



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

- Congress must stop the 4.5% Medicare pay cut – the whole 4.5% cut
- The new crossover members of the House
- When it comes to Congress - which meetings times are better?
- Nominations for AMPAC Award for Political Participation Now Open

Congress must stop the 4.5% Medicare pay cut—the whole 4.5% cut

More than 150 organizations representing over 1 million physicians and other health care clinicians are strongly urging Congress to take action to prevent the entirety of the 4.5% cut in Medicare physician pay rates that is set to take effect Jan. 1, 2023.

"This desperately needed relief will help provide crucial short-term financial stability for practices until permanent, bipartisan payment reforms are enacted," says a letter (PDF) organized by the AMA, and signed by all 50 state medical associations, and sent to House leaders Nancy Pelosi and Kevin McCarthy, and Senate leaders Chuck Schumer and Mitch McConnell. A separate letter (PDF), also organized by the AMA, was signed by more than 100 national specialty societies and others such as the Ambulatory Surgery Center Association and The US Oncology Network.

The hope is that congressional leaders will take action on a bipartisan basis during the "lame duck" session to ensure that all of the 4.5% cut is averted as part of an end-of-the-year legislative spending package. The 4.5% cut stems from the combination of the expiring 3% increase to the MPFS conversion factor that Congress enacted via the Protecting Medicare and American Farmers from Sequester Cuts Act, and a new 1.5% budget-neutrality reduction related to payment changes for evaluation-and-management (E/M) services in the nonoffice setting.

"The impending 4.5% Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) payment cut comes as medical practices throughout the country are experiencing pressures stemming from rising rates of inflation," says the letter from the AMA and the state medical associations. "All health care stakeholders struggle to endure steep, annual payment reductions; however, the negative impact of such policy decisions is exacerbated by the fact that physicians are the only providers whose Medicare payments do not automatically receive an annual inflationary update.

Incalculable cost of inaction

"Things are different this year," AMA President [Jack Resneck Jr., MD](#), told *MedPage Today* recently. To forge ahead with Medicare physician pay cuts "three years into a

pandemic ... and with burnout rates [soaring from about 38% in 2020 to 63% in 2021](#)," he noted, is "unconscionable."

"It's just really dangerous and incredibly difficult," [Dr. Resneck added](#), as doctors are "faced with difficult choices about selling their practices."

His points echoed those made in the physician organizations' letter to congressional leaders. "Burnout, stress, workload and the cumulative impact of COVID-19 are leading one in five physicians to consider leaving their current practice within two years," says the letter from the AMA and state medical associations. "Payment cuts will only accelerate this unsustainable trend and undoubtedly lead to Medicare patients struggling to access health care services. As a result, we cannot overstate the importance of Congress stopping the looming 4.5% reduction, in full.

"Put simply, the cost of congressional inaction is an across-the-board cut that will further amplify the financial hardship physician practices are already facing while inhibiting Medicare from delivering on its promises to seniors and future generations."

The AMA—in collaboration with 120 other physician and health care organizations—[has outlined the essential principles \(PDF\)](#) that can put the nation's health care system on sustainable financial ground.

Visit [AMA Advocacy in Action](#) to find out what's at stake in [reforming Medicare payment](#) and other advocacy priorities the AMA is actively working on.

The new crossover members of the House

By [Kyle Kondik](#) of [Sabato's Crystal Ball](#)

Republicans win majority by cutting deeper into hostile turf; number of split districts remains low historically

With vote counts near final across the country, it appears that Republicans are on track for a 222-213 majority in the U.S. House, a mirror image of the small majority that Democrats won in 2020. When a party wins such a small House edge, there are all sorts of factors that one can reasonably argue was crucial to the outcome.

One of those, undoubtedly, was the Republicans' superior ability to win districts that did not vote for their party for president in 2020.

The overall number of "crossover" districts — seats that vote for one party for House but the other party for president — has been generally on a downward trajectory. Table 1 shows the number of crossover districts since the 2000 election.

Table 1: Crossover House districts, 2000-2022

Year	Ds in districts carried by R prez nominee	Rs in districts carried by D prez nominee	Total
2000	46	40	86
2002	32	26	58
2004	41	18	59
2006	62	8	70
2008	49	34	83
2010	12	62	74
2012	9	17	26
2014	5	26	31
2016	12	23	35
2018	31	3	34
2020	7	9	16
2022	5	18	23

Sources: Almanac of American Politics, Daily Kos Elections, The Long Red Thread, Pendulum Swing

Prior to the Republican Revolution of 1994, when the GOP flipped the House for the first time in 4 decades, it was much more common for Democrats to win on hostile territory than vice versa. One can see that ancestral Democratic legacy even in the first decade of the 2000s. For instance, in 2004, Democrats had about twice the number of crossover members than Republicans did even as Republicans won the House and George W. Bush won reelection.

By 2008, Democrats held nearly 50 districts that Republican presidential nominee John McCain carried. But many of those districts went red in 2010 and, aside from 2018, Democrats have won relatively few districts won by the other side's presidential candidate. In fact, Republicans have won more crossover seats than Democrats in 6 of the last 7 elections. The big exception came in 2018, when Democrats won 31 Donald Trump-won districts while Republicans won only 3 districts carried by Hillary Clinton, the 2016 Democratic presidential nominee. A contributor to this dynamic may be that Republicans have not won the popular vote for president since 2004, which may naturally contribute to having more crossover districts because of relative weakness at the top of the ticket. This is an extreme example, but Democrats doing so poorly in the 1972 and 1984 presidential elections led to a ton of Democrats in districts that Republicans won for president, given that Democrats won House majorities in each of those elections despite being clobbered at the top of the ticket.

There are a lot of other things going on too, like partisan realignment sometimes happening at the presidential level first and then bleeding down the ballot, leading to split outcomes in the interim. Nearly half of the Trump districts that Democratic House candidates won in 2018 turned around and voted for Biden in 2020. We also don't want to discount the legitimate crossover appeal that some Republican candidates have demonstrated in recent cycles (and that some Democrats have shown as well).

As Table 1 shows, it's common for the opposition party to cut deeper into the other side's turf during midterm years. The number of crossover districts captured by the opposition party spiked in each of the last 5 midterms. So even though Republicans had a somewhat disappointing year compared to the last 4 midterms — all elections we can classify as waves — this trend still held, although 2022 was also a redistricting year, unlike the previous 4 midterms. New lines contributed to changes in crossover district membership: For instance, Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D, MI-7) saw her district changed from a narrow Trump district to a narrow Biden one. Given that she ended up winning by about 5.5 points, it stands to reason that she would have held on in her old district as well. But she is not on our list, because she won a Biden district.

In 2000, about 20% of House members came from crossover districts. While the total fluctuates over time, in this election just about 5% of the total House membership will come from crossover districts. Assuming John Duarte (R) does in fact win in an open-seat race in CA-13 — he narrowly leads Adam Gray (D) but the race is not yet called — there will be 18 Republicans in districts that Joe Biden won in 2020 and just 5 Democrats in districts that Donald Trump carried in the last presidential election. Table 2 shows those members.

How these districts change, or don't change, at the presidential level in 2024 will have at least some bearing on the outcomes in these districts. Democrats can look at the trends as a hopeful sign in these districts, but such changes are not guaranteed to continue. Crossover district members are not extinct, but they are endangered to some degree — or, at the very least, we advise them to believe they are endangered and to act accordingly as they eye another campaign.

[Continue reading](#)

Which meeting times are better?

Our friends at The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) wanted to know whether congressional staff prefer to meet with constituents when Congress is in session or in recess. They asked congressional staff the following question:

"When is the best time for a constituent to meet with you on a policy-related matter (When Congress is in session or not in session)?"

What they learned: Congressional staff prefer to meet with constituents when Congress is not in session. While less than one-third (29%) said that they prefer to meet with constituents when Congress is in session, more than two-thirds (71%) said they prefer to meet when Congress is not in session. Advocacy organizations have to book their fly-in events long before the House and Senate unveil their legislative calendars, making it impossible to guarantee that their fly-in events will take place while Congress is in session. Although constituents are understandably disappointed if they have traveled to DC, only to learn their

Member is back home, the good news is that they gain an opportunity to build a stronger relationship with their Member's staff as well as a chance to meet their Member at another time in the district. Recess meetings between congressional staff and constituents are often longer (lasting at least 30 minutes), and much more substantive.

Nominations for AMPAC Award for Political Participation Now Open

Awarded every two years by the AMPAC Board of Directors the AMPAC Award for Political Participation recognizes an AMA or AMA Alliance member who has made significant personal contributions of time and talent in assisting friends of medicine in their quest for elective office at the federal and state level.

These may include: volunteer activities in a political campaign or a significant health care related election issue such as a ballot initiative or referendum.

Nominees must be a current member of the AMA or AMA Alliance and AMPAC with preference given to members with a demonstrated history of AMPAC involvement. The deadline to submit nominations is January 31. The full criteria for the 2023 AMPAC Award for Political Participation including how to submit a nomination can be found [here](#).

The winning nominee will receive special recognition during the AMPAC Board Chair's speech before the House of Delegates or during the AMPAC luncheon at the AMA Annual Meeting in Chicago. The winning nominee will also receive free admittance (including airfare and hotel expenses if held in-person) to a future AMPAC political education program (campaign school or candidate workshop) in Washington, DC.

DECEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25 Christmas Day	26 Christmas Day [observed]	27	28	29	30	31

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



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