



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

- "All Politics is Local" advocacy webinar on March 13
- Why should advocates take time to personalize correspondence to Congress?
- New resources available at FixMedicareNow.org
- The Race for the House, Part Two
- Space still available for 2024 AMPAC Candidate Workshop – deadline to register March 1

"All Politics is Local" advocacy webinar on March 13

"All politics is local." It's a well-known phrase dating back to the 1930s, but does this saying apply to your congressional outreach efforts as a physician advocate? The answer is an emphatic, "Yes!"

[Join us March 13 at 8pm ET for our "All Politics is Local" advocacy webinar.](#)

Many current members of Congress served as city, county, or state officials prior to coming to Washington. Congressional Quarterly's profile of the 118th Congress found that 60% of US House members served as state or local officials, as did 71% of their Senate counterparts. Relationships developed with state and local officials could lead to strong ties with tomorrow's federal legislators.

This AMA Very Influential Physician event will explore the benefits of connecting, interacting, and building personal relationships with state and local legislators.

Tracy Mattison Brandon, a current Town Commissioner in Davidson, NC, and Beatrice Lanzi, a former Rhode Island lawmaker with 10 years tenure in both the state House and Senate, will share their experiences as elected officials. Hear how constituents made impressions, both positive and negative, on these public officials; what members of their communities did to endear themselves to these legislators; and, how their roles as local and state government officials were intertwined with the work of their members of Congress.

[Register now!](#) Space is limited, so please be sure to register early.

Why should advocates take time to personalize correspondence to Congress?

Our partners at The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) wanted to know the value for constituents to take extra time to personalize correspondence with their Members of Congress. They asked congressional staff the following question:

"If your Member/Senator has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to their office have on his/her decision?"

What they learned: While about 90% of congressional staff said that personalized messages (postal and email) has some or a lot of influence, about two-thirds (64%) said that form messages have some or a lot of influence. We drilled down further by focusing on the rates that congressional staff responded "a lot of influence." While more than one-quarter of staff agreed (24%) that personalized messages have a lot of influence, a very small portion (3%) of staff feel the same about form communication from constituents. (Note: this "3%" number has not changed since CMF has been conducting this survey for 20 years.)

These responses are based on an online survey of congressional staff in December 2023 to solicit their opinions on best practices for citizen communications and advocacy strategies. Nearly all of the staff respondents are Chiefs of Staff, Legislative Directors, Communications Directors, and Legislative Assistants. The survey included both open and closed questions.

Source: Partnership for a More Perfect Union, Copyright Congressional Management Foundation, <http://CongressFoundation.org>.

New resources available at FixMedicareNow.org

The AMA's Fix Medicare Now website is a one-stop-shop for everything you need to know about the flawed Medicare payment system and how it can be fixed.

Continually updated with new content, the site contains all the resources you need to advocate on behalf of your practice and your patients—including:

- The ability to take action by emailing your members of Congress
- A "share your story" feature
- Toolkits on how to be a more effective advocate on social media
- An interactive timeline
- A patient reception-area flyer with a QR code where patients can take action
- A robust resources page with background information, charts, advocates' letters to Congress and much more

Unfortunately, the flawed Medicare physician payment system is not going to fix itself. It is going to take action from advocates like you to persuade Congress to do the right thing and address these very real and pressing issues.

If Congress does not act soon, the most recent 3.37% cut that went into effect on Jan. 1 will become permanent. The most recent continuing resolution, which keeps the government funded until early March, extended the deadline for the final 2024 appropriations package—the last best hope in reversing this cut.

Please join the fight to fix the broken Medicare payment system today by visiting Fix Medicare Now and let Congress know that America's physicians demand action before it is too late.

The Race for the House, Part Two

By [Kyle Kondik](#)

Following last week's release of 2023's fourth quarter campaign fundraising reports, we thought this was a good time to go through our House ratings and make a few revisions.

The changes don't alter the overall House rating math all that much: currently, we have 212 districts rated as Safe, Likely, or Leans Republican, 203 as Safe/Likely/Leans Democratic, and 20 Toss-ups. Splitting the Toss-ups down the middle would lead to... a 222-213 Republican House, or exactly zero net change from what happened in 2022. So Republicans are a little bit ahead in the ratings, but we'd classify the overall battle for the House as a Toss-up.

The relatively scant House generic ballot polling generally shows a small Republican lead—the FiveThirtyEight average pegs it as half a point and the RealClearPolitics average has it as 2 points. This makes the overall environment seem like we're still stuck in 2022, an observation we ran by several sources on both sides of the aisle without much pushback.

In yesterday's part one of our House analysis, we discussed the correlation between House and presidential results and what we saw in 2016 and 2020. Two of the relatively few "crossover" district members are Reps. Jared Golden (D, ME-2) and Don Bacon (R, NE-2). The pair are linked not only by being crossover members, but also because of the Electoral College quirk that is unique to their two states: Both Maine and Nebraska award electoral votes by congressional district. This allowed Donald Trump, by carrying Golden's sprawling ME-2 in 2016 and 2020, to pad his electoral vote tally by one, and Joe Biden was able to do the same in 2020 by carrying Bacon's Omaha-based NE-2.

That both districts are likelier than not to award their electoral votes to the party opposite of their current House incumbent is the main reason we're moving both districts from Leans to Toss-up, although they both are poised to have potentially strong opposition.

Golden continues to stand out as perhaps the House Democrats' most independent member. A recent FiveThirtyEight analysis of 2023 congressional roll call votes found that Golden was the only House Democrat who voted with President Biden's position less than 50% of the time. Golden did recently move toward his party on one important issue, though: changing from opposing to supporting a national assault weapons ban following a horrific school shooting in his hometown of Lewiston last fall.

Golden's likely Republican opponent is state Rep. Austin Theriault, a former NASCAR driver. Those who bemoan the predominance of elderly politicians in federal government will find something to like about this potential matchup—Golden is 41, and Theriault is only 30. Golden is probably still helped by Maine's ranked-choice voting system for federal races, as well as Mainer's willingness to split tickets (as demonstrated both by Golden's recent success and Republican Sen. Susan Collins's crossover victory in 2020), but we could also easily imagine Trump enjoying a bigger margin in this district than his 6-point win in 2020. Golden still has a huge cash on hand edge on Theriault, who Republicans nonetheless hope will be a better fit for the district than the former Republican incumbent, Bruce Poliquin, who Golden beat in 2018 and 2022.

Bacon, meanwhile, is potentially easier to portray as a rank-and-file Republican, with a voting

record more in line with other members of his caucus, according to that same FiveThirtyEight analysis. Bacon first won in 2016, reclaiming for his party a seat that had flipped against then-Rep. Lee Terry (R) in 2014. One indicator of Terry's weakness that year—the former incumbent had a severe case of a common political affliction, foot in mouth syndrome—was a surprisingly slim 6-point primary victory over Tea Partier Dan Frei (R). Frei is back a decade later, as he recently launched a primary challenge to Bacon. It's hard to know how seriously to take any primary challenge, but this may keep Bacon focused to at least some degree on his right flank, which in turn may help state Sen. Tony Vargas (D) in his effort to reduce Bacon's enviable level of crossover support in the general election. Bacon beat Vargas by 3 points in 2022, not exactly a runaway for the incumbent in a decent Republican environment. Bacon leads the cash-on-hand race \$1.55 million to \$1.11 million, so Vargas is solidly positioned for a challenger.

Some of our House ratings are based on what we're calling "realignment watch." Namely, we may rank a seat in a category that may seem a little less friendly to the incumbent party than one might expect because of the possibility of a significant shift at the presidential level. That's the main reason we're moving Rep. Vicente Gonzalez (D, TX-34) from Likely Democratic to Leans Democratic.

[Continue reading](#)

Space still available for 2024 AMPAC Candidate Workshop – register by March 1

Reminder that there are still spaces available for the 2024 AMPAC Candidate Workshop which will be held in-person, March 22-24 at the AMA offices in Washington, DC.

The [deadline to register is March 1](#) (or sooner if the event reaches maximum capacity).

Ever wonder how Doctors get elected to Congress or your state legislature? Considering a run for office for yourself? The AMPAC Candidate Workshop will teach you how to run a winning political campaign, just like we taught many of your AMA colleagues over the years. The Candidate Workshop is designed to help you make the leap from the exam room to the campaign trail and give you the skills and strategic approach you will need to make a run for public office.

At the Candidate Workshop, Republican and Democratic political veterans work together to give you expert advice about being a successful candidate and how to run a winning campaign. You will learn: the importance of a disciplined campaign plan and message; the secrets of effective fundraising; what kinds of advertising may be right for your campaign; how to work with the media; as well as how to build your campaign team and a successful grassroots organization.

Attendees include physicians, spouses of physicians, residents and medical students and state medical society staff interested in becoming more involved in politics.

Please note the following:

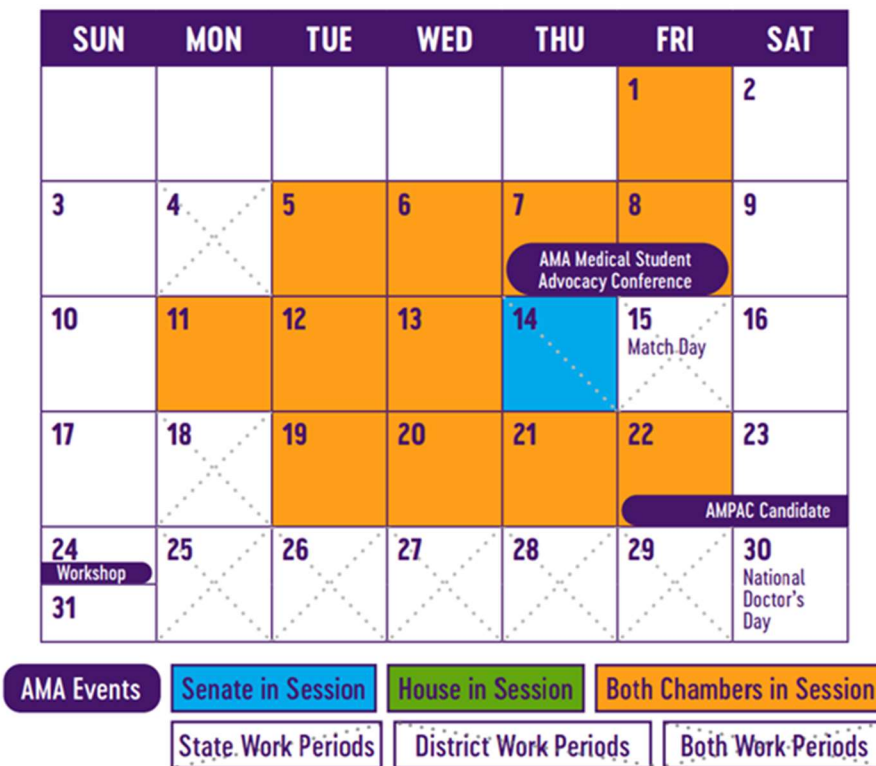
1. The Candidate Workshop is open to AMA physician members, member spouses, residents, medical students and state medical society staff.

2. Registration fee is \$250 for AMA Members/spouses and \$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.
3. 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).
4. Participants will be required to bring a laptop or Wi-Fi enabled tablet with them.

[Registration for the 2024 AMPAC Candidate Workshop is now OPEN.](#) Space is limited and the **deadline to register is March 1, 2024.**

For more information please contact: Politicaleducation@ama-assn.org

MARCH



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.



[AMA Advocacy](#)



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