Alaska and Colorado may both think of themselves as having a link to the frontier, but they're also very different in terms of demographics and dependence on the oil industry. The Senate races in the two states are also similar in some ways but not others, perhaps reflecting the more diverse economy of Colorado. In both cases, the Republican candidates are have anti-environmental records. The difference is on the Democratic side, where the Alaskan candidate has a mixed environmental record while the Colorado candidate has a strong one.

The Alaska race pits Democratic incumbent Mark Begich against Dan Sullivan, who has been state Attorney General and Commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources. As Commissioner, Sullivan "worked with the private sector to maximize Alaska's full economic potential", and "when necessary, aggressively fighting back against those who try to shutdown or delay economic opportunities for our citizens." In case you're not quite sure what that means, it's accompanied by a nice oil-pipeline photo.

Sullivan's opponent, Mark Begich, bills himself as being "as independent as Alaska" — presumably meaning he's not close to Barack Obama. No surprise, he's also in favor of resource development:

> *I have been fighting to create good jobs throughout Alaska by responsibly developing Alaska's oil and gas, mineral, and fishing resources. I have also helped secure critical federal permits for projects creating thousands of good paying jobs for Alaskans.*

And on energy: "We have vast opportunities for increased oil and gas development and renewable energy deployment." His support for renewable energy does differentiate him from Sullivan. It's more than just a throw-away line for Begich, who says he sent "more than $3 billion to Alaska communities to adopt renewable and energy efficiency projects." Overall, Begich has a favorable though mixed LCV rating, higher than the Southern Democrats we've looked at it in recent posts. If elected, Sullivan's rating would probably be close to zero.

The Colorado race also pits an incumbent Democrat, Mark Udall, against a Republican challenger, in this case Cory Gardner. On environmental and energy issues, Gardner has voted the GOP party line in the House. However, Gardner presents himself as a "national leader on energy policy," who has not only supported expansion of fossil fuel production but also renewables:

> *In addition to his work with traditional resources, Cory has promoted legislation to streamline the permitting process for renewable technologies on federal lands and*

supports a paid-for extension of the wind production tax credit (PTC). He also co-wrote the legislation that established Colorado's Clean Energy Development Authority while serving in the Colorado General Assembly.

His opponent, Mark Udall, also highlights the energy issue:

Responsibly developing our renewable energy sources like wind, solar, and geothermal power alongside clean-burning natural gas will help us achieve energy independence, grow our economy, and create Colorado jobs. Mark has also worked tirelessly, alongside Democrats and Republicans, to keep investing in Colorado's wind industry and secured tax credits for wind energy businesses that support nearly 5,000 Colorado jobs. Mark knows that when it comes to energy, an approach which balances development with protecting our communities and the health of our families is paramount.

Udall has a very high LCV rating, while Gardner's has been close to zero in the House.

There's also the question of Senate control, which may be more important than the environmental credentials of individual candidates. Unless the filibuster rules are modified, Democrats can probably still block most standalone environmental legislation from passing the Senate even if they lose control of 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.