



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

- Is the Senate in play? National Journal says, don't bet on it.
- Which Congressional staffers should advocates connect with?
- CMF Webinar: Behind the scenes of Congressional decision making
- State-by-state party political affiliation
- Last call for 2018 Campaign School registrations – deadline September 21

Is the Senate in Play? Don't Bet on It.

By [Josh Kraushaar @HOTLINEJOSH](#)

Democrats would need to sweep the close Senate races in Trump country to win back a majority. That would require an epic Republican collapse this November.

After NBC News commissioned a series of three red-state Senate surveys showing Democratic candidates tied or ahead, it [prompted a wave of rethinking](#) about whether Democrats could actually win back the upper chamber. That has always been an outside possibility, but to this analyst, the odds aren't any better now than they were several months ago. Republicans have made progress in several key states (North Dakota, Missouri, Arizona) even as they've suffered setbacks in others (West Virginia, Indiana, Montana).

All told, it's looking most likely that the Senate will remain closely divided, with Republicans holding their narrow advantage past 2018. Republicans will blow a historic chance at picking up many seats, given the uniquely favorable Senate map, while Democrats are still struggling to ensure that all their vulnerable red-state senators return to Congress despite a favorable national environment.

Here's the Senate math: If Republicans can defeat two of the six vulnerable Democratic senators up for reelection, they've locked down their majority for another cycle. Strategists from both parties agree that Republicans have pulled ahead in North Dakota, where Sen. Heidi Heitkamp is facing a spirited challenge from Rep. Kevin Cramer. Public polls show Missouri's and Florida's contests as pure toss-ups, while Indiana remains highly competitive. Democrats have the momentum in West Virginia and Montana, but the conservative nature of those electorates give Republicans an outside chance.

If North Dakota already leans in their direction, Republicans would need just one more of these red-state races to clinch a majority—regardless of what happens with the several

seats they have to defend. Even if Republicans fall short, Democrats would still need to win a GOP-held seat on deeply conservative turf, either in Tennessee or in Texas.

There are two competing theories of the political landscape. One, [laid out by my colleague Charlie Cook](#), is that the House and Senate races are operating in two entirely different universes. Most of the House battlegrounds are taking place in affluent suburbia, where Trump is deeply unpopular and where Democrats should pick up numerous seats. Most of the battleground Senate races are occurring in some of the Trumpiest parts of the country, where the president is still popular and red-state Democrats are still weighed down by the liberalism of the national party.

The second theory, [teased by NBC's political team](#), is that one party inevitably wins all the close elections in wave years. So with polls showing competitive contests in red states like Missouri, Tennessee, Arizona, and Indiana, the instinct is to give Democrats an advantage in assessing which party has the edge. And if Democrats run the table in every close race, that's how they can win a 51-seat majority. There's plenty of historical precedent for this: In 2006, Democrats surprised the political world by taking back the Senate, winning all but one of the close races in the blue wave.

I'm much closer to the former camp. One senior Republican official compared wave elections to a different meteorological phenomenon: tornadoes, which can wipe out one neighborhood but leave a nearby one untouched. The 2010 GOP landslide hardly affected vulnerable Democrats in the West, which has since emerged as a Democratic beachhead in the Trump era. And in the Democrats' 2006 wave, the only close Senate race that Republicans won took place in Tennessee, then in the middle of a political realignment to the right.

The latest round of public polling, while showing red-state Democrats competitive, also contain warning signs for the Democratic candidates. In Missouri, the NBC/Marist survey showed Sen. Claire McCaskill with an alarmingly low 41/49 job-approval/disapproval rating, while state Attorney General Josh Hawley [held steady at 36/36](#). Hawley is more likely to see his support grow, while nearly half of Missouri voters view McCaskill unfavorably. If there's a silver lining for McCaskill, it's that Trump's job-approval rating is down to 45 percent in the state, giving her room to make the argument that she's a necessary check on the president's excesses.

In Tennessee, where the NBC/Marist poll showed popular former Gov. Phil Bredesen leading Rep. Marsha Blackburn by 2 percentage points, the fundamentals still look favorable for the GOP. Republicans held a 12-point lead on the state's generic ballot, while Trump holds a positive job-approval rating in the state (47-43 approval). The key to the race is whether Republicans can blur Bredesen's golden image in a state that's shifted sharply to the right. It's hard to see how Bredesen will maintain his 61 percent favorability rating after the attack ads are through.

In today's polarized times, we're seeing reaction to Trump (and Republicans) differ dramatically depending on whether voters live in the suburbs or in small towns. The blue wave that's expected to hit Northern Virginia is unlikely to impact North Dakota. The path

for Democrats to win the Senate majority depends on a near-sweep of the most Trump-friendly parts of the map: Tennessee, Missouri, and West Virginia. If Democrats shock the political world with these unlikely red-state upsets, impeachment will be the least of Trump's troubles.

Which Congressional staffers should advocates connect with?

Our friends at the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) wanted to know which congressional staff advocates should get to know to build strong relationships with that office. We asked the following question.

"In thinking about constituents and the groups that represent them (e.g., associations, nonprofits, companies), what should they do more or less of to build better relationships with your office and your Member/Senator?"

We learned: Legislative Assistants and District Directors are the best congressional staff to get to know. Of the congressional staff who responded, 79% said constituents should do more to get to know Legislative Assistants, while 62% said constituents should work harder to get to know their district/state director. Only 23% felt that getting to know Chiefs of Staff helps to build relationships. Citizen advocates are advised not to discount the importance of having relationships with Legislative Assistants and District Directors.

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

Webinar: "Backstage Pass - Behind the Scenes of Congressional Decision Making" Join us for this webinar on September 20, 2018 at 1:00 PM EDT.

[Register here!](#)

Despite stereotypes perpetrated by shows like House of Cards, research conducted by the Congressional Management Foundation show that Members of Congress believe that staying in touch with constituents is the most important aspect of their job. Furthermore, Congressional staff report that in-person meetings and attending events in the state are the most important activities for Members of Congress to understand constituent views.

During this program, participants' "backstage pass" will provide the following:

- Insight about what it's really like to be a Member of Congress or work for one;
- Practical strategies on how legislative decisions are made; and
- Who is the best "go to" in a congressional office to get what you need.

This program is based on exclusive and private surveys of congressional staff conducted by CMF and is available only to members of CMF's Partnership for a More Perfect Union.

The webinar will be conducted by Bradford Fitch, President and CEO of CMF, and Seth Turner, Director of Citizen Engagement for CMF.

If you have any questions regarding this presentation, please contact Jaime Werner at CMF at JWerner@CongressFoundation.org

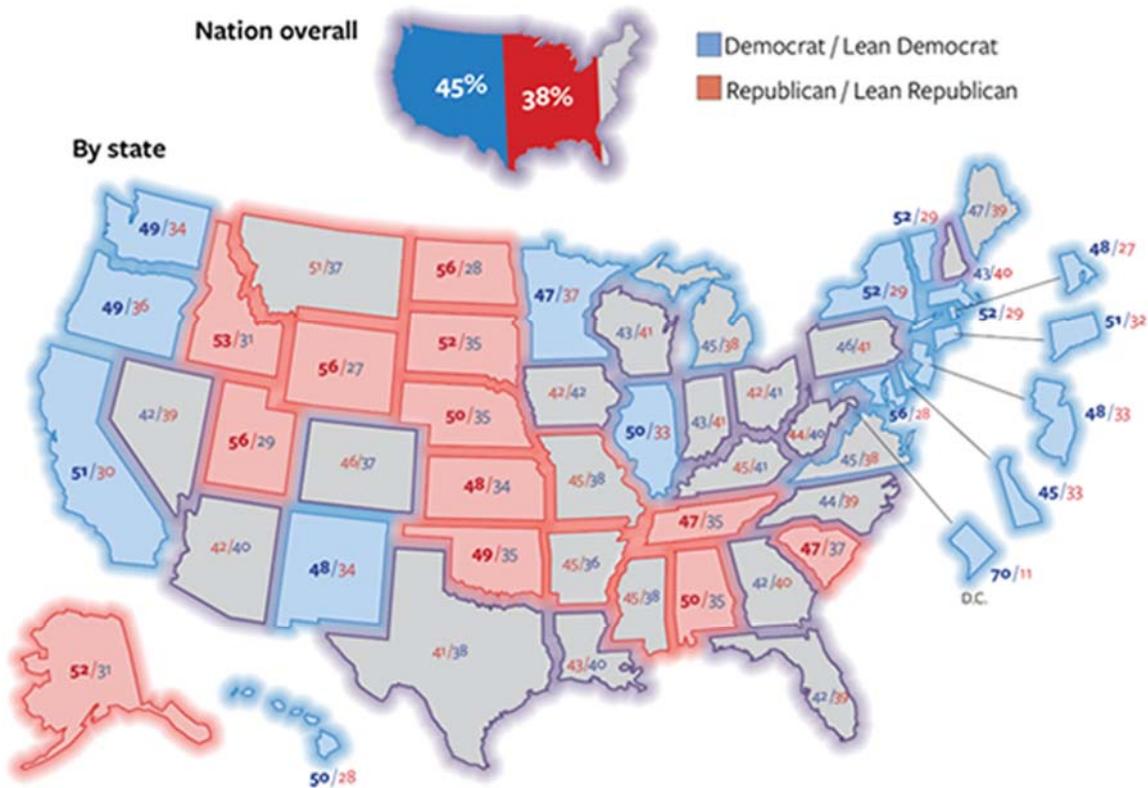
Which Way Each State Leans

By [John Irons @NATIONALJOURNAL](#)

Only one state — Iowa — is split evenly between self-described Democrats and Republicans, but plenty more are closely divided.

While it's true that most states tend to lean reliably toward either the Democratic or Republican Party, there's often a significant portion of citizens who vote the other way. Only about half of the states are considered "solid," meaning one party has more than a 10-point advantage. The rest are more politically diverse than one might suspect. Below, a map of which states' residents affiliate themselves more with one party or the other. And in case you were wondering, Iowa is the only state in which political identification is evenly split between the two major parties.

Political affiliation in 2017



Based on annual averages of party affiliation as reported to pollsters. All states have an "outer glow" to indicate which party they are more likely to support; purple states are considered competitive. States where a party has an advantage of at least 10 points are filled in with that party's color.

SOURCE: Gallup

Don't delay – the deadline to sign up for the 2018 AMPAC Campaign School is

September 21

For AMA members, their spouses, medical students and residents who want to become more involved in the campaign process, the [2018 AMPAC Campaign School](#) will be taking place Dec. 6-9 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 out on the campaign trail. Our team of political experts will teach you everything you need to know to run a successful campaign or be a sought-after or better volunteer.

During the two and a half day in-person portion of the program under the direction of our political experts, participants will be broken into campaign staff teams to run a simulated congressional campaign using what they've learned from the pre-school workbook and video activities along with the group sessions on strategy, vote targeting, social media, advertising and more.

Sign up now – deadline to register is September 21!

NOTE: Faculty, materials and all meals during the meeting are covered by the AMA. Participants are responsible for the registration fee, airfare, and hotel accommodations at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill (please reference the AMA room block for a discounted rate).

For more information or to apply visit: ampaonline.org/apply or contact us at: politicaleducation@ama-assn.org



[AMA Advocacy](#)



[AMPAC](#)

Connect with the Physicians Grassroots Network :  