

The current Supreme Court vacancy is a reminder of just how crucial the Senate is. If there were two more Democratic Senators there today, Trump would not be able to fill Ginsburg's seat before the election.

Of course, the Senate matters for other reasons, too. An example of the importance of the Senate in policy terms is Montana. The candidates there have starkly different views of environmental issues.

This race could be called the Battle of the Steves. Steve Daines is the incumbent Republican. The challenger is Steve Bullock, a popular governor. They both seem to be near the centers of their own parties, which means that they're far apart on environmental issues.

Steve Daines. The Daines campaign website doesn't have an issues tab, as seems to be common among Republican candidates. His Senate site endorses the "all of the above" strategy, but with an emphasis on fossil fuels: "Montana will continue to lead the way through promoting exploration and sustained development of the Bakken oil shale, continuing to lead in domestic coal production, and expanding our renewable energy production." Daines has a 29% LCV score this year, but only a 6% lifetime score. That lifetime score puts him in about the middle of the pack among Republican Senators, slightly below Mitch McConnell.

Daines has recently helped form the Roosevelt Conservation Caucus, which is attempting to counter the GOP's anti-environmentalist image. I feel that I'm in no position to judge whether that effort is sincere or electoral window-dressing.

Steve Bullock. Bullock has about the most minimalist campaign website I've ever seen. It's basically a single screen, about half of which is devoted to the Donate field. His website as Governor is a bit more revealing. It touts his Montana Renewables Development Action Plan, which identifies barriers to the state's renewable energy industry that need to be removed. It also says that he has "advanced efforts to better prepare Montanans for climate impacts." In particular, he "established the Montana Climate Solutions Council in July 2019 to identify made-in-Montana solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, prepare the state for climate impacts, and address the needs of communities in transition through appropriate economic development and workforce strategies."

As with other embattled GOP Senators, Daines seems interested in distinguishing himself from Trump's slash-and-burn approach to the environment. Independently of how these elections come out, I think that probably says something about how the public's views are

shifting. Maybe it will become respectable for Republicans to respect the environment again.