We're less than a month from election day, which will help shape the future of environmental protection. Because the parties are so polarized now, partisan control in Congress or the states translates into movement toward further regulation or deregulation, depending on which party is in the ascendancy.

Here are ten reasons why you should care about the elections, whatever your position on environmental matters may be. Whether you favor environmental regulation or oppose it, this election really matters.

1. If the Democrats take control of the U.S. House, they will be able to block anti-environmental riders on appropriations bills as well as legislation such as the proposed rollbacks to the Endangered Species Act. Our environmental laws will be safe from piecemeal or wholesale repeal.
2. With control of the House, the Democrats might even be able to get a few pro-environmental riders added to must-pass legislation. Maybe even save a national monument or two from presidential downsizing. On the other hand, if the Republicans gain ground in the midterms, the President will feel emboldened and his grip on the Republican Party will grow even stronger. That will strengthen the current deregulatory push, maybe translating some of it from executive orders and agency rule-makings into statute.
3. With control of the House, Democrats could launch far-reaching investigations of matters such as conflicts of interest, industry influence on EPA and other agencies, and the debatable science behind many of the Administration's proposals. In other words, the Administration would be subject to congressional oversight for the first time. Or, if you're on the other side, to what you might view as partisan harassment.
4. If the Democrats were to win control of the Senate (not likely but possible), they could greatly limit the President's ability to appoint courts anti-regulatory crusaders. That's going to really matter over the long haul. Senate control would also impact appointments to cabinet and sub-cabinet positions.
5. On the other hand, if the Democrats lose seats in the Senate, it will be almost impossible for them to block even the most controversial nominees. The Democrats have been able to block a few of those by picking up a single Republican supporter. Trump would have a freer hand with a couple of additional seats in the Senate.
6. This election will also shape the 2020 elections. If the Republicans do unexpectedly well in this election, that will encourage them to stay the course, adhering more closely to the President. An unexpectedly bad outcome may

cause some to reconsider that strategy. A lot of GOP Senators will be up for reelection in 2020, not all in deeply Republican states, and they will have to decide whether to tack for the middle. That's more likely if the party does poorly on Nov.6.

7. State elections also matter, something that the Republican Party is very much aware of and the Democrats forgot during the Obama years. The Republicans completely control the legislature in a majority of states right now, allowing a host of anti-environmental measures. Moreover, there are some important ballot initiatives on the ballot: the gas tax in Washington, an anti-fracking measure in Colorado, renewable energy measures in Arizona and Utah. We've learned a lot over the past few years about how important state policies can be in the energy and environmental sphere.
8. If Democrats pick up some governors' mansions, they can use the governors' power over state administrators to push for stronger regulation. They can make environment-friendly appointments to state administrative agencies. New Jersey is a prime example: When Democrat Phil Murphy took over from Chris Christie last year, climate change and renewable energy policies changed quickly.
9. Newly elected Democratic governors will also be able to influence redistricting, limiting potential Republican gerrymandering. Not to mention the governor's ability in many states to make at least initial appointments of state judges – and in some situations, to fill empty U.S. Senate seats. Indeed, as the Washington Post reports, Democrats are make redistricting a major campaign focus. The Dems are "aggressively pursuing an array of efforts this year to overhaul the redistricting process — from ballot initiatives to legal challenges and down-ballot elections — that make the midterms even more consequential."
10. Democratic state legislatures, especially in states that already have Democratic governors, will be able to strengthen their state's environmental laws as well as restoring funding to state agencies that have been starved by GOP legislatures.All of these effects translate into millions of tons of carbon – carbon that would stay in the atmosphere for a period of time measured in centuries.

Bottom line: Don't say you care about environmental issues and then stay home on Election Day.