



At the [debate](#) between Elizabeth Warren and Scott Brown last night, there was a brief discussion of energy issues. Brown defended subsidies for oil companies but criticized Warren for trying to tie him to Jim Inhofe. Unlike Inhofe, Brown does believe in climate change (at least right now — he seems to have waffled over the past few years.) He doesn't seem to be prepared to do anything about the problem, however. A little research confirms that there's a real difference in the views of Warren and Brown, with Brown much more conservative on environmental issues.

One difference between them is that Warren has an “energy and environment” [tab](#) on her campaign website, whereas Brown doesn't bother to discuss them on his. But a little digging revealed that, like his party's national standard-bearer, Brown's environmental views changed quickly when he left Massachusetts state office for the national arena.

Warren takes a strong position in favor of renewable energy and decries federal subsidies to the oil and coal industries. She sees a variety of benefits to renewables:

*As long as we subsidize dirty sources like oil, gas, and coal, we threaten the air we breathe and the water we drink. In Massachusetts, 1 in 10 people have asthma. Pollution is a serious public health challenge – and our children's well-being is at risk. . .*

*Carbon-heavy fuels also intensify the risks of climate change. . . Climate change endangers our health and national security, it threatens agricultural production and the availability of clean water, and it risks floods and droughts.*

Since Brown's [website](#) doesn't discuss energy or environment, I had to search a bit further. According to the [Boston Globe](#), Brown apparently had a strong environmental record when he was in Massachusetts, but that changed as soon as he went to D.C.:

*Brown . . .has dismayed environmental advocates over the past two years by voting against multiple efforts to eliminate billions of dollars in federal subsidies for oil companies, and against requirements to improve auto fuel-efficiency standards.*

*They also lament his votes for blocking the US Environmental Protection Agency from regulating greenhouse gases, and for slashing the agency's budget by nearly a third — a bill the League of Conservation Voters described as “the greatest legislative assault ever on the environment.”*

In short, Brown's positions on environmental matters do not seem markedly different from the norm in today's Republican Party. Similarly, Warren's seem to be about the norm for Democratic Senators. Voters thus have a clear choice between the two candidates.