

I hate to give you something else to freak out about in our current Age of Anxiety, but there's a very worrisome presidential election next Sunday. No, I haven't completely lost it – the presidential race isn't here, it's in Brazil. The election pits a dangerous populist against a highly competent but colorless Establishment candidate. Does this sound at all familiar to you?

The populist is Jair Bolsonaro. He's been a legislator for years, somewhere on the right-wing fringe, where he was best known for outrageous statements. According to the [Economist](#), he "said he would not rape a congresswoman because she was 'very ugly'; he said he would prefer a dead son to a gay one; and he suggested that people who live in settlements founded by escaped slaves are fat and lazy." But his shock-talk has helped propel him to frontrunner status: "Suddenly that willingness to break taboos is being taken as evidence that he is different from the political hacks in the capital city." Does that last part ring a bell?

Bolsonaro is very bad news in terms of environmental issues. The [Washington Post](#) summarizes his environmental platform in an article entitled "How Brazil's Bolsonaro threatens the planet" Here are some key points:

- He has pledged to follow Trump and withdraw Brazil from the Paris Agreement.
- He has criticized what he calls "excessive" policing of rural areas and forests.
- He's discussed merging the environmental ministry and the agriculture ministry, which would clearly weaken environmental protection.
- He wants to open up the lands of indigenous people to agricultural and commercial development.

All of this is especially ominous because of Brazil's importance to the global environment. The Amazon contains a big share of the world's biodiversity. And it is also a gigantic carbon store. Bolsonaro's enthusiasm for deforestation bodes ill for future climate change.

Bolsonaro's opponent is Fernando Haddad. He has degrees in law and in economics, and was education minister earlier in his career. He was a highly successful mayor of São Paulo. We can only hope that November 2018 in Brazil doesn't turn out to be a replay of November 2016 in the U.S.

There's nothing we in the U.S. can do about the election in Brazil. But we do have our own election coming up. Just saying.

