Eric just noted that Bloomberg's endorsement of President Obama marks the first significant moment in the campaign where climate change is front and center. He also suggests that climate change and its relationship to Hurricane Sandy could now actually affect the presidential race. A related and perhaps even more important question is whether the hurricane and its aftermath will make any difference post-election about whether we actually decide to create national climate policy or to exert meaningful global influence in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. I hope that it does and have a small (but only small) amount of optimism that it will.

If President Obama is reelected, the possibilities of significant action on climate emissions seem obviously to be significantly higher than if Governor Romney is elected. As Mayor Bloomberg noted in his endorsement, the President is on record as a committed believer that human activity is causing the planet to warm. If Governor Romney is elected, not only has he equivocated on the human connection to a warming globe but he is also fairly clearly the candidate of the coal industry and other carbon-intensive industries. One would think he would feel beholden at least in part to an industry that has provided significant funding to his Presidential campaign.

But in either case, my guess is that we are likely to see an uptick — even a strong one — in public belief in and concern about climate change. Such an uptick occurred post-Katrina. It seems hard to imagine that the freakish intensity of Hurricane Sandy won't spark a similar sense that something is amiss with our climate. We got closer than ever to a national climate policy in the years immediately post-Katrina. And the combination of an uptick in public concern about climate change with the fact that the economy is strenghtening could make political action on climate changemore feasible.

Of course the odds are relatively high that we'll still have a Republican House of Representatives that seems to be the most anti-environmental in the modern environmental era. And it is virtually impossible to imagine that a Republican House would pass a national climate bill. But it seems at least plausible that we could see any one of the following:

A somewhat bolder Environmental Protection Agency using its power under Massachusetts v. EPA and the Clean Air Act to take stronger action than it has to date to implement rules to reduce greenhouse gases;

An energy bill, focused less directly on climate change but that provides strong support for renewable and alternative energy;

A stronger international effort by a second Obama Administration to reach some sort of meaningful post-Kyoto accord, or to use the Montreal Protocol to cut greenhouse gases that are part of the protocol, or to engage in bilateral negotiations or sectoral agreements focused on large sources of emissions

The reengagement of many of the states that indicated early support for regional cap and trade efforts but dropped out due to the economic recession.

So this is the proverbial sliver lining in the Sandy clouds. I may be too optimistic. But I never imagined that less than a week before the election a prominent endorsement would be based in part on the President’s support for climate change.