



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

- House and Senate committees advance legislation to address opioid-use disorder
- In session or during recess: which times are better for scheduling meetings?
- Why the Senate election map is so bad for Democrats
- Fixing Prior Authorization remains a top priority

House and Senate committees advance legislation to address opioid-use disorder

The Senate Health Education Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittees marked up legislation on April 25 and 26, respectively, on addressing the opioid crisis.

The HELP Committee passed S. 2680, the "Opioid Crisis Response Act of 2018," by a vote of 23-0. The AMA offered its support for the [measure](#), which includes:

- Improvements to state grant programs for prevention, response and treatment of opioids.
- A study to examine and report on the impact of federal and state laws regulating the length, quantity, or dosage of opioid prescriptions
- Support for states to improve their PDMPs and implement other evidence-based prevention strategies, including the reauthorization of the National All Schedules Prescription Electronic Reporting Reauthorization Act.

HELP Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander, R, Tenn., indicated that he would like to see the full Senate consider S. 2680 this summer.

The Energy and Commerce Health Subcommittee approved 57 bills—35 passed by voice vote, 13 passed en bloc and nine passed by individual roll call votes. These bills addressed a wide range of issues, including Medicare and Medicaid policies and programs regulated by the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Subcommittee Chairman Michael Burgess, MD, R, Texas, noted that the committee will continue to work with members, stakeholders and the administration to improve those bills that will be considered by the full committee later this month.

The AMA will continue to work with the HELP and the Energy and Commerce committees, as well as other committees, to ensure sound policies to address the opioid

epidemic are included in the final package.

Meetings: In session or during recess: Which times are better?

Our partners at The Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) wanted to know whether congressional staff prefer to meet with constituents when Congress is in session or in recess. To find out they 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)?"

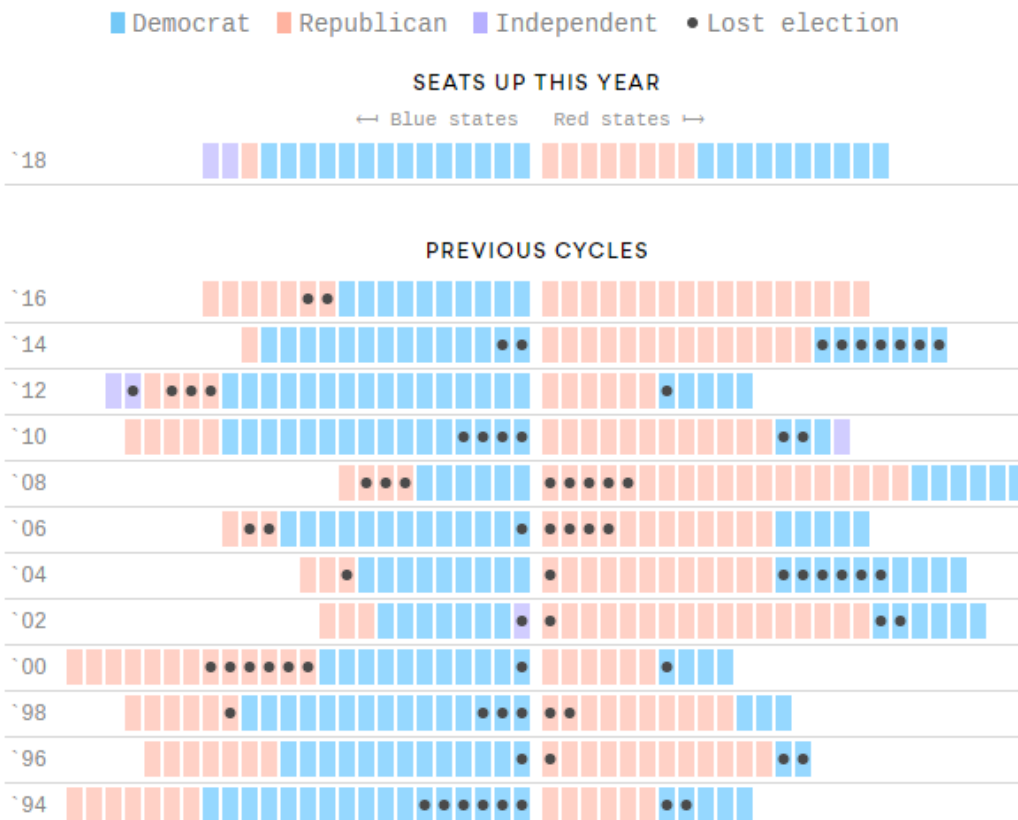
What they learned is that Congressional staff prefer to meet with constituents when Congress is not in session. While less than one-third (29%) said that they prefer to meet with constituents when Congress is in session, more than two-thirds (71%) said they prefer to meet when Congress is not in session.

Many 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.

Why the Senate election map is so bad for the Democrats

Senators up for re-election by previous presidential election result



Data: Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Elections, Daily Kos Elections; Chart and Story: Chris Canipe/Axios

The Democrats have a good shot at winning a majority in the House this November, and now [there's even talk](#) of the Senate being in play — but this chart shows why that's such a long shot. It would take a tsunami, not a wave. Of the 35 seats up in 2018, 26 are held by Democrats or independents who caucus with the Democrats. And 10 of them are up for re-election in states won by President Trump in 2016, while Republicans only have to defend one seat in a state won by Hillary Clinton.

How to read this chart: Each rectangle is a senator up for election in a given year. Seats on the left side of the chart are seats in states carried by a Democrat in the previous presidential election. Seats on the right side were last won by a Republican. The dots inside the rectangles indicate seats that changed parties in the election.

What to look for in the chart:

- 2014: Republicans flipped every Democratic seat in a red state and picked up two more seats in states won by Barack Obama in 2012.
- 2008: Democrats picked up eight seats — the largest single-year gain for Democrats since 1986.

- 2004: The last time Democrats defended 10 seats in red states — they lost six of them.
- 2000: The GOP held 13 seats in blue states and wound up losing six.

Fixing prior authorization remains a top priority for the AMA

In the run up to next month's AMA House of Delegates the issue of Prior Authorization remains a top priority. According to a [recent AMA survey](#) more than nine in 10 physicians say that prior authorizations programs have a negative impact on patient clinical outcomes. The survey results further bolster a growing recognition across the entire health sector that prior authorization programs must be reformed.

As mentioned previously in this newsletter the AMA has recently launched a new prior authorization [interactive experience](#) for physician advocates as part of the Physicians Grassroots Network. We encourage you to visit the site and learn more about the issue and see what the AMA is doing to fix it. While you're there please take time to share your story on how PA is affecting your ability to practice medicine.

You can also learn about the steps the AMA is taking to combat the overused and time-consuming process of prior authorization by watching a [short video](#). "Fixing Prior Authorization" is also the focus of the [Advocating for Patients and Physicians](#) topic page.

Lastly, if you plan on attending the AMA Annual Meeting next month in Chicago, please swing by our grassroots advocacy booth to learn more!



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