.org for updated resources including policy points and information on public events that lawmakers are planning. Also, please keep us informed on your activities throughout the month by filling out this [brief form](#).

Remember, elections are approaching, and time is running out for this Congress to take the critical steps required to help physicians and the patients they care for. Please do your part by answering this urgent call to action!

AMPAC Campaign School returns in-person this fall – deadline to register fast approaching

After two years of virtual programming due to the COVID-19 pandemic, AMPAC is excited to announce that the 2022 Campaign School will be returning in-person September 29 – October 2 at the AMA offices in Washington, DC.

Spaces are still available but hurry – deadline to register is September 4!!

Running an effective campaign can be the difference between winning and losing a race. That's why the Campaign School is designed to give you the skills and strategic approach you will need out on the campaign trail. Our team of political experts will teach you everything you need to know to run a successful campaign.

Under the direction of our lead trainers, participants will be broken into campaign staff teams to run a simulated congressional campaign using what they've learned during group sessions on strategy, vote targeting, social media, advertising and more.

Attendees include physicians, spouses of physicians, residents and medical students and state medical society staff interested in becoming more involved in politics. Participants range from those attracted to grassroots efforts to those considering becoming a candidate for public office. No matter where you are in the process, you will develop a new understanding of how campaigns are run. As a graduate of the AMPAC program, candidates will rely on you to give them advice on strategy, message, and campaign plans.

Please note the following:

- Registration fee is \$350 for AMA Member/\$1000 for non-AMA members. This fee is waived for AMA residents and students; however, space is limited and the AMPAC Board will review and select four participants from the pool of qualified resident and student applicants.
- Faculty, materials, and all meals during the meeting are covered by the AMA. Participants are responsible for their registration fee, travel to/from Washington, DC and hotel accommodations (AMA will provide you with a list of nearby hotels within walking distance of the AMA offices).
- All participants will be required to provide proof of full vaccination and at least one booster for the COVID-19 virus.

[Registration for the 2022 Campaign School is now OPEN.](#) Space is limited and the deadline to register is September 4 (or sooner if maximum capacity is reached).

For more information contact us at: politicaleducation@ama-assn.org

Citizen advocate webinar: How to Remedy "Advocate Apathy"

Join our partners at the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) on September 20, 2022 at 3:00 PM EST for their citizen advocate webinar: How to Remedy "Advocate Apathy." Access to this webinar is a VIP member benefit.

[Register here](#)

Motivating advocates can be extremely challenging. Through the media, internet, and even Hollywood, citizens are bombarded with the message that their voices don't make a difference in our democracy. Moreover, some grassroots networks are just worn out – either because previous efforts have been unsuccessful, or the legislative process grinds too slowly. This presentation will provide advocacy leaders with tools and strategies for working with grassroots advocates. It will offer information from CMF research to help organizations convince their supporters that their voices make a difference, and motivational tools to turn citizen-slouches into citizen-SUPER-advocates!

This program is based on exclusive and private surveys of congressional staff conducted by CMF and the webinar will be conducted by Bradford Fitch, President and CEO of CMF.

If you have any questions regarding this presentation, please contact Anna Lee Hirschi at ahirschi@CongressFoundation.org.

Hotline's Senate power rankings – the top five seats that could flip in November

By Matt Holt and Kirk A. Bado

The Senate map has emerged as a bright spot for Democrats, at a time where President Biden's approval ratings are stuck in the 30s and whispers of "when we're in the minority" pepper conversations among House Democrats.

Democrats have multiple factors moving in their favor. This cycle has a favorable map, with the top six most competitive races held in states that President Biden carried in 2020. Democratic incumbents have raised a lot of money and are running ahead of the president's approvals. Finally, GOP candidates are underperforming expectations with less than 100 days till Election Day.

Remember: Republicans are defending 20 seats, while Democrats are defending 14. Republicans are defending five open seats, while Democrats are only defending one open seat in deep-blue Vermont.

Right now, it appears as if some Republican Senate candidates are hoping the red wave will carry them ashore instead of creating their own weather while they're being outraised hand-over-fist by Senate Democrats. While the battlefield has not radically changed since *Hotline's* [last power rankings](#), analysts are growing more bullish on Democrats keeping the Senate.

Can the environment wash the lagging Republicans to shore, or can Democrats beat the historical odds of losing Senate seats in the first midterms of a new president?

This is *Hotline's* second edition of the Senate seats that are most likely to flip this fall. This ranking is based on conversations with campaign strategists, consultants, and candidates in both parties.

1. Pennsylvania—Open (R)

The race to replace retiring Sen. Pat Toomey is unlike any other race in the country. Just before he won the Democratic primary in dominating fashion, Lt. Gov. John Fetterman suffered a stroke and hasn't held any public events since despite his wife saying that he'd be back on the trail by July. However, his Republican opponent, celebrity Dr. Mehmet Oz, has not capitalized on Fetterman's absence, even taking a vacation. Thanks to the barrage of negative ads run against him in the brutal GOP primary that he won by about 900 votes, Oz finds himself behind in the polls and facing enthusiasm issues within his own base. Meanwhile, Democrats are excited about Fetterman's candidacy. He has relentlessly hit Oz for being a carpetbagger, repeatedly bringing up the fact that he's lived in New Jersey most of his life. [FiveThirtyEight's](#) polling average has Fetterman up by 8 points, but many expect this race to tighten as we get closer to Election Day.

2. Nevada—Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D)

Cortez Masto remains the Democrats' most vulnerable incumbent. She's polling in the mid-forties against former state Attorney General Adam Laxalt, one of the two GOP Senate nominees that has managed to unite both the McConnell and Trump factions. This is a troubling sign for an incumbent. Cortez Masto, who ran the DSCC last cycle, is well-funded,

and Democrats typically carry the day in Nevada, but voter registration trends are giving hope to Republicans—they've narrowed the gap to Democrats over the past year, from 75,038 at the end of 2021 to 51,351 at the end of June. Plus, if Latino voters continue to trend away from Democrats, Nevada is a state where the party could be hit the hardest.

3. Georgia—Sen. Raphael Warnock (D)

Democrats concede that Georgia is structurally one of the toughest, if not the toughest, states for their candidate to win, given the extreme polarization of the state and the tiny slice of independent voters. But former NFL running back Herschel Walker's gaffe-prone campaign, compared to Warnock's well-oiled money machine, gives the advantage to the incumbent. Walker largely avoided the media during the primary. Since then, reports of children he didn't previously acknowledge and his comments about China's "bad air" highlight the perils of his candidacy, even causing the NRSC to launch a "rescue mission" of his campaign. Polls in the contest are tight, but Warnock is regularly winning over independents, even as that voting group has largely soured on Biden. His \$22 million cash on hand will allow him to continue to craft an image independent from the national party.

4. Arizona—Sen. Mark Kelly (D)

Arizona, a purple state with an independent streak, should be among the easier pickups for Republicans, considering Democrats currently hold both Senate seats for the first time since 1954. But Republicans are worried their candidate isn't strong enough to take down Kelly and the war chest he's amassed. Former President Trump endorsed former Thiel Capital executive Blake Masters, who emerged victorious from Tuesday's primary. Masters, who presents himself as a fire-breathing, right-wing populist, has run ads about the border claiming that Democrats "want to give mass amnesty in exchange for votes." Republicans believe Kelly's voting record will hinder his ability to win in November, but he's attempting to appeal to Arizona's middle, while Masters continues to appeal to the fringes of the party.

5. Wisconsin—Sen. Ron Johnson (R)

Johnson remains the GOP's most vulnerable incumbent. With Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes all but locking up the primary next week, Republicans like the contrast between the seasoned senator and Barnes, whom they believe is too liberal for the state. But Wisconsin has elected liberals before, among them former Sen. Russ Feingold, and their current junior senator, Tammy Baldwin. Johnson's poll numbers aren't great, and Democrats argue that he's not the same candidate he was when he ran for his first two terms. But Johnson has the national environment at his back in the perennial swing state, and he is raising the funds necessary to wage a competitive reelection.

Advocacy odds and ends

Below is a snapshot of the September Congressional calendar. Be sure to follow all the AMA's physician grassroots network social media accounts for all the latest news on physician advocacy and what you can do to make sure your voice is heard on Capitol Hill.



SEPTEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5 Labor Day	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
AMA House of Delegates						
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
				AMPAC Campaign School – Tentative		

AMA Events	Senate in Session	House in Session	Both Chambers in Session
	State Work Periods	District Work Periods	Both Work Periods

