

Last week, I looked at the Republican Senate candidates in the neighboring states of Arkansas and Louisiana. This week, we turn to two other Southern neighbors, Georgia and North Carolina. (Before you rush to email me that they're not neighbors because South Carolina is between them, take another look at the map — Georgia and North Carolina actually do have a common border west of South Carolina.) The Republican candidate in David Perdue has kept nearly mum on environmental issues, while his counterpart in North Carolina is a fervent advocate of regulatory reform. Their Democratic opponents favor renewable energy and environmental protection.

In the Georgia race, the Democratic candidate, Michelle Nunn, favors renewable energy and action on climate change. She also speaks out in favor of reducing air and water pollution, as well as protecting wetlands and endangered species. Her opponent, David Perdue, seems to have succeeded in saying practically nothing about environment and energy issues. What little he has said is not encouraging — a call for greater domestic energy production to achieve “energy independence,” and an attack on his opponent for going along with “burdensome regulations on the coal industry will raise energy prices and destroy jobs.” On the other hand, the fact that he hasn't chosen to highlight anti-environmental views could be seen as positive in a way, and he *was* on the board of a Wisconsin utility that supported cap-and-trade legislation. So he's a bit of a cipher.

In North Carolina, Thom Tillis (the GOP candidate) calls regulatory reform his signature issue. In particular, he wants to cut back on regulation of the energy industry:

*The anti-energy policies of Kay Hagan and Barack Obama have destroyed jobs and caused energy prices to skyrocket. Thom understands we need an all-the-above approach to make America energy independent. Thom strongly supports the construction of the Keystone Pipeline and favors expanding offshore drilling to make our nation less dependent on foreign oil. And unlike Hagan, Thom opposes cap and trade and will fight the EPA's job-killing regulations.*

Tillis also complains that “North Carolina agribusinesses are being stifled by federal regulations that threaten their livelihood.” (Again, there's some interesting phrasing here — he doesn't even pretend that these are “family farmers.”) His opponent, incumbent Democratic Senator Kay Hagan, says nothing about energy or environmental issues on her campaign website, but her Senate website makes clear her generally pro-environment stance.

Energy and environment are not center-stage in the campaigns in either state. But there can be little doubt that environmental regulation would fare better under the Democratic

candidates than their opponents. Tillis, in particular, seems dedicated to shackling the regulatory process at the national level, as he successfully did as House Speaker in North Carolina.

In the background lurks an issue that transcends the individual races: who controls the Senate. This will matter primarily in terms of appropriations riders. Unless the filibuster rules are modified, Democrats can probably still block most standalone environmental legislation from passing the Senate. But they may not be able to block riders on must-pass appropriations bills, which would then put the President in the position of having to sign the bills or risk a government shutdown. The Republican leadership has already announced a desire to pursue this strategy if they get control of the Senate. So each Senate race matters, not only for its own sake, but also because of its impact on Senate control.