

The Colorado Senate race pits incumbent Republican Cory Gardner against John Hickenlooper. Gardner makes a point of stressing his support for environmental protection and has apparently been working hard to strengthen his environment record since he moved to the Senate in 2014.

Cory Gardner. Gardner's Senate website touts his bipartisanship. It says that he "was ranked the 3rd most bipartisan Senator by The Lugar Center for his work in the 116th Congress to build consensus, elevate the tenor of debate, practice civility, and advance legislation on pressing issues." His campaign website calls him a "common sense conservative." The campaign website stresses his support for renewable energy and his receipt of awards from renewable energy organizations. In terms of climate, the website says "his bipartisan approach aims to reduce emissions, combat climate change, and grow the economy." Again stressing his support for the environment, the page on public lands and the environment says he "has been recognized by numerous organizations for his work to protect the environment, and has been named a Nature Conservancy Conservation Champion and Friend of the Outdoor Industry."

Gardner's lifetime LCV score is 11%. Last year, like many other GOP Senators, his score spiked up (to 36% in his case). In his earlier time in the House, his LCV score was [near zero](#). He now has one of the top dozen lifetime scores among Senate Republicans (though it's a low bar). That suggests he's made a concerted effort to reposition himself since he joined the Senate in 2014. His 2019 score tied him with two other Republicans and left him behind only Susan Collins, who is an outlier among GOP Senators on environmental issues. In a further effort to burnish his credentials, he recently helped push a major public lands bill through the Senate, which provides major funding to repair infrastructure in national parks and other public lands.

John Hickenlooper. Hickenlooper's website emphasizes the urgency of addressing climate change:

"Climate change is the defining challenge of our time, and our state is on the front lines of this crisis, with shorter winters, catastrophic floods and wildfires, and continued air pollution. . . .Our planet's health, economic well-being, and national security are all at risk. It is imperative that we address the climate challenges we face with a fierce sense of urgency — human lives and livelihoods are at stake."

Hickenlooper calls for “transition to a 100% renewable energy economy with net-zero emissions by 2050, with an interim goal of a 43% reduction below 2005 levels in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 — exactly where many of the world’s leading scientists tell us we need to go.” He then adds some more specifics, such as major investments in R&D and clean energy infrastructure, higher fuel efficiency standards, and a “carbon dividend” plan. Finally, he touts the “pragmatic solutions” he advanced as Governor.

When I googled “Cory Gardner for Senate,” the link on the page was an ad from the Conservative Triumph Fund that began: “Colorado is in danger - donate now to make sure we don’t lose Trump’s Senate majority. We have to re-elect Cory Gardner to keep the Trump majority in 2020 and beyond.” That highlights Gardner’s biggest challenge. He hopes to pick up moderates with (among things) his support for the environment. He also needs to keep the Trump base. In the end, the race may turn on how much Gardner is able to escape from Trump’s shadow.