



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

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- In-district meetings are the best way to educate freshman offices about policy priorities

Stop the Medicare payment cut and pass a permanent fix, House members urge leaders

By [Joyce Frieden](#), Washington Editor, [MedPage Today](#)

A majority of House members urged House leaders to not only reverse a proposed 2.8% cut in the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS), but also to pass a law that would avoid such cuts in the future.

"Increased instability in the healthcare sector due to looming cost hikes impacts the ability of physicians and clinicians to provide the highest quality of care and threatens patient access to affordable healthcare," read a bipartisan letter signed by 233 House members and spearheaded by Reps. Mariannette Miller-Meeks, MD (R-Iowa) and Jimmy Panetta (D-Calif.). "In lieu of these harmful cuts, which, absent federal legislation, will take effect on January 1, 2025, Congress must pass a bill providing physicians and other clinicians with a payment update that takes into account the cost of actually delivering care to patients." The letter, which was dated October 11, was sent to House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.).

The letter noted that the proposed cuts mark the fifth consecutive year that CMS has proposed a cut to the fee schedule. "While Congress has stepped in the past 4 years to pass legislation to mitigate portions of these cuts, the fact remains that the MPFS is inherently broken," the members wrote. "The continued cuts have forced medical groups and

integrated systems of care to make difficult choices, such as imposing hiring freezes, delaying system improvements, delaying implementation of care model changes including transitions to value-based care systems, and possibly eliminating services."

Medicare payments have fallen by 29% over the last 2 decades when adjusting for the costs of running a practice, the authors pointed out. "In addition, compliance with the Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) is expensive and a flawed, insufficient way to measure quality and costs of care that has resulted in steep and unfair penalties."

In addition to the inflationary increase, "we also request that you enact targeted reforms to statutory MPFS budget neutrality requirements, raise the current MPFS budget neutrality threshold to be reflective of 2024 dollars... mandate CMS review key elements of practice expense costs concurrently and no less often than every 5 years, and limit changes to the MPFS conversion factor to no more than 2.5 percent in a given year," the letter said. "We stand ready to work with you to pass crucial bipartisan legislative initiatives before the conclusion of the 118th Congress."

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Hotlines fall House power rankings – top 5

By [James A. Downs](#) and [Kirk A. Bado](#) of the [National Journal](#)

Summer volatility at the top of the ticket has not necessarily affected the race for the House. All cycle, Democratic and Republican camps have expected yet another tooth-and-nail election, and polling results—what little there are of House campaigns—have withstood the chaos at the presidential level.

But following the post-Labor Day blitz, there are some significant changes from our last iteration, which published in April. Eight races moved in Democrats' direction and seven moved in Republicans' favor.

Operatives predict the era of double-digit majorities is over—for now, at least—and are preparing for a drawn-out election process: The states most pivotal to the control of the gavel—New York and California—have arduous vote-counting processes. It's more than likely no majority will be decided on Nov. 5.

As was true in the last edition, seats affected by redistricting do not appear on this list. That includes three near-automatic Republican wins in North Carolina. Elsewhere in the South,

Louisiana and Alabama saw court challenges break in favor of Democrats. While a lower court initially overturned the Democratic-leaning map in the Pelican State, the Supreme Court stayed the ruling, and Louisiana state Sen. Cleo Fields is all but likely to return to Congress, as Republican Rep. Garret Graves announced he would not seek reelection this year.

In Alabama, Democrats and Republicans alike have monitored the newly drawn 2nd District, but polling has shown former Justice Department official Shomari Figures in a strong position to send a second Alabama Democrat to Congress in this Black-majority seat.

National Democrats and Republicans contend that each race exists within its own ecosystem and may be immune to national headwinds. While that isn't always true, these rankings should not be read as a prediction of which party may control Congress, come January. Rather, each race should be interpreted on its own merits and independent of the greater battlefield.

Rankings were determined based on conversations with operatives, strategists, campaigns, and pollsters in both parties.

1. New York's 22nd: Rep. Brandon Williams (R)

The top five in our list are unchanged, which means Williams remains the most vulnerable member in the country. The Democratic primary was unsettled back in April, but state Sen. John Mannion prevailed, as many party insiders expected. Private Democratic polling has shown Mannion in good shape, and redistricting in February made the Syracuse-area seat more favorable to Democrats. Williams does have one thing in his favor: New York Republicans have had success running against Albany—including Gov. Kathy Hochul—in recent years, but it's unlikely to be enough to overcome the partisanship of the district.

2. New York's 4th: Rep. Anthony D'Esposito (R)

D'Esposito was in danger before *The New York Times* reported this week that he allegedly put his fiancée's daughter and his alleged mistress on his office payroll. The former cop has denied the allegations, but a cloud of controversy hangs over the freshman lawmaker. His Democratic opponent, Laura Gillen, has outraised him every quarter and has run a very competent campaign. President Biden carried this seat by nearly 15 points four years ago, and that alone might be too much for D'Esposito to overcome.

3. California's 13th: Rep. John Duarte (R)

Republicans think Vice President Kamala Harris will bleed support in the Central Valley—which may be true—but this was a double-digit Biden seat in 2020 and one of the closest House races in the country in 2022, decided by fewer than 600 votes. Democrat Adam Gray, the 2022 nominee, is flush with cash. He raised more than double Duarte's haul in the last

filing period. Operatives say both candidates are relatively unknown and undefined, which may ultimately be Duarte's biggest crutch in a presidential year.

4. Washington's 3rd: Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez (D)

Gluesenkamp Perez is once again *Hotline's* most vulnerable Democrat. Despite 2022 nominee Joe Kent emerging as her GOP opponent once again, she still faces an uphill battle in a seat former President Trump carried by 4 points. Kent's far-right views alienated voters two years ago, but Gluesenkamp Perez only squeaked past him by less than a point. With Trump at the top of the ticket, the former president could drag Kent kicking and screaming across the line.

5. California's 27th: Rep. Mike Garcia (R)

Garcia has benefited from a less-than-stellar Democratic challenger in each of his first three elections. But he doesn't have that luxury this year as he faces former Virgin Galactic CEO George Whitesides, a candidate universally acknowledged by strategists in both parties as a top recruit this cycle. This is also one of the races in a safe blue state that is helped by having Harris at the top of the ticket. Biden carried the district by 12 points in 2020, and Democratic strategists were worried that turnout would be depressed if the president remained on the ticket after that disastrous debate performance. The renewed enthusiasm around Harris eases those concerns and raises their hopes that Democrats can flip this seat back.

The Senate: Republicans measure majority in Midwest as Democrats seek targets

By [Kyle Kondik](#) and [J. Miles Coleman](#) of [Sabato's Crystal Ball](#)

As we survey the Senate with less than three weeks to go until the election, Republicans clearly remain on course to win at least 51 Senate seats in 2024, which would give them a Senate majority regardless of what happens in the presidential race. The bigger question down the stretch is not whether Republicans will win the majority but rather how big of a majority they can get—an important factor that will have both profound implications for governance in 2025 and shape future battles for the majority. In the closing weeks, the focus of the Senate campaign has landed where competitive American political battles often do: the Midwest/Industrial North, specifically Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, all races that Democrats are defending.

To review, the basic path to a Republican majority of 51 seats involves the GOP holding all of their current seats, which we continue to favor them to do, while flipping the open seat in West Virginia and defeating Sen. Jon Tester (D-MT). Since we moved the Montana race to Leans Republican in early September, there's been little indication that Tester has pulled out

of his polling deficit, and he trails businessman Tim Sheehy (R) by roughly half a dozen points in public numbers. While Republicans have had to address a few weaknesses in seats they currently hold, most notably involving Sen. Deb Fischer's (R-NE) troubles against independent labor leader Dan Osborn in Nebraska and Sen. Ted Cruz's (R-TX) small polling leads against Rep. Colin Allred (D, TX-32) in Texas, we continue to give the Republicans clear edges in these races (more on them in the second half of this article).

Remember that Democrats face a hellacious defensive assignment on this map. Including the various independents who caucus with them, Democrats are defending 23 of the 34 seats on this year's map. That includes defending seven Senate seats in states that voted for Donald Trump at least once for president (Montana, Ohio, and West Virginia backed him twice, and Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin backed him once). It's not out of the question that all seven could vote for Trump again in 2024—as could an eighth state Democrats are defending, Nevada, which Trump lost in his first two elections—giving the Democrats a tremendous amount of exposure. The Republicans are not defending any states that voted Democratic for president in either 2016 or 2020, and none of these states seem likely to do so in 2024. (Update: This paragraph has been corrected to reflect that Nevada did not vote for Trump in either 2016 or 2020.)

As we reach the final stretch of this campaign, one thing you could say for Democrats is that it's not as bad for them as it could be.

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In-district meetings are the best way to educate freshman offices about policy priorities

With the upcoming elections only a few weeks away, our partners at The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) wanted to identify the most effective tactics that advocacy groups should use to educate new Members of Congress about the group's policy priorities at the start of the new Congress. To find out, they surveyed senior staff working for current House freshmen offices. CMF asked staff to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with several statements, including the following:

"Advocacy groups should have representatives from our district/state meet new Members of Congress to educate new Members about their groups' policy priorities when the Member is home in the district/state."

We learned: A clear majority (71%) of staff agree that the most effective way for groups to inform them about their policy priorities is through in-district meetings with groups'

representatives. Associations, nonprofits, and companies should invest a great deal of resources to engage with and educate new Members of Congress as soon as possible. The most effective way for advocacy organizations to do that is to have their supporters meet their new Members while they are home in their districts and states.

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

NOVEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1 Open Enrollment Begins	2
3	4	5 U.S. Election Day	6	7	8	9
10	11 Veterans Day	12	13	14	15	16
Meeting of the AMA House of Delegates						
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28 Thanksgiving Day	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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