Arkansas and Louisiana are neighboring states in which Republicans have good chances of picking up Senate seats. But the GOP candidates in the two states have somewhat different stances on the environment. Though, needless to say, neither of them will be getting awards from the Sierra Club anytime soon, one of them has some environmental positives, while the other is a dedicated advocate for the fossil fuels industry. On the Democratic side, the Democratic incumbent in Arkansas also has a weaker environmental record than his Louisiana counterpart. The key difference is where they stand on coal. There are undoubtedly a variety of reasons for the different stances, but the two states are different in one very important and relevant way. Coal is the source of half the electricity in Arkansas but only a sixth in Louisiana. So the economics of coal regulations are very different in the two states.

Tom Cotton in Arkansas could get the Mr. Fossil Fuel award, if there was such a thing. He's in favor of drilling for oil everywhere you can think of. He's also in favor of using coal with as little interference from EPA as possible. So it's not surprising that he's against any pesky ozone regulations EPA might have in mind. Renewables are o.k. but shouldn't get any subsidies or tax breaks — unlike fossil fuel companies, whose current tax benefits he wants to continue. His philosophy is captured by the very first thing that he says about energy issues on his website: "America has the world's largest fossil-fuel reserves in the world. I view fossil fuels as a valuable asset to be used, not an embarrassing liability to be restrained." Or, as he said in June 2013, 'It's actually quite simple: natural resources like coal are very valuable, and we should take advantage of them to create good jobs and a higher standard of living for all Arkansans." His opponent, Sen. Mark Pryor, has a mixed environmental record, but still offers a sharp contrast to Cotton.

Across the border in Louisiana, the GOP candidate is Bill Cassidy. Not surprisingly, he's also very gung-ho about oil and gas. But encouraging the use of coal doesn't seem to be high on his agenda. He expresses a degree of warmth toward the environment and the use of clean energy:

> *Dr. Cassidy supports a balanced approach to utilizing Louisiana's prized natural habitats.*
>
> *According to the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, roughly twenty-four square miles of land were lost every year between 1990 and 2000 in Louisiana to coastal erosion. Over the next fifty years, the state is expected to lose another five hundred square miles of land. Dr. Cassidy is working to restore*

> *Louisiana's coasts and protect coastal Louisiana from hurricanes and erosion.*
>
> *Dr. Cassidy is also a strong supporter of alternative energy technologies, like solar power, biofuels, and ultra-efficient vehicles, which will improve the environment and contribute to America's energy security.*

Cassidy's opponent, Sen. Mary Landrieu, has a mixed record but overall is more environmentally friendly than his Arkansas counterpart. Thus, there is still is a significant gap between her and Cassidy on environmental issues.

As in the other Senate races, of course there is an issue that transcends the individual race: who controls the Senate. 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 do so with legislative 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.