

As important as the presidential election is, the presidency isn't the only important federal office at stake.

This year, an unusual number of Senate races could go either way, and control of the Senate hangs in the balance. The Democrats need to pick up 4 seats (if Kaine is VP) or 5 (if Pence is VP).

Over the next month, I will post information about the environment and energy views of the candidates in critical Senate races. In the interest of objectivity, I will use information provided by the candidates themselves as the primary source.

Control of the Senate matters greatly no matter who wins the Presidential race. True, filibusters are potential roadblocks to passing new legislation, unless the rules are changed. But the filibuster doesn't apply to appointment of lower court federal judges or administrative officials, nor is House approval needed for those appointments. Nor does the filibuster apply to "reconciliation" legislation (bills that cut the deficit). Control of the Senate also means the ability to conduct investigations, which would be especially important for the Democrats given almost-certain Republican control of the House.

A President Trump with a Republican Senate could do a lot to carry through on his pledge to dismantle EPA's powers, whereas a President Clinton would receive valuable support from a Democratic Senate. If Clinton wins, Democratic control of the Senate would increase her leverage in dealing with the House, and would allow her a much freer hand with agency and judicial appointments. If Trump wins, GOP control of the Senate would give him a solidly Republican Congress, making it easier to pass legislation or to make drastic cuts in EPA's budget.

I've picked 8 key states because their Senate races were all identified early on as being in play. (At present, there are a couple of other races that may end up being close, and if they still look that way in mid-October I'll discuss them as well.) As this table shows, the 8 Senate races involve big differences in environmental attitudes. The numbers below are the lifetime scores given by the League of Conservation Voters. A number of the Democratic candidates have not served in Congress and therefore do not have scores.

State	Democratic Candidate	Republican Candidate
Florida	88%,	6%
Illinois	85%	57%

Indiana	74%	3%
Ohio	70%	20%
Nevada	NA	8%
New Hampshire	NA	35%
Pennsylvania	NA	7%
Wisconsin	95%	4%
Average Score	82.4%	17.5%

There are significant differences between candidates from the same party, but in each case, the Democrat's score is at least 25% higher than the Republican's, and in some states the difference is more like 90%. That's a good indication of how much these races matter in terms of energy and environmental policy.