

According to political forecaster [Cook Political](#), “Suddenly, nearly anything is possible in the Senate races.” After yesterday’s vote to confirm Amy Barrett, I probably don’t need to tell you how important Senate control is. In the next session of Congress, control of the Senate will determine the environmental views of new judges and whether any environmental legislation can pass. These Senate races will determine the shape of American policy until at least 2023. Democrats have a good chance of flipping the Senate, but there’s huge uncertainty.

To flip the Senate Democrats need a net gain of three seats if Biden wins (because his Kamala Harris would cast the tie-breaking vote); otherwise they need a net gain of four. Here’s why Senate control is so important and where things stand right now.

Control of the Senate will shape post-2020 policy in many areas, notably including the environment and climate policy. If Biden wins, Senate control will give him a chance of 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 with anti-regulatory judges.

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. Based on the views of the forecasters, I’d say that Senate control leans just *slightly* in favor of the Democrats.

This table shows where things are now. I’ve added adjectives where the two forecasters disagree — “leans slightly” means that one forecaster said a race was a toss-up and the other said it leaned toward one side. “Leans strongly” means one said “likely” and the other said “leans.”

State	June 2	Current state of play
<b>Alabama</b>	Leans strongly Rep.	Leans strongly Rep.
<b>Michigan</b>	Lean Dem.	Leans D
<b>Maine</b>	Toss-up	Leans slightly D

<b>North Carolina</b>	Toss-up	Toss-up
<b>Arizona</b>	Lean slightly Dem.	Leans D
<b>Colorado</b>	Lean slightly Dem.	Leans strongly Dem.
<b>Georgia (open seat)</b>	Lean Rep.	Leans slightly R Oct. 20 update: seat now reclassified to toss-up.
<b>Montana</b>	Lean Rep.	Leans slightly R

There are also some other seats that are now in play, including Iowa and the other Georgia Senate seat, but I wanted to give a sense of trends in the same states that were flagged in June.

Control of the Senate is clearly within reach for the Democrats. If they pick up Arizona, Colorado, Maine, Michigan, where they are somewhat favored, that would (barely) give them the Senate even if they lose Alabama. If Biden loses, then they need one more Senate win.

Will Senate control end up as close as the forecasters say? I'd say probably not, due to the way elections have been nationalized. If Biden gets a solid win, close Senate races are more likely to go his way. If Trump wins, flipping the Senate gets really tough for the Democrats. But if Biden just squeaks by, control of the Senate is going to be a very close call.