



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

- Tell Congress to cancel the cuts!
- High floor + low ceilings = tight races
- The six types of races that will decide the House
- Should advocates mention specific legislation?

Tell Congress to cancel the cuts!

Stop us if you've heard this before - physicians are facing another round of Medicare payment cuts by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Unless Congress acts by the end of the year, physician Medicare payments are planned to be cut by 8.42 percent in 2023 which would severely impede patient access to care due to the forced closure of physician practices and put further strain on those that remained open during the pandemic.

[Tell Congress to protect America's Medicare patients and stop the cuts!](#)

These scheduled cuts will come in three forms:

- **Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.** CMS has proposed a 4.42% cut for all physician services in 2023 to offset payment policy improvements in office and facility-based visits.
- **No inflationary update.** Physicians are the only providers whose Medicare payments do not automatically receive an annual inflationary update; during this time of record inflation on the heels of a highly disruptive pandemic, this statutory flaw amplifies the impact of proposed payment cuts.
- **PAYGO.** Congressional Pay-As-You-Go (PAYGO) rules have been triggered requiring an automatic 4% cut as a result of new federal spending having nothing to do with physicians. These cuts will kick in in 2023 unless waived by Congress.

Physicians simply cannot afford to operate under the current payment system. Congress must reform the Medicare physician payment system to make it simpler, more reflective of real-world physician practice costs and more predictable for both physicians and CMS before it's too late!

Recently, **Representatives Ami Bera, MD (D-CA) and Larry Bucshon, MD (R-IN) introduced H.R. 8800 the "Supporting Medicare Providers Act"** to help address the flawed payment system and provide relief from the devastating cuts.

This is a great first step, but with only a handful of legislative days left it is critical that

Congress act to pass it or any other legislation that will prevent these devastating cuts from going into effect. Please take a moment and [contact your Senators and Representative](#) to tell them to cancel the cuts!

High floors + low ceilings = tight races

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

Don't be surprised between now and the midterm elections to see most independent political prognosticators being unusually cautious in their pronouncements (those in the partisan cheerleading roles will exhibit their predictable responses). After all, the trajectory of this campaign has already departed that of any midterm election in modern times. A key component in election analysis is studying past elections, in this case midterm elections under somewhat similar circumstances. But this year is akin to driving cross country with no map or GPS.

With the country at large and many states so evenly divided and with hyper-partisanship so pervasive, the political environment has created high floors and low ceilings for candidates in key races, keeping trailing candidates within striking distance of those in the lead. It takes an unusual circumstance for one candidate to win comfortably in many of these contests, much harder than it was just a decade or two ago.

Take Florida: The once very purple Sunshine State has inched over toward the GOP in recent years. Republicans have swept statewide offices with regularity for a number of years, but usually by slim margins. Witness Gov. Ron DeSantis, who won the open governorship four years ago by less than half a percentage point, 49.6 percent to 49.2 percent. On the same night another Republican, Rick Scott, won an open Senate seat by just two-tenths of a percentage point, 50.1 percent to 49.9 percent. Democrats routinely get close statewide, but as they say, close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades.

In this year's Florida Senate race, which has not been considered one of the top eight or nine Senate contests of the year, second-term incumbent Marco Rubio is shown in the [RealClearPolitics average](#) of public polls to be just 2.3 points ahead, 47.3 percent to 45 percent. Two August surveys had shown him with a lead of 2 and 3 points over Democratic Rep. Val Demings. Another had Demings, a former Orlando police chief, ahead by 4 points. In the gubernatorial race, the same polls showed DeSantis with leads over former Rep. (and former governor) Charlie Crist as narrow as 3 points to as wide as 8 points, averaging out to a [4-point DeSantis lead](#).

Last week the senior advocacy group AARP released the latest in its series of high-quality surveys of likely voters conducted jointly by the Republican firm of Fabrizio Ward and Democratic firm Impact Research. These are great data from key states, complete with supplemental interviews among those 50 and over, particularly [Black](#) and [Hispanic](#) voters. A walk through the reports is almost like looking over the shoulder at what a campaign manager is reading.

The [AARP Florida poll](#) showed Rubio ahead of Demings in the Senate race by 2 points, 49 to 47 percent, and DeSantis leading Crist by 3 points, 50 to 47 percent. In the generic congressional ballot, Republicans lead Democrats by 2 points, 48 to 46 percent.

Basically, the identity of the candidates didn't matter: One group was voting only for Republicans, the other for Democrats; there were very few who did anything else. Note the remarkably tight cluster of Republican vote shares of 49, 50, and 48 percent in the Senate, governor, and House races, respectively, and the equally tight 47, 47, and 46 percent for Democrats. Rubio carried Republicans by 82 points, DeSantis by 84 points. Republicans stayed in line on the generic by 86 points, 91 to 5 percent.

Demings prevailed among Democrats by 86 points, while Crist led among fellow Democrats by 85 points. Democrats also stayed home on the generic by 85 points. Independents sided with Rubio over Demings in the Senate race by 3 points, 48 to 45 percent. Similarly, they went for DeSantis in the gubernatorial race by 4 points, 49 to 45 percent. On the generic, however, they backed Democrats by 3 points, 45 to 42 percent.

DeSantis had a net favorability of 4 points overall, 51 percent favorable to 47 percent unfavorable. Rubio had a net unfavorable of minus 8 points, 44 percent favorable to 52 percent unfavorable. For Democrats, Crist sported a net unfavorable of 5 points, 43 percent favorable to 48 percent unfavorable. Demings had a net favorable of 14 points, 42 percent to 28 percent. Rubio seems to be carrying a bit of a drag among Republicans: 15 percent of those in his own party had an unfavorable view of him, while only 7 percent of DeSantis's fellow Republicans had a negative opinion of him. Twelve percent of Democrats were unfavorably disposed toward Crist while just 7 percent of Democrats had an unfavorable view of Demings. The good news for Demings is that she is not well known and has a lot of room for growth; the bad news is that she is not well known and a well-funded opponent may well be able to define her in a pejorative way.

Applying this nationally, when looking at competitive states with key Senate and governors' races, the high floors and low ceilings should keep them in play. The vagaries of voter turnout and the fickle nature of true independents is such that any race with a margin in the single-digits and/or a leader below 50 percent is one to take seriously. Remember also that undecideds rarely break evenly; they tend to move in one direction. These are important things to keep in mind as you do your own handicapping this year.

The six types of races that will decide the House

By [Dave Wasserman](#)

At a time when both parties' bases are energized and independent voters are torn between Democrats' warnings on abortion and Republicans' overtures on inflation, crime and immigration, the House is far from a foregone conclusion.

To wrest back the majority, Republicans will need to win at least nine districts Biden carried in 2020 — including some held by their own vulnerable incumbents. And it's still possible Democrats could buck the historical trend of large losses for the president's party in the midterm elections.

The Cook Political Report with Amy Walter currently rates 212 races as at least leaning toward Republicans, 192 races as at least leaning toward Democrats and 31 toss-ups. In other words, the House's fate will come down to a very narrow cross-section of the country. Here's a breakdown of the six types of competitive races to watch:

White-collar suburbs

In 2018, Democrats rode an anti-Trump revolt in highly college-educated suburbs to the House majority. In 2022, many of these same Democrats — in districts ranging from suburbs of Minneapolis, Kansas City and Seattle to Des Moines — are vulnerable. Some, including Reps. Sharice Davids (Kansas' 3rd District) and Tom Malinowski (New Jersey's 7th District), saw their seats become less friendly after redistricting.

All are hoping the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* awakens the same kind of activism among suburban women that powered their victories four years ago.

Blue-collar bastions

Ranging from Gary, Indiana; Flint, Michigan; Toledo, Ohio; and Scranton, Pennsylvania to northern Maine, these strongholds of organized labor and heavy manufacturing have steadily moved away from their Democratic roots.

All of the Democratic incumbents below ran significantly ahead of Biden in 2020, but their ability to defy gravity will be more severely tested amid high inflation and with the president's approval in the low- to mid-40s.

Hispanic majority battlegrounds

Trump performed much better with Latino voters in 2020 than he did in 2016 by painting Democrats as the party of socialism and "defunding the police."

Republicans hope to carry that momentum forward in 2020, and there are five up-for-grabs House races in Hispanic majority districts.

Two are in the Central Valley of California — where Democrat Rudy Salas (California's 22nd District) is vying to become the first Mexican American elected to the House from the region, and three more are in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas.

MAGA primary takeovers

In a handful of races, Republicans have nominated hardcore pro-Trump candidates who could jeopardize their ability to win swing seats.

In Alaska, former Gov. Sarah Palin lost an August special election to Democrat Mary Peltola and could lose a rematch for the full term in November.

In Michigan, Trump-endorsed former Housing and Urban Development official John Gibbs' defeat of pro-impeachment Rep. Peter Meijer gives Democratic immigration attorney Hillary Scholten an excellent chance to pick up a seat in the Grand Rapids area.

Vulnerable GOP incumbents

Although Democrats are playing most of the defense this cycle, Republicans must defend a handful of their own at-risk incumbents.

Reps. David Schweikert (Arizona's 1st District), Mike Garcia (California's 27th District), Yvette Herrell (New Mexico's 2nd District) and Steve Chabot (Ohio's 1st District) all wound up with bluer seats after redistricting.

Omaha Rep. Don Bacon (Nebraska's 2nd District) also faces a much tougher Democratic challenger this November after twice narrowly beating a weak progressive activist in 2018 and 2020.

For Democrats, picking up a handful of GOP seats would be essential to keeping the majority.

Hotly contested open seats

Redistricting and retirements have spawned 21 competitive races with no incumbent on the ballot. Republicans hope to nab House seats in western Rhode Island, where popular Democratic Rep. Jim Langevin is retiring, and suburban Portland, Oregon, where moderate Democratic Rep. Kurt Schrader lost his primary to a progressive activist.

Democrats are vying to pick up a seat in Syracuse, New York, where pro-impeachment GOP Rep. John Katko is retiring, as well as in Colorado's brand new 8th Congressional District — a result of the 2020 census.

Should advocates mention specific legislation?

Our partners at The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) wanted to know how helpful it is for advocates' messages to include a reference to specific legislation (as opposed to a general issue) to a Senator or Representative. We asked Congressional staff the following question:

"How helpful is it for messages from constituents to include... a reference to specific legislation, as opposed to a general issue?"

What they learned: Advocates should definitely include a reference to specific legislation in messages to lawmakers! An overwhelming majority of Congressional staff (96%) felt that the inclusion of specific legislation was helpful or even very helpful. By contrast, only 5% of respondents felt that this information was somewhat helpful or not helpful at all to include. Going beyond the general issue and naming a specific bill number or proposed legislation will help advocates stand out.

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.

Advocacy odds and ends

Below is a snapshot of the October 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.



OCTOBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				29	30	1
				AMPAC Campaign School – Tentative		
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10 Columbus Day	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

AMA Events

Senate in Session

House in Session

Both Chambers in Session

State Work Periods

District Work Periods

Both Work Periods



[AMA Advocacy](#)