



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

- Congress needs to get to work on physician payment reform
- Campaign School returns in-person July 25-28 – register now!
- Meetings: in session or during recess: which times are better?
- The six most vulnerable Senators this year are all Democrats

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### **Congress needs to get to work on physician payment reform**

In March, Congress finally passed the delayed appropriations package which included a 1.68% reduction to the 3.37% Medicare physician payment cut that went into effect on January 1.

[While the relief was welcomed, it's not enough!](#)

Tell your members of Congress to get to work on Medicare physician payment reform!

To make matters worse, in addition to the lack of full relief of the 3.37% cut, physicians remain the only providers whose Medicare payments do not automatically receive an annual inflationary update. As a result, Medicare physician payments have lagged 29% behind the rate of inflation growth since 2001.

Multiple pieces of legislation have been introduced to address these issues but so far Congress has refused to act. For example, H.R. 2474, championed by a bi-partisan group of physician members of Congress and supported by over a hundred cosponsors, would reform this flawed system and provide annual inflationary updates, based on the Medicare Economic Index (MEI), for Medicare physician services, similar to updates received by other health care providers.

Further inaction is not an option. Both the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) and the Medicare Trustees issued reports this year noting the growing, cumulative

gap between Medicare payment rates and the costs of running a practice. In fact, the Trustees noted that without Congressional action the “quality of health care received by Medicare beneficiaries would, under current law, fall over time compared to that received by those with private health insurance. Please contact your members of Congress today and urge them to support America's physicians and their Medicare patients by ending the cycle of annual cuts and passing H.R. 2474 to ensure physicians are provided an annual inflationary update so they can continue to provide high quality care to their patients!

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### **Campaign School returns in-person July 25-28 – register now!**

AMPAC is excited to announce that the [2024 Campaign School](#) will be returning in-person July 25–28 at the AMA offices in Washington, DC!

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](mailto:politicaleducation@ama-assn.org)

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### **Meetings: in session or during recess: which times are better?**

Many groups are dismayed after months of planning a fly-in to learn that the date, which has been in the works for years, falls during a congressional recess. The result: no meetings with Members of Congress. However, there is a silver lining in this cloud. The Congressional Management Foundation wanted to know whether congressional staff prefer to meet with constituents when Congress is in session or in recess. We 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 when they travel 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. (Said another way, congressional staff would much rather have a substantive policy conversation with a knowledgeable constituent than answer reams of identical form emails.)

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

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## **The six most vulnerable senators this year are all Democrats**

By [Daniela Altimari](#) and [Mary Ellen McIntire](#)

The ranks of vulnerable senators keep thinning, but that's not helping Democrats' chances of holding on to control of the chamber.

Roll Call typically compiles a list of the 10 most endangered incumbents, but since our initial look at the 2024 landscape, three of those senators – Democrat Joe Manchin III of West Virginia, independent Kyrsten Sinema of Arizona and Republican Mitt Romney of Utah – have taken themselves out of contention by announcing their retirements.

As a result, with Election Day less than six months away, just eight senators are really vulnerable. And Democrats hold the top six spots.

Republicans need a net gain of two seats to take the majority next year. And with Manchin's departure, the GOP is all but guaranteed to pick up the seat in deep red West Virginia.

Based on conversations with campaign insiders and independent election analysts, Sen. Bob Menendez, whose trial on federal bribery and extortion charges is due to start next week, was the consensus pick for most vulnerable.

While the New Jersey Democrat has vigorously denied the allegations, he is not running in the state's Democratic Senate primary next month, but left the door ajar for a potential run as an independent in November.

"I am hopeful that my exoneration will take place this summer," Menendez said in a March video message.

New Jersey is a blue state and Democrats will likely keep the seat if Menendez does not run.

So the GOP's top targets are two Democrats from states where then-President Donald Trump easily beat Joe Biden in 2020: Montana's Jon Tester and Ohio's Sherrod Brown.

Republicans will aim to tie the veteran senators to Biden, who remains unpopular in both

states. Democrats contend that Tester and Brown have strong blue-collar appeal, however, that will help them withstand national headwinds.

Because this list only looks at vulnerable incumbents, it does not include competitive open seats that also will help determine control of the Senate.

Perhaps the biggest battleground race is in Arizona, where the GOP's hopes rest with former television news anchor and failed 2022 gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake while Democrats have coalesced around Rep. Ruben Gallego. Inside Elections with Nathan L. Gonzales rates the race a Toss-Up.

In Michigan, Democratic Rep. Elissa Slotkin and Republican former Rep. Mike Rogers are the top contenders for the seat being vacated by Sen. Debbie Stabenow, though both face primaries. Inside Elections rates the race Tilt Democratic.

And in dependably Democratic Maryland, the Republicans have been buoyed by the entrance of the state's popular former GOP governor, Larry Hogan, into the race to succeed retiring Democratic Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin. On the Democratic side, Rep. David Trone, the wealthy founder of a wine and spirits retail chain, and Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks are battling it out ahead of an increasingly tense May 14 primary.

Here's a rundown of the most vulnerable at this point in the race:

### **1. Bob Menendez, D-NJ**

*Menendez's 2018 margin: +11*

*Biden's 2020 margin: +16*

Menendez stays in the top spot, despite his decision not to run in the Democratic primary next month. To run as an independent, Menendez would need to submit 800 signatures by June 4. If he does so, Menendez would likely face Rep. Andy Kim, the front-runner in the Democratic primary who has perhaps helped to reshape the state's politics in bringing a successful lawsuit to challenge a primary ballot format that gave party machines heavy influence in primaries. Menendez saw his favorability plummet after the charges against him were first announced last year, and if he is exonerated at trial, he'll have to work to raise his ratings ahead of November.

### **2. Jon Tester, D-MT**

*Tester's 2018 margin: +4*

*Biden's 2020 margin: -16*

Tester is a third-generation Montana farmer counting on his personal brand to provide an edge in a state that has grown increasingly unwelcoming to Democrats. He'll face former

Navy SEAL and businessman Tim Sheehy, who picked up Trump's endorsement and received a boost in February when his top GOP rival, Rep. Matt Rosendale, dropped his bid. Republicans have sought to portray Tester as a D.C.-insider and a favorite of lobbyists while Democrats say Sheehy is an untested rich guy whose life story will now be under a microscope. At the end of the first quarter, Tester had about \$12 million in his campaign account, compared with \$1.9 million for Sheehy.

### **3. Sherrod Brown, D-OH**

*Brown's 2018 margin: +7*

*Biden's 2020 margin: -8*

Even Republicans acknowledge that Brown is a tough competitor who's managed to hold on to the seat despite Ohio's move away from the Democratic Party. With almost \$16 million on hand, Brown, the chairman of the powerful Senate Banking Committee, has the largest war chest of any Senate candidate running in a Toss-up district this year. His Republican opponent, Trump-backed businessman Bernie Moreno, had about \$1.8 million on hand. Moreno won a bruising primary against two other Republicans and has endured criticism for his business dealings while Republicans say Brown walks in lockstep with Biden.

### **4. Jacky Rosen, D-NV**

*Rosen's 2018 margin: +5*

*Biden's 2020 margin: +2*

Rosen remains among the most vulnerable ahead of Nevada's June 11 primary, when she will learn whether the candidate backed by the National Republican Senatorial Committee, Sam Brown, is in fact her challenger. Brown released polling last month showing him with a commanding lead in the primary, but Trump has not made an endorsement. The other notable names on the GOP ballot are Jeff Gunter, who was Trump's ambassador to Iceland, and recurring candidate Jim Marchant. Rosen had \$13.2 million in cash on hand at the end of the first quarter, with Brown having \$2.3 million. Gunter, who raised \$600,000 and put in another \$2.7 million of his own, had \$2.6 million.

### **5. Bob Casey, D-PA**

*Casey's 2018 margin: +13*

*Biden's 2020 margin: +1*

The three-term Democrat is locked in a tough reelection battle against Dave McCormick, a former hedge fund CEO who officially became the Republican nominee last month. Casey had \$11.9 million on hand on April 3, while McCormick had \$6.4 million, but McCormick could add to the \$2 million he's already contributed to the campaign. A super PAC supporting McCormick, Keystone Renewal PAC, had raised \$21 million as of April 3. Both

candidates are already up on air. Democrats have questioned McCormick's business dealings and his residency, while Republicans have sought to tie Casey to Biden, a Pennsylvania native whose own reelection could hinge partly on his results here.

#### **6. Tammy Baldwin, D-WI**

*Baldwin's 2018 margin: +11*

*Biden's 2020 margin: +0.6*

Baldwin spent last year preparing for the election without an official opponent, but that changed in February when businessman Eric Hovde entered the race. He's put \$8 million into his campaign and he's been spending it, according to FEC reports. Hovde had \$5.3 million on hand at the end of March compared to Baldwin's \$10.3 million. Both parties expect this race to be much closer than Baldwin's 11-point win in 2018, especially with the competitive presidential race, but Baldwin begins with higher name ID than Hovde, who lost a 2012 Republican primary for Senate. Still, an April Marquette Law School poll found the two 50-50 among likely voters.

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# JUNE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Meeting of the AMA House of Delegates						
16	17	18	19 Juneteenth	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

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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