GRASSROOTS UPDATE for Very Influential Physicians

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

- News and views from the recent AMA Annual Meeting
- Latest news on House and Senate efforts to pass opioid abuse legislation
- How Congress responds to constituent correspondence
- Newly released House power rankings by the National Journal

News and views from the 2018 AMA Annual Meeting
The 2018 AMA Annual Meeting was full of discussion on the big topics facing the medical community and the country. U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams, MD, a special guest at the meeting, gave a speech encouraging AMA members to lead the nation in a civil discussion on the pressing issues of our day, such as gun violence, substance-use disorder and health equity. Dr. Adams, an AMA delegate, encouraged physicians to look "upstream for root causes and preventative solutions" to substance-use disorders and other health issues. Noting that he joined the AMA 20 years ago, he said that the experience "lit a fire," helping him to develop into a physician leader.

In that spirit, physicians at the meeting backed common-sense gun safety measures, sought to boost affordability and competition in ACA marketplaces, adopted policy that puts organizational muster behind achieving health equity in the U.S. health system, committed to integrating precision medicine into alternative payment models, and declared that drug shortages are a matter of national security.

Visit the Advocating for Patients and Physicians topic page for more coverage from the Annual Meeting.

House, Senate continue consideration of opioid abuse legislation
One June 22, 2018, the House of Representatives concluded two weeks of consideration of legislation related to the opioid abuse epidemic, culminating in the passage of H.R. 6, a compilation of more than 70 individual opioid proposals. For the time being, this concludes a renewed effort by multiple House Committees to develop additional policies to address the opioid epidemic.

In the Senate, the Committee on Finance approved the Helping to End Addiction and Lessen (HEAL) Substance Use Disorders Act of 2018 by a vote of 27-0. The bill constitutes a collection of over 20 individual bills to address opioid abuse disorder which were introduced by members of the committee on a bipartisan

basis. The AMA will continue to seek improvements to this bill prior to Senate floor consideration.

It is expected that the Senate Finance Committee bill will be merged into a package of opioid bills that includes bills previously adopted by the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, the Judiciary Committee, and the Commerce Committee, and debated by the full Senate at a time to be determined. The AMA will remain engaged with members and stakeholders as this issue is debated in the Senate, and later reconciled between the two chambers.

Email: How Congress responds to constituent correspondence
Our partners at the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) are often asked how Congress processes and responds to correspondence from constituents. CMF works with congressional offices to help them improve their mail operations.

They have observed that procedures for processing and responding to constituent correspondence have not changed for decades. When congressional offices receive mail it is categorized and sorted by the office, a response is drafted, then reviewed and approved, and finally the approved response is sent to the constituent. What HAS changed is that the volume of mail has significantly increased. Although advancement in technology has provided more efficiencies, congressional offices still spend more manpower on processing constituent mail – most of it form emails (one of the least influential advocacy strategies).

Advocates who rely on form email campaigns should encourage their supporters to engage in more effective advocacy strategies, such as personalizing messages or conducting in-person meetings.

House power rankings
By Ally Mutnickand @ALLYMUTNICK and Kyle Trygstad @KYLETRYGSTAD of the National Journal

With California in the rear-view mirror, Democrats have successfully navigated their biggest headache of the primary season and, 20 weeks out from Election Day, remain in a commanding position to potentially erase the Republican House majority.

The political environment still bends in the party's favor, with President Trump's approval ratings mired in the low 40s, generic-ballot polling continuing to lean toward Democrats, and midterm election results and surveys so far indicating bubbling Democratic enthusiasm. But there are enough variables at play, including an improving economy, that could assist Republican efforts to retain control of the chamber. Open and redistricted seats, which are the bedrock of the Democrats' path to netting 23 districts, still top our list of the most likely to flip. The rankings are based on a Hotline analysis of the most-competitive races and interviews with top party strategists who have direct, district-by-district knowledge of polling,

fundraising, and the candidates.

This list runs only 20 deep. Several seats that were in the conversation but didn't crack the top tier include Illinois's 6th District in suburban Chicago, Trump's worst-performing GOP-held district in the state and where Rep. Peter Roskam is running for a seventh term. Two more redrawn seats in Pennsylvania are worth watching, as Republican Rep. Keith Rothfus faces newly elected Democratic Rep. Conor Lamb, and Democratic Rep. Matt Cartwright is up against a formidable challenger.

Here are the top 10:

1. Pennsylvania's 5th District: Open (R)
The court-ordered redistricting in February and sexual-harassment allegations that led to the late retirement of Republican Rep. Pat Meehan combined to give Democrats their best pickup opportunity of the cycle. Former school-board member Mary Gay Scanlon is the likely new member of Congress for this district, which would have backed Hillary Clinton by nearly 30 points in 2016 under the new lines.

2. Pennsylvania's 6th District: Open (R)
Republican Rep. Ryan Costello's unexpected retirement after the filing deadline likely ended any prayer his party had of holding this suburban Philadelphia seat, which had already become substantially more favorable to Democrats after redistricting. The only other Republican to file for the seat is Greg McCauley, a tax attorney who ended April with $54,000 in the bank. Meanwhile, Democratic nominee Chrissy Houlahan was sitting on $1.6 million.

3. Florida's 27th District: Open (R)
There are nearly twice as many Republicans vying for the open seat of retiring Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen after several Democrats dropped out of the race following Donna Shalala's entrance in March and the rollout of the state's resign-to-run law. But a district that Clinton carried by 20 points is Democrats' to lose this cycle. The more interesting contest is the Aug. 28 primary, where state Rep. David Richardson attempts to paint Shalala as insufficiently progressive and a relic of the party's past, while the former Clinton Cabinet official's name ID and fundraising chops make her the favorite.

4. New Jersey's 2nd District: Open (R)
Even National Republican Congressional Committee Chairman Steve Stivers admitted that this district was a recruitment flop for his party. He walked back those comments after meeting with GOP candidate Hirsh Singh—but that's not who emerged from the June primary. Seth Grossman, a former Atlantic County freeholder who called diversity "a bunch of crap" and raised just $12,000 by mid-May, will face state Sen. Jeff Van Drew, a conservative Democrat and a five-star recruit.

5. New Jersey's 11th District: Open (R)

Democratic nominee Mikie Sherrill, a political neophyte, had the kind of first-quarter fundraising that would make veteran incumbents jealous, and has hauled $2.9 million overall since entering the race a year ago. By the middle of last month, Sherrill had eight times more cash on hand than her Republican rival, state Assemblyman Jay Webber. This northern New Jersey district—of which Webber represents a portion—narrowly backed Trump in 2016, but the retirement of Appropriations Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen was a huge blow to the GOP.

6. Arizona's 2nd District: Open (R)
Former Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick continues to be favored to return to Congress in a new district. A court challenge of her residency by supporters of her Aug. 28 Democratic primary opponent, 2016 nominee Matt Heinz, could further highlight her district jump, and Republicans are likely to nominate a credible candidate in Lea Márquez Peterson, the president of the Tucson Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. But Kirkpatrick had raised and spent twice as much as both of them by April, and she has enduring name ID from running ads in the Tucson media market while representing a neighboring district, and her 2016 challenge to Sen. John McCain.

7. California's 49th District: Open (R)
After a top-two June 5 primary scare, the race is between Democratic environmental attorney Mike Levin and Board of Equalization member Diane Harkey, a former state assemblywoman and Dana Point mayor whom Rep. Darrell Issa endorsed shortly after announcing his retirement. In 2016, the district flipped from Mitt Romney to Clinton and hosted the closest House race in the country. Now, the coastal district that stretches from southern Orange County deep into San Diego is the Democrats' best chance to add a seat in the land of opportunity that is California.

8. Minnesota's 8th District: Open (D)
Pete Stauber, a retired police lieutenant and former professional hockey player, is a bright spot for Republicans in what's been an otherwise tough recruitment year. His biography and the 16-point win Trump scored in the Iron Range district combined to make this seat the GOP's top pickup opportunity in the country. Rep. Rick Nolan's late retirement scrambled the Democratic field—no candidate garnered enough to secure the Democratic-Farmer-Labor endorsement at the April convention—meaning that the battle will continue until the Aug. 14 primary. Though Democrats did catch a break when Leah Phifer, a favorite among some progressives, ended her bid. And Nolan's last-minute entrance into the lieutenant governor's race could boost turnout.

9. Virginia's 10th District: Rep. Barbara Comstock (R)
Comstock is one of the GOP's strongest incumbents, but strategists in both parties agree that the political headwinds might be too much for her to overcome in a district that Clinton and Gov. Ralph Northam carried handily. From a political-geography standpoint, Democrats nominated their best possible candidate. State Sen. Jennifer Wexton has deep roots in Loudoun County, home to 45 percent of

the district's population, and will be hard to taint as a carpetbagger. Meanwhile, Comstock took just 61 percent of the vote in her primary, raising red flags about the strength of support from her base.

10. Minnesota's 2nd District: Rep. Jason Lewis (R)
Strategists from both parties agree that Lewis is inching toward the top of the most-vulnerable-incumbents list. He shocked political handicappers when he won the open suburban Minneapolis seat in 2016, thanks in no small part to Trump's 1-point victory there and a third-party candidate that siphoned off 8 percent of the vote. Two years later, Lewis and 2016 Democratic nominee Angie Craig have the ballot to themselves and Democratic polling shows the president is underwater in the district by double digits.