Physicians and Nurses in Congress and the November 2026 Elections

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

October 11, 2026

Findings

The 119th Congress currently includes 20 medical doctors—four in the Senate and 16 in the House—and four House members with nursing backgrounds. Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks is included in both groups because she previously worked as an Army nurse and later became an ophthalmologist. These figures distinguish physicians (MD/DO) from dentists, optometrists, pharmacists and other health professionals.

The 2026 election cycle has produced a broad field of clinician-candidates, but a campaign announcement or primary candidacy should not be confused with qualification for the November 3 ballot. The physician-candidate names below are a research roster with verification flags; by contrast, a published nursing-professional survey identifies 18 general-election candidates, including four incumbents. Candidate lists and races remain subject to corrections by state election authorities.

Of particular interest: Michigan Democratic U.S. Senate nominee Abdul El-Sayed is a physician and former public-health director; Kansas Sen. Roger Marshall, an obstetrician-gynecologist, is seeking another term; Louisiana Sen. Bill Cassidy remains in office but lost his 2026 Republican primary and should not be counted as a November nominee. Oklahoma's Senate general-election ballot includes two nurses: Democrat N'Kiyla Jasmine Thomas and independent Ron Meinhardt.

NOTE: There is one former hospital administrator in Congress: Ami Bera (D-CA) and he is also a physician. Prior to his election to Congress in 2013, Bera served in hospital administration in California and also served as Chief Medical Officer of Sacramento County.

I. Physician Members of the 119th Congress

Senate — four physician members (all Republican):

Member	State	Specialty
John Barrasso (R)	WY	Orthopedic surgery
Bill Cassidy (R)	LA	Gastroenterology/hepatology
Roger Marshall (R)	KS	Obstetrics/gynecology
Rand Paul (R)	KY	Ophthalmology

House — 16 physician members:

Member	State	Specialty/background
Ami Bera (D)	CA	Internal medicine
Herb Conaway (D)	NJ	Internal medicine
Scott DesJarlais (R)	TN	General/family medicine
Maxine Dexter (D)	OR	Pulmonary/critical care

Neal Dunn (R)	FL	Urology
Andy Harris (R)	MD	Anesthesiology
Ronny Jackson (R)	TX	Emergency medicine
John Joyce (R)	PA	Dermatology
Mike Kennedy (R)	UT	Family medicine
Rich McCormick (R)	GA	Emergency medicine
Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R)	IA	Ophthalmology; former Army nurse
Kelly Morrison (D)	MN	Obstetrics/gynecology
Greg Murphy (R)	NC	Urology
Bob Onder (R)	MO	Allergy/immunology
Raul Ruiz (D)	CA	Emergency medicine
Kim Schrier (D)	WA	Pediatrics

II. Members With Nursing Backgrounds

Member	Party/state	Background
Sheri Biggs	R–SC	Family and psychiatric nurse practitioner; DNP
Jen Kiggans	R–VA	Registered nurse; geriatric nurse practitioner
Lauren Underwood	D–IL	Registered nurse; MSN, MPH
Mariannette Miller-Meeks	R–IA	Former Army nurse; subsequently earned MD

None of these four serves in the Senate. Nursing experience is not interchangeable with current licensure or nursing practice; the table describes professional background.

III. Physician Candidates in the 2026 Election Cycle

Senate: Abdul El-Sayed (D–MI) won the Democratic nomination and faces Mike Rogers in November; Roger Marshall (R–KS) is the incumbent physician standing for reelection. Annie Andrews (D–SC), a pediatrician, has is a Senate candidate. Bill Cassidy (R–LA) and John Fleming (R–LA) ran during the Republican nomination contest, but Cassidy lost the primary.

House: The following physicians appeared in 2026 candidate reporting. This is NOT a certified list of November nominees; some ran in primaries against one another.

Name	Party / race	Medical background
Amish Shah	D / AZ-01	Emergency medicine
Richard Pan	D / CA-06	Pediatrics
Jasmeet Bains	D / CA-22	Family medicine
Darren McAuley	R / FL-15	Flight surgeon
John Cowan	R / GA-11	Neurosurgery
Ralph Alvarado	R / KY-06	Physician
Matt Klein	D / MN-02	Physician
Tina Shah	D / NJ-07	Physician
Adam Hamawy	D / NJ-12	Surgery
Brad Cohen	D / NJ-12	Physician
Ala Stanford	D / PA-03	Pediatric surgery

Verified examples: Abdul El-Sayed won the Michigan Senate Democratic primary in August; Amish Shah and Richard Pan advanced in their respective House contests.

IV. Nurses Identified as November 2026 Congressional Candidates

The American Society of Registered Nurses published the following 18-person roster—16 House candidates and two Senate candidates, including incumbents.

Office / state	Candidate (party)	Nursing qualification
Senate / OK	Ron Meinhardt (I)	BSN, RN
Senate / OK	N'Kiyla Jasmine Thomas (D)	LPN
House / AL	Amanda Pusczek (D)	ADN, BSN
House / AZ	Elizabeth Lee (D)	RN
House / CA	Genevieve Angel (R)	RN
House / GA	Pamela DeLancy (D)	RN
House / IL	Jennifer Todd (D)	BSN, RN
House / IL	Lauren Underwood (D), incumbent	RN, MSN, MPH
House / IA	Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R), incumbent	Former Army nurse; MD
House / LA	Lisa Ballay (L)	LPN
House / NV	Jon Kamerath (IAP)	LPN
House / ND	Helene Neville (I)	LPN
House / OH	Kristina Knickerbocker (D)	RN, MSN
House / PA	Nancy Mannion (D)	RN, DNP
House / SC	Sheri Biggs (R), incumbent	DNP, FNP
House / TX	Steven Shook (D)	RN, MSN
House / VA	Jen Kiggans (R), incumbent	AGNP
House / WI	Mitchell Berman (D)	RN

The Oklahoma state election listing independently confirms Thomas and Meinhardt on the November Senate ballot. A separate nursing-candidate review uses a different candidate universe and specifically cautions readers to confirm ballot status; the 18-person list should therefore be treated as the ASRN publication's roster rather than an exhaustive independently audited compilation.

V. Additional Health-Profession Members

Other members with clinical professions include Sen. John Boozman (R–AR), optometrist; Reps. Brian Babin (R–TX), Paul Gosar (R–AZ), Mike Simpson (R–ID), and Jeff Van Drew (R–NJ), dentists; and Reps. Buddy Carter (R–GA) and Diana Harshbarger (R–TN), pharmacists. These professions are excluded from the physician and nursing counts.

VI. Historical Comparison: Physicians and Nurses in Congress, 1995–2026

Executive finding. The 119th Congress has 20 members with physician backgrounds and four with nursing backgrounds. Compared with the 107th Congress (2001–2002), physician representation has more than doubled (nine to 20), while nursing representation has changed relatively little (three to four). The 118th Congress also had 20 physicians, so the current count is not a new high relative to the immediately preceding Congress.

Verified Historical Benchmarks

Congress	Years	Physicians	Nurses
107th	2001–2002	9	3
118th	2023–2024	20 (4 Senate; 16 House)	3
119th	2025–2026	20 (4 Senate; 16 House)	4

Sources: Congressional Research Service (CRS) membership profiles for the 107th, 118th, and 119th Congresses. Numbers reflect members' reported occupational backgrounds and may include overlapping categories; one nurse counted in the 119th is also a physician.

Thirty-Year Perspective

Physician growth. The increase from nine physicians in 2001 to 20 in the current Congress represents an increase of 11 members, or approximately 122%. Physician membership remains a small share of the 535 voting congressional seats: roughly 3.7%.

Nursing representation. Nursing membership increased from three to four between the two benchmark periods, or roughly 33%. Four members represent approximately 0.7% of voting House and Senate seats. Nursing representation has not followed physician representation upward at the same pace.

Recent plateau. The 118th and 119th Congresses both list 20 physicians, indicating no net increase between these two congressional rosters. The nurse count increased from three to four.

Historical caution. The benchmark figures above are directly supported by CRS. A complete Congress-by-Congress census from the 104th through 119th Congress was not independently reconstructed for this summary; therefore, the current figure should be described as at or near a modern high, not conclusively the highest in 30 years. Historical series can differ in how they count physician degrees, professional practice, and prior nursing experience.

Significance. A larger contingent of physicians may bring personal experience with clinical practice, Medicare payment, quality standards, and patient care to deliberations. A smaller nursing contingent makes nurse-specific expertise relatively less common in congressional discussion of staffing, graduate nursing education, and hospital workforce policy. Occupational background alone does not establish influence; committee assignments, seniority, and leadership remain decisive.

Historical Source References

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