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

- AMA-supported prior authorization bill reintroduced in Congress

- Space still available for 2024 Campaign School – deadline to register is July 1!

- Where to focus your attention this election year

- 2024 Hotline Senate power rankings

AMA-supported prior authorization bill reintroduced in Congress
On June 12, bipartisan lawmakers introduced an updated version of the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act in both the House (H.R. 8702) and Senate (S. 4532). The AMA is proud to support the latest version of this legislation that was introduced, once again, by Senators Roger Marshall, MD (R-KS), Krysten Sinema (I-AZ), John Thune (R-SD), and Sherrod Brown (D-OH), as well as Representatives Mike Kelly (R-PA), Suzan DelBene (D-WA), Ami Bera, MD (D-CA) and Larry Bucshon, MD (R-IN).

Contact your representative and senators today and ask them to support the "Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act of 2024" (S. 4532/H.R. 8702).

In the 117th Congress (2021-2022), the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act garnered more than 378 total bipartisan cosponsors in the House and Senate and also passed the full House of Representatives. In addition, the legislation secured endorsements from more than 500 outside organizations, including the AMA and numerous national and state medical societies.

Unfortunately, the version of this bill that passed the House in the 117th Congress was never considered in the Senate because it produced a score of $16 billion from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), thus necessitating modifications to lessen the bill's fiscal imprint. While electronic prior authorization rules that were finalized by the Biden administration in Jan. 2024 lowered the $16 billion score substantially, the recently introduced bill is amended to ensure it ultimately scores as close to $0 as possible.

More specifically, the legislation requires the Office of National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONCHIT) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to submit a report to Congress on the use of prior authorization in Medicare Advantage and what constitutes "real-time decisions" for "routinely approved services." The legislation also delegates explicit authority to CMS to implement this newly defined real-time prior authorization decision-making process for routinely approved services in Medicare Advantage. Finally, the legislation delegates explicit authority to the secretary of Health and Human Services to enforce the real-time prior authorization processes for routinely approved services and issue tighter timelines for health plans to make utilization management decisions, such as 24 hours for emergent services.

Of note, the legislation is unchanged as it relates to:

- Mandating compliance with uniform electronic prior authorization technical standards

- Barring Medicare Advantage plans from utilizing faxes or proprietary payer portals

- Including robust transparency requirements (e.g., disclosure of policies and evidence utilized in formulating prior authorization, listing of all services subjected to prior authorization, how many services are denied and overturned on appeal, etc.)

- Permitting insurers to create gold-carding programs

The demand for prior authorization reform is growing — particularly as more seniors choose Medicare Advantage for their health insurance needs. For far too long, insurance companies have hidden behind prior authorization requirements to cut costs and boost their bottom line, all at the expense of the patient.

The time to act is NOW - contact your Representative and Senators and ask them to cosponsor the Improving Seniors' Timely Access to Care Act of 2024 today!

Space still available for 2024 Campaign School – deadline to register is July 1!

AMPAC is excited to announce that the 2024 Campaign School is returning in-person **July 25–28** at the AMA offices in Washington, DC!

Spaces are still available but hurry – the deadline to register is July 1!

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 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 may 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:

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

- Registration fee is $350 for AMA members and member spouses/$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 (AMPAC staff will provide you with a list of nearby hotels within walking distance of the AMA offices).

- Participants will be required to bring a laptop or Wi-Fi enabled tablet with them.

Registration for the 2024 Campaign School is now OPEN. Space is limited and the deadline to register is **July 1** (or sooner if maximum capacity is reached).

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

Where to focus your attention this election year
By Charlie Cook of the National Journal

In just 20 weeks (141 days), a deeply conflicted American electorate will vote, most of them for either President Biden, who's bearing the blame for the high cost of living, or for former President Trump, whose behavior and character many question.

In recent weeks, Trump's always unconventional behavior has become even more erratic—just as the most recent University of Michigan Index of Consumer Sentiment, released last week, shows a growing pessimism about the economy.

In a country as evenly divided as ours, small numbers of votes in a small number of states have enormous consequences. That is one reason that looking at national polls at this stage, while informative about broad trends, are of little use in ascertaining what is likely to happen in the presidential race.

Similarly, only nine of 34 Senate races leave us any real doubt about the outcome, and just 11 governorships are up for election this year.

So where to best allocate our attention this fall?

There are nine states with contests of particular national import in November:

Presidential and Senate battlegrounds: Arizona, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin are each important swing states in the presidential race but also host critical Senate matchups.

In terms of just the presidential race, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin seem to be the most important; indeed it is hard to see a path for Biden's reelection without winning those three states. If he does so, he would need just one more Electoral College vote to hit the 270 needed for a majority, most plausibly in the 2nd Congressional District of Nebraska (Nebraska and Maine are the only two states that allocate electors at the district level).

The Tar Heel two-fer: North Carolina is a potential presidential swing state, and it also features arguably the most important gubernatorial contest of this cycle, as controversial Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson (R) takes on state Attorney General Josh Stein (D). (Though they fall out of our top nine, both New Hampshire and Washington feature highly competitive, open-seat contests for governor. Also worth noting is that in the 11 governorships up this cycle, only three incumbents are seeking reelection: Greg Gianforte in Montana, Spencer Cox in Utah, and Phil Scott in Vermont.)

A laser focus in the Peach State: Georgia could be a make-or-break state for the presidential race but does not have a Senate or gubernatorial race this year.

Senate-only swing states: It's inevitable that Democrats will lose the West Virginia Senate race this year. Sen. Joe Manchin would have had an exceedingly difficult time winning reelection in this increasingly Republican state. Without him running, it is hopeless for Democrats, effectively taking them from 51 to 50 seats, figuratively speaking, before the balloting even takes place.

The most likely Senate seat to tip the balance is held by Sen. Jon Tester in Montana. After West Virginia, Montana is the most challenging seat for Democrats to hang onto, followed closely by Sen. Sherrod Brown's seat in Ohio. Both incumbents are as strong as Democrats could possibly be in their very red states, but they are still wearing blue jerseys in states that have grown more partial to the color red. Just as even an Olympic Gold Medal swimmer can get pulled under if the undertow is bad enough, anybody else would be sucked under for sure.

Let's look first at Montana: In his 2012 challenge to President Obama, Mitt Romney carried the state by 13 points, 55 to 42 percent. Four years later, Trump prevailed over Hillary Clinton by almost 20 points, 56 to 35 percent. In 2020, Trump bested Biden by 16 points, 57 to 40 percent. To win a fourth term, with between 500,000 and 600,000 votes likely to be cast, Tester will need to convince between 50,000 and 75,000 Trump voters to vote for him in the Senate race. That is a tall order in this era when ticket-splitting is getting increasingly rare. In 2016, no Senate races were won by a candidate of the party losing the presidential race in that state. In 2020, only Sen. Susan Collins in Maine accomplished that feat.

Ohio was a competitive state in the not-too-distant past. In 2004, John Kerry lost to George W. Bush there by just over 2 percentage points, 51 to 49 percent. Obama carried the state by almost 5 points in 2008, 51 to 47 percent, and by almost 3 points in 2012, 51 to 48 percent. But Trump won each of his races in the Buckeye State by 8 points, in 2016 and 2020. By my calculation, with between 5.5 and 5.9 million votes likely to be cast in Ohio, Brown will need to lure between 400,000 and 500,000 Trump voters to flip over and vote Democrat for the Senate.

If one wants to look even deeper into the weeds, the incomparable Lou Jacobson (a former *National Journal* reporter) did an excellent analysis for *U.S. News & World Report* that pinpointed the 15 most important counties in this election out of the 3,143 counties or county equivalents in the U.S. (*U.S. News* previously looked at the key states here.)

2024 Hotline Senate power rankings
By the National Journal

Key Takeaways from the National Journal's research:

Republican path to the Senate: "Republicans have successfully avoided messy primaries in key states, as the National Republican Senatorial Committee and former President Trump have ferried the most electable candidates through primaries while keeping more-conservative challengers on the sidelines."
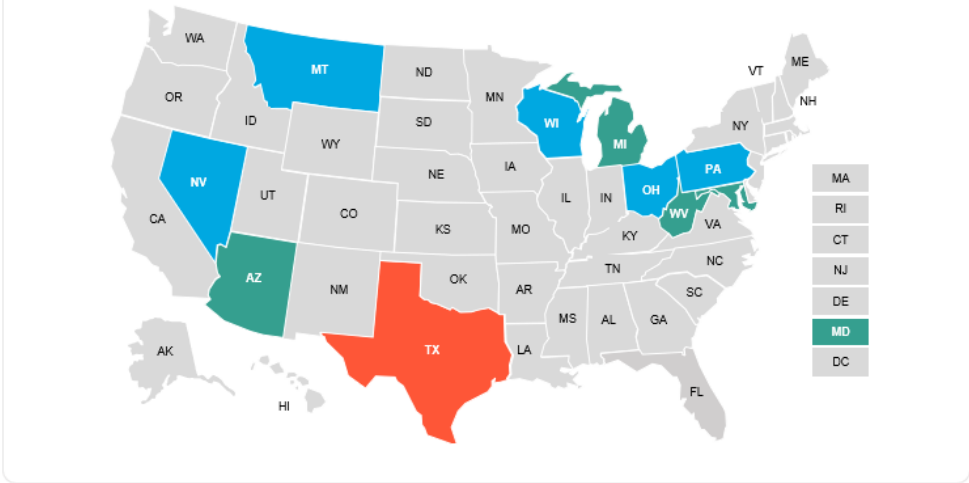
Democrats thin margin for error: "The two lone Democratic pickup opportunities occupied our final two spots in our last iteration of the power rankings, But this time, Democrats only have one pickup opportunity in our top 10. Democrats' best chance to gain a seat is in Texas, where Rep. Colin Allred (D-TX-32) is raising an eye-popping sum of money in his challenge to Sen. Ted Cruz (R)."

Look-ahead: Eight of Hotline's 10 seats most likely to flip are currently held by Democrats "Democrats representing states former President Trump carried twice—West Virginia, Montana, and Ohio—topped the list of most vulnerable members again, followed by the five presidential battleground states—Nevada, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Arizona."

Democrats are playing defense in Hotline's Senate power rankings

Hotline's Senate power rankings
■ Democratic incumbent ■ Republican incumbent ■ Open seat

Hotline's Senate Power Rankings: Top 10 seats most likely to flip (1/2)

Race	Incumbent	2018 Election Result		Cook Rating
WV	*Joe Manchin (D)*	49.6%	46.3%	Solid R
MT	Jon Tester (D)	50.3%	46.8%	Toss up
OH	Sherrod Brown (D)	53.4%	46.6%	Toss up
NV	Jacky Rosen (D)	50.4%	45.4%	Toss up
MI	*Debbie Stabenow (D)*	52.3%	45.8%	Lean D

Incumbent not running for re-election

Hotline's Senate Power Rankings: Top 10 seats most likely to flip (2/2)

Race	Incumbent	2018 Election Result		Cook Rating
PA	Bob Casey (D)	55.7%	42.6%	Lean D
WI	Tammy Baldwin (D)	55.4%	44.6%	Lean D
AZ	*Kyrsten Sinema (I)*	50.0%	47.6%	Toss up
TX	Ted Cruz (R)	50.9%	48.3%	Likely R
MD	*Ben Cardin (D)*	64.9%	30.3%	Likely D

Incumbent not running for re-election

JULY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4 Independence Day	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15 Republican National Convention	16 Republican National Convention	17 Republican National Convention	18 Republican National Convention	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**

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.

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