Florida has not one but two races this year with national significance. One is the Senate race. The other is the Governor's race.

We all know why Senate races matter, especially this year when the Senate is so closely divided. A gubernatorial race, in contrast, normally would be considered mostly a local matter. But there are a couple of reason why the Florida race has broader significance.

First, Florida is due to get additional House seats, and a new Governor could have input into redistricting. In particular, a Democratic governor could help balance the Republican legislature, preventing gerrymandering. That could impact control of the House in future years.

Second,Florida's environmental policies could have regional if not national significance. A new governor could guide the state toward a solar revolution, an area where it's a laggard. South Florida is keenly aware of climate change, but state government is in denial. New policies in Florida could have ripple effects in other parts of the South. And Florida has unique environmental assets such as the Everglades and the Keys, both of which need protection.

Florida is also unusual in that environmental issues have been prominent in the campaign. The issue is the algae blooms that have hit Florida's coasts. Governor Scott (who is running for the Senate) blames the federal government in the person of the incumbent Senator, Bill Nelson. Nelson responds that as Governor Scott was in a far better position to address the pollution causing the problem.

With that prelude, here are the two big races:

The Senate: Nelson (D) v. Scott (R).

Rick Scott.

Scott, the current governor, does not have a great environmental record. According to the Washington Post,

> "During Scott's tenure, budgets for environmental agencies have been sharply reduced. The budget of the South Florida Water Management District, which oversees water issues from Orlando to Key West, was cut. Many of the more than 400 workers who lost their jobs in the $700 million

> cut were scientists and engineers whose jobs were to monitor pollution levels and algal blooms. Scott also abolished the Department of Community Affairs, which oversaw development in the state."

Scott's Senate website doesn't mention the environment. The only issue it discusses are fiscal, promising austerity without pain. According to the Miami Herald, he has forbidden government employees and contractors to mention climate change or global warming. So Scott looks like he'd be an avid opponents of environmental regulation in the Senate.

Bill Nelson.

Nelson has a lifetime LCV score of 75%. That's not at the head of the pack among Democrats but not at the back either. His score last year was 95%, perhaps representing the polarization of the Trump era. Unlike Scott's, Nelson's website does have an environment tab, which opens with the following, in very large print: "Bill Nelson stands up to big polluters and corporations to fight and protect Floridians from the growing dangers of climate change." He's clearly far more protective of the environment than Scott.

The Governorship: Gillum v. DeSantis.

Andrew Gillum.

Gillum, the Democrat, is the mayor of Tallahassee Andrew was born in Miami where his mother drove a school bus and his father was a construction worker. He was the first in his family to go to college. . It's probably politically relevant that he's an African American.

The environment tab of his website opens with: "Andrew believes that climate change is a real and urgent threat. Politicians like Donald Trump, who call it a "hoax," and Governor Rick Scott, who banned the words 'climate change' and 'global warming,' are putting us and future generations of Floridians at risk." The website then touts his success in expanding renewables during his term as mayor. Gillum would be a strong environmental voice in the governor's mansion.

Rin DeSantis.

Gillum was expected to face, Putnam, who is now Agriculture Commissioner.

Instead, due to Trump's intervention, he will face Ron DeSantis. DeSantis says he will "reduce bureaucracy, eliminate unreasonable regulations and crack down on lawsuit abuse." He calls himself the #1 conservative in Florida. But he always has some environmental-sounding pledges on his website:

- Protect our coasts by stopping toxic discharges from Lake Okeechobee and by storing and cleaning polluted water south of the Lake
- Defend Florida's coastline through beach restoration and flood mitigation
- Restore the Everglades

Considering that his lifetime score from the League of Conservation Voters is 2%, I have my doubts about how environment-friendly these pledges really are. They may translate into damming the outlet of Lake Okeechobee, building sea walls, and doing who-knows-what to the Everglades.

As I said at the outset, both of these elections are important, not just the state but for the nation generally. Florida is one of the country's most populous and fastest growing states. What happens in Florida *doesn't* stay in Florida. So these are elections you should definitely keep an eye on.