

Control of the Senate will determine the environmental views of new judges and whether any environmental legislation can pass. In August, I'll start looking at the environmental stakes in specific Senate races. Here's why Senate control is so important and where things stand right now.

Basically, the question is whether Mitch McConnell retains his grip on legislation and judicial appointments. Control of the Senate will have a big impact on post-2020 policy in many areas, notably including the environment (and climate policy in particular). If Biden wins, Senate control will give him a shot at enacting new environmental measures and appointing judges who are receptive to environmental regulation. If Trump wins, Senate control will determine whether he can continue to pack the lower courts (and maybe the Supreme Court) with anti-regulatory judges.

To flip the Senate Democrats need a net gain of three seats if Biden wins (because his Veep would cast the tie-breaking vote); otherwise they need a net gain of four.

Two months ago, I took a look at the views of forecasters (Cook Political and Larry Sabato) about key Senate races. I concluded that the Republicans had the edge but the Democrats were making headway. This table shows where things are now. I've added adjectives where the two forecasters disagree — "leans slightly" means that one forecaster said the case was a toss-up and the other said that it leaned toward one side. "Leans clearly" means one said "probable" and the other said "leans".

State	June 2	Current state of play
Alabama	Leans Rep.	Now leans clearly R.
Michigan	Leans Dem.	No change
Maine	Toss-up	No change
North Carolina	Toss-up	No change
Arizona	Leans slightly Dem.	Now leans Dem.
Colorado	Lean slightly Dem.	No change
Georgia (open seat)	Lean Rep.	No change
Montana	Lean Rep.	Now leans slightly Rep.

As you can see, not a lot of movement in the past month. Montana and Arizona have moved a bit toward the Democrats, while Alabama has moved a bit toward the Republicans. The relatively lack of movement could be partly a function of infrequent polling, partly because

voters aren't thinking about down-ballot races yet.

It's also possible that other Senate seats may now be in play. Cook recently moved the Iowa and the other Georgia Senate race (involving incumbent David Perdue) to toss-up.

As the presidential race firms up, some of the Senate races may become clearer. Individual Senate candidates, their ability to raise money, and how well they run their campaigns will matter. But in the end, the most important factors may be crises we have faced this year with the coronavirus, the economy, and public protests. They will undoubtedly have a major influence on the presidential election, which will spill over into the state races.