

There's a lot riding on the 2018 elections. The midterms will decide whether the GOP has a large enough majority to pass legislation weakening environmental protection, whether either house of Congress is willing to investigate misconduct by Pruitt and others, and who Trump can appoint to agencies and the judiciary. I'll post more detailed information about the races as we get closer to the election, but here's a quick overview of eight crucial races.

Seats currently held by the Dems are blue while GOP seats are red. All these races are considered toss-ups.

Arizona. Incumbent Jeff Flake (R) isn't running for reelection. No matter how the race turns out, at least we can be pretty sure his replacement won't move the Senate much further to the right on environmental issues. Flake's lifetime score from the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) is a mere 9%. The primaries aren't till August 28, so we'll have to wait until then to see just how this one shapes up. But the likely match-up is Martha McSally, a Republican with a lifetime 6% LCV score, versus Democrat Kyrsten Sinema, with an LCV score of 78%.

Indiana. The incumbent is Joe Donnelly (D), who has a 58% lifetime LCV score. He will face businessman Mike Braun, who benefitted from Trump's endorsement at an Indiana rally.

Missouri. The incumbent, Claire McCaskill (D), has a 74% lifetime LCV score. The primaries aren't until August, so it will be a while before this race fully gels.

Montana. The incumbent is Jon Tester (D), with an 86% lifetime LCV score. Montana gets 54% of its power from coal and 40% from renewables (33% hydro). His opponent is state auditor Matt Rosendale, who won his primary with heavy support from conservative groups and figures such as Ted Cruz. Rosendale's website promises to fight "radical environmentalists . . . every step of the way."

Nevada. Incumbent Dean Heller (R) has a 13% lifetime score from LCV. Energy issues have gained a higher profile in Nevada. Heller's views may be a bit out of touch with the voters, judging from recent renewable energy initiatives in the state. The Democratic opponent is Rep. Jackie Rosen, who has a 97% LCV lifetime score.

North Dakota. The incumbent, Heidi Heitkamp (D), has a 50% lifetime score. North Dakota is a big coal state, but it's not necessarily hostile to renewables. Her opponent is Rep. Kevin Cramer, with a lifetime LCV score of 1%.

Tennessee. Tennessee has unexpectedly turned out to be in play, due to the candidacy of

popular Democratic governor Phil Bredesen. The likely matchup will pit him against Rep. Marsha Blackburn, who has a lifetime LCV score of 2%.

West Virginia. The incumbent is Joe Manchin (D), with a 44% LCV score. Manchin's opponent is State Attorney General Patrick Morrisey. His website emphasizes his crusades against Obama-era environmental regulations.

As you can see even from this quick overview, there are stark differences in the environmental views of the opposing candidates. The GOP currently has a razor-thin majority in the Senate. The possible outcomes range from a 52-48 margin for the Dems to 55-45 for the GOP. A lot will depend on whether a predicted blue wave strengthens between now and November or dissipates.