

The Senate race in Iowa pits incumbent Joni Ernst against Democrat Theresa Greenfield. Climate change is the area where the two contrast most strongly. Greenfield accepts the science and calls for action. Ernst is still in the “maybe it relates to a little bit to humans” phase of climate denial. She also says she’s “so skeptical” of the COVID death count. “These health-care providers and others are reimbursed at a higher rate if covid is tied to it, so what do you think they’re doing?”

**Joni Ernst.** Ernst’s campaign site focuses much of its attention on rural areas. She calls for “eliminating harmful rules and regulations that hamstring Iowa’s economy, including Obama’s Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule which would have regulated about 97 percent of land in Iowa.” (I have no idea where she got the 97% figure — surely she doesn’t mean that nearly all the state is a swamp or marsh.) Not surprisingly, she’s also in favor of ethanol as a fuel — they grow a lot of corn in Iowa. Her Senate website calls for an “all of the above” energy approach and mentions her support for wind power (Iowa sells a lot of that) and biofuels, along with fossil fuels and the Keystone XL pipeline.

Ernst isn’t willing to acknowledge that human activities are causing climate change. [Here](#) is as far as she’s been willing to go: ““I think there is probably a contribution there, but again, if we wipe industry off the face of the earth, the climate is still going to change. Climate has been changing since the dawn the time, but can we be better stewards of the environment? Of course, we can.” At least she didn’t say climate change is a Chinese hoax, like the national leader of her party.

In practice, “all of the above” seems to lean heavily toward fossil fuels. Ernst has a 3% lifetime score from the League of Conservation Voters. Her score of 14% in 2019 must have lifted the lifetime score by a percent or two.

**Theresa Greenfield.** Greenfield’s campaign biography is sketchy, but it tells an appealing story about a young widow with two children who pursues a career in urban planning and real estate development. In terms of the environment, the website says:

“We can’t afford to have Senators who question and deny the science, who refuse to act when the future of our kids and grandkids are on the line, and who consistently put the needs of Big Oil over Iowans suffering. Theresa is proudly endorsed by the League of Conservation Voters Action Fund, and understands the gravity of our climate crisis requires smart, principled leadership.”

The website says Greenfield will pursue “good-paying clean energy jobs and defend and strengthen our environmental laws that are under attack from the corporate special

interests in Washington.” Notably, the website also mentions climate change adaptation, saying “she will also be focused on solutions that protect Iowans from the effects of climate change, including securing infrastructure funding to strengthen our defenses against flooding to save communities across Iowa.”

Overall, Ernst seems to be pretty much a standard-issue anti-environmental conservative, except where local industries (biofuels, wind) are at issue. Greenfield seems likely to be a fairly average Democrat in environmental terms. The choice between them may have national repercussions, given the battle for Senate control now underway.