



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

- Medicare physician payment cuts are coming
- Advocacy Insights webinar: What Congress needs to do now: a grassroots update
- The Senate: Race for Majority Remains a Toss-up as 2024 Looms
- Hotlines 2022 House power rankings

Medicare physician payment cuts are coming

We know this sounds like a broken record but - 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 the form of:

- **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.

When adjusted for inflation, Medicare physician payments have dropped by 22% from 2001 to 2021. 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 days before the election, it is critical that

Congress act to pass this or any other legislation that will prevent these devastating cuts in the "lame duck" session. Please take a moment and [contact your Senators and Representative](#) to tell them to cancel the cuts!

AMA Advocacy Insights webinar series: What Congress needs to do now: A grassroots update

As we approach the end of this year and head into the next, physicians are taking this message to Congress: Reforming Medicare payment and fixing prior authorization need to top the agenda. Without Congressional action, physician practices that have already been weathered by the pandemic will face an 8%+ pay cut next year. Not only that but prior authorization continues to delay patient care, cause patient harm and create practice hassles.

[Registration is now open](#)

Join this AMA Advocacy Insights webinar to hear about the AMA's grassroots calls to action on these issues and what you can do.

Moderator

- Jack Resneck Jr., MD, president, AMA

Speakers

- Todd Askew, senior vice president, Advocacy, AMA
- Jason Marino, director, Congressional Affairs, AMA

When

Nov. 3, 2022, 11 a.m. Central

[Registration is now open.](#)

The Senate: Race for Majority Remains a Toss-up as 2024 Looms

By J. Miles Coleman, Associate Editor, Sabato's Crystal Ball

With just under 2 weeks to go to Election Day 2022, we figured it would be worth surveying the race for control of the Senate -- on the House side, we made [several changes](#), all in the GOP's direction. While we aren't updating any Senate ratings today, some of the top races remain in flux.

We'll start in Pennsylvania. On Tuesday night, the Keystone State was the scene of the most highly anticipated senatorial debate of the cycle: Lt. Gov. John Fetterman (D) faced off against television doctor Mehmet Oz (R).

As best we can tell, the situation in Pennsylvania is this: John Fetterman remains very narrowly ahead, although whatever lead he does have is small and tenuous. We could say something very similar about Sen. Mark Kelly's (D-AZ) lead in Arizona. One of the differences between Arizona and Pennsylvania, though, is that Republicans are throwing everything but the kitchen sink at Pennsylvania, but that is not happening in Arizona.

Any professional debate coach would easily award the debate to Oz, and not just because Fetterman, still recovering from a stroke, clearly had trouble communicating. Oz's extensive television experience showed, and he was quite comfortable making his points. If Oz overtakes Fetterman, the debate and broader questions about Fetterman's health will be part of the reason why -- although the more important factor would probably just be the Republican lean in this broader electoral environment. The prevailing "elite" opinion of the debate (which was especially reflected on Twitter) was that Fetterman bombed. For now, we are watching if the broader public reacts similarly -- that is, if the debate even makes any waves at all, which is never guaranteed.

Democrats are hoping that any public reaction isn't in sync with the "elite" consensus and that enough voters will continue to see Oz as the Fetterman camp has portrayed him: a snake oil salesman from out of town. It is still the case that Oz's favorability numbers are considerably worse than Fetterman's, even as the latter has taken an immense amount of incoming fire over the past couple of months. There is also widespread consensus that state Attorney General Josh Shapiro (D) is doing quite well in the gubernatorial race -- so well that some Republicans are trying to attack Fetterman by contrasting him with Shapiro in advertising. Similarly, as Ben Forstate, a state Democratic operative, warned, the more erratic Doug Mastriano, the GOP's far-right nominee for governor, appears, the more palatable Oz may look by comparison. This contrast may be important to a crucial bloc of swing voters: lapsed Republicans in the Philadelphia suburbs who may have voted for Joe Biden in 2020 but are not exactly true-blue Democrats. The now-outgoing Sen. Pat Toomey (R-PA) owed his 2016 reelection victory to his relative strength with that demographic.

If nothing else, both candidates provided soundbites that the opposing sides are already utilizing in their messaging. The Oz campaign is pointing to some of Fetterman's conflicting statements on fracking (Fetterman's answer to a question on his fracking inconsistency led to what was probably the most painful moment of a painful night). Meanwhile, Democrats are trying to make hay over Oz's not-artfully worded abortion answer -- and using it to tie Oz to Mastriano.

The Pennsylvania race is fluid -- we've seen Fetterman as a small favorite since late summer but it's not hard to imagine the race breaking to Oz, particularly after the debate. **If we get good evidence of such a break over the next several days, we'll change our rating.**

There has been a lot of focus, justifiably we think, on questionable Republican Senate candidates this year. Oz is one of them -- had Toomey run again or someone else been nominated, we doubt Fetterman ever would've seemed like a favorite to begin with. But if Fetterman loses to Oz, there will rightly be a lot of second-guessing in Democratic circles about the quality of Fetterman's candidacy and whether the party should have gone with someone else (or whether Fetterman should have dropped out after his stroke, which he has been less than transparent about since it occurred).

In New Hampshire, which occupies a firmer spot in our Leans Democratic category than Pennsylvania does, Democratic Sen. Maggie Hassan got something of a break late last week: Senate Leadership Fund, the massive outside spending group linked to Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY), essentially pulled out of the state. SLF canceled close to \$6 million worth of ad time, although the National Republican Senatorial Committee more recently came in with a smaller, \$1 million buy that was reserved jointly with their nominee, Don Bolduc. **While Hassan can't rest easy -- several recent polls have given her single-digit leads -- SLF's cancellation has not been interpreted as a sign of confidence in Bolduc.**

According to numbers from AdImpact, which tracks campaign spending, Democratic candidates, and groups supporting them, are poised to outspend Republican forces in 7 of the 10 most expensive races during the final couple of weeks of the campaign. The balance is most tipped towards the Democrats in Arizona, where Democrats will be spending close to \$13 million to just over \$2 million for Republicans. **If Mark Kelly comes up short for reelection, it will almost certainly be because the national environment pushed his very marginal state too far towards the GOP.**

Though public polls often show both contests to be within the margin of error, our thinking for basically the entire cycle has been that North Carolina and Ohio would stay in the red column. Going down the home stretch, Republicans will be spending at least a few million more than Democrats in both states. The spending is more mixed in Wisconsin, with Democrats holding a tiny edge, although we still consider Sen. Ron Johnson (R-WI) to be a favorite. Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes (D) has struggled under the weight of GOP attacks -- if he comes up short, this is another race where there will be Monday morning quarterbacking about the Democratic candidate (but, again, the larger political environment looms large there, as it does in other key races).

Given the overall trajectory of the election, we think Democrats should be more concerned about their races rated Leans Democratic (Arizona, New Hampshire, and especially Pennsylvania) than Republicans should be about their Leans Republican races (North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin).

Over the past week or so, voters in Georgia and Nevada, our 2 Toss-up states in the Senate, have been casting early ballots. In parsing through the data, Democrats are probably cautiously optimistic about the former, even if they're chewing their fingernails over the latter. On Tuesday, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger announced that, with 2 weeks until Election Day, over 1 million ballots had been cast in the Peach State. The state cast nearly 4 million votes in 2018, 5 million in 2020, and a little under 4.5 million in the January 2021 Senate runoffs. So this may represent something like a fifth or a quarter of the total vote, give or take.

Georgia doesn't have partisan registration but the racial composition of the electorate can sometimes be a useful proxy for partisanship. Democrats began early in-person voting with a bang -- on the first day, close to 39% of the electorate was Black. That number has dropped steadily in the days since and sits at about 31%, which is roughly equal to the overall share of the state's registered voters who are Black. As Republican pollster (and early vote tracker extraordinaire) John Couvillon has pointed out, the Black share of the early vote in southern states often notches upwards during weekends -- that will be something to monitor early next week. **In a racially-polarized state, the Black share of the electorate is vitally important to Democratic chances.**

Despite a few weeks of bad press, Sen. Raphael Warnock's (D-GA) challenger, former professional football player Herschel Walker (R), very much remains viable. **To us, a runoff continues to be the likeliest outcome.** While we strive to push all competitive races to the Leans Democratic or Leans Republican columns in our final ratings (coming the Monday before the election), our handicap in Georgia may very well stay at Toss-up in anticipation of a runoff (this is how we handled the Senate races there in 2020).

As for the Silver State, the Nevada Independent's early vote blog -- written by state political guru Jon Ralston -- will be an indispensable tool over the next week and a half. As Ralston points out, Nevada has transitioned from being primarily an in-person state to one that mails a ballot to every voter. Under the leadership of the late Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, state Democrats built a versatile turnout machine. But 2022 will put Democrats' organizational abilities to the test: The state's electorate just may be in a foul mood, with factors like high local gas prices and the fallout from Covid potentially working against Democrats in this tourism-heavy state.

Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), who took Reid's place in the Senate, is running for a second term against former state Attorney General Adam Laxalt (R). Laxalt is probably a weaker candidate than Cortez Masto's 2016 opponent, then-Rep. Joe Heck (R, NV-3), but he arguably lacks the baggage that some other Republicans in key races, like Oz, are saddled with. **Generally speaking, we have been pessimistic about Democratic chances in Nevada's Senate race, although maybe what we learn from early voting will change our minds.**

We touched on this somewhat last week, but Colorado has become, possibly, an early frontier in the 2024 GOP presidential primary. The GOP's nominee, businessman Joe O'Dea, has tried to frame himself as a relative moderate -- in doing so, he's worked to keep Donald Trump at arm's length. Right on cue, the former president lashed out at O'Dea. Gov. Ron DeSantis (R-FL), who is on an easy path to reelection in his own state, affirmed his support for the party's Colorado nominee. In a subtle way, moves like this might make DeSantis seem like more of a "team player" to a national electorate. That said, our sense is that Sen. Michael Bennet (D-CO) should be fine for reelection -- we have his race at Likely Democratic, although it may be closer to Leans Democratic than Safe Democratic if the trajectory of the election continues to move toward Republicans.

Overall, we have Democrats and Republicans favored in 49 seats apiece, with Georgia and Nevada as Toss-ups. If Fetterman's lead in Pennsylvania holds, Republicans will need to win both Toss-up races to reach an outright 51-seat majority -- something they seem perfectly capable of doing. Democrats, who only need 50 seats, thanks to Vice President Kamala Harris's tie-breaking vote, would only need to win one of the Toss-ups. That said, if we actually start to see some post-debate pro-Oz momentum in Pennsylvania, there will be even more pressure on Georgia and Nevada Democrats to perform.

[Continue reading](#)

Hotline's 2022 House Power Rankings

Hotline's House Power Rankings: Top 20 seats most likely to flip (1/2)

Green picture border indicates an incumbent; gray picture border indicates a challenger

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. WI-03 (Open)
Incumbent: Rep. Dan Kildee (D)
Republican Candidate: Derriek Van Orden (R)</p> | <p>6. IA-03 ▲
Incumbent: Rep. Cindy Axne (D)
Challenger: Zach Nunn (R)</p> |
| <p>2. MI-10 (Open)
Incumbent: Rep. Andy Levin (D)
Republican Candidate: John James (R)</p> | <p>7. NJ-07 ▼
Incumbent: Rep. Tom Malinowski (D)
Challenger: Thomas Kean Jr. (R)</p> |
| <p>3. AZ-02
Incumbent: Rep. Tom O'Halloran (D)
Challenger: Eli Crane (R)</p> | <p>8. PA-07 ▲
Incumbent: Rep. Susan Wild (D)
Challenger: Lisa Scheller (R)</p> |
| <p>4. AZ-06 (Open)
Incumbent: Rep. Ann Kuster (D)
Republican Candidate: Juan Ciscomani (R)</p> | <p>9. MI-07 ▲
Incumbent: Rep. Elissa Slotkin (D)
Challenger: Tom Barrett (R)</p> |
| <p>5. TX-15 (Open)
Incumbent: Rep. Vicente Gonzalez (D)
Republican Candidate: Monica De La Cruz (R)</p> | <p>10. MI-08 ▲
Incumbent: Rep. Dan Kildee (D)
Challenger: Paul Jung (R)</p> |

SOURCE: National Journal Hotline
PRESENTATION CENTER 10/3/22

*Red and green arrows indicate a state's power ranking relative to the last Hotline power ranking update
**District numbers are included for incumbents who would represent a different seat due to redistricting
***Strikethrough indicates incumbents retiring from public office, double strikethrough indicates incumbents running for other offices, italicized strikethroughs indicate primary defeat

Hotline's House Power Rankings: Top 20 seats most likely to flip (2/2)

Green picture border indicates an incumbent; gray picture border indicates a challenger

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>11. CA-22
Incumbent: Rep. David Valadao (R)
Challenger: Rudy Salas (D)</p> | <p>16. PA-08 ▲
Incumbent: Rep. Matt Cartwright (D)
Challenger: Jim Boquist (R)</p> |
| <p>12. VA-02 ▲
Incumbent: Rep. Elaine Luria (D)
Challenger: Jen Kiggans (R)</p> | <p>17. MI-03 ▲
Incumbent: Rep. Peter Meijer (R)
Democratic Candidate: Hillary Scholten (D)</p> |
| <p>13. OH-09 ▼
Incumbent: Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D)
Challenger: J.R. Majewski (R)</p> | <p>18. PA-17 (Open)
Incumbent: Rep. Conor Lamb (D)
Democratic Candidate: Chris Deluzio (D)</p> |
| <p>14. ME-02
Incumbent: Rep. Jared Golden (D)
Challenger: Bruce Poliquin (R)</p> | <p>19. NV-03
Incumbent: Rep. Susie Lee (D)
Challenger: April Becker (R)</p> |
| <p>15. IL-17 (Open)
Incumbent: Rep. Cheri Bustos (D)
Republican Candidate: Esther Joy King (R)</p> | <p>20. NY-22 (Open)
Incumbent: Rep. John Katko (R)
Democratic Candidate: Francis Conole (D)</p> |

SOURCE: National Journal Hotline
PRESENTATION CENTER 10/3/22

*Red and green arrows indicate a state's power ranking relative to the last Hotline power ranking update
**District numbers are included for incumbents who would represent a different seat due to redistricting
***Strikethrough indicates incumbents retiring from public office, double strikethrough indicates incumbents running for other offices, italicized strikethroughs indicate primary defeat

Redistricting impact:

- "In our ranking of the House seats most likely to flip, Hotline is not including the two newly drawn Florida districts, the 7th and the 13th, along with districts like Georgia's 6th and Tennessee's 5th, that will almost certainly flip to Republicans due to redistricting."

Vulnerable candidates:

- "The most vulnerable members in each party are Rep. Tom O'Halleran (D-AZ 01) clocking in at No. 3 and Rep. David Valadao (R-CA 21) at No. 11 on our list."
- "Democrats are still in dire straits: Seventeen of the top 20 [seats] are held by Democrats."

Look-ahead:

- "Less than three months out from the midterms, Republicans are still favored to take control of the House. In response to the Supreme Court's reversal of Roe v. Wade, Democratic lawmakers have made abortion rights front and center of their campaigns, though it remains to be seen how this ruling will affect voters' choices in November."

Advocacy odds and ends

Below is a snapshot of the November 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.



NOVEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	
		1 Open Enrollment (begins)	2	3	4	5	
6	7	8 Mid-term Elections	9	10	11 Veterans Day	12	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	
20		21		22		23	
24		25		26		27	
28		29		30			



[AMA Advocacy](#)



25 Massachusetts Ave. NW | Suite 600 | Washington, DC 20001

Copyright © 2022, American Medical Association