

Who will lead the Senate in 2025? The odds are that it will be a Republican. Democrats have a slim margin and face some close races, while all the GOP seats seem secure. That makes the question of who will replace Mitch McConnell as GOP leader all the more important for climate and energy policy.

Here are two top possibilities. Neither of them is by any stretch of the imagination an environmentalist. Yet you have to say one thing in their favor: neither is half as anti-environmentalist as their national party leader, Donald Trump.

**John Cornyn (TX).** LCV score of 7%, just below Mitch McConnell's lifetime score of 9% and a third of Susan Collins's score. Cornyn's Senate website emphasizes expansion of fossil fuel production but also touts Texas as a "trailblazer in renewable energy." In 2021, however, when asked about Biden's plan to eliminate electricity-related emissions by 2035, Cornyn said, "'It's pure fantasy. ... This is part of the cult, or religion, of renewable energy."

**John Thune (SD).** Lifetime LCV score of 11% (half of Susan Collins's lifetime score). Thune called the Green New Deal "a radical, comprehensive socialist revamping of our society, with the federal government inserting itself into nearly every aspect of American life." He also said that the Inflation Reduction Act would worsen inflation, harm economic growth, drive up energy costs for consumers, and make the energy system less reliable. Still, he calls himself "a strong supporter of clean energy innovation, from wind power to biofuels" and reports that "83 percent of the electricity generated in my state of South Dakota came from renewable sources." But, he says, "we're not yet at the point innovation-wise where we can rely mostly on intermittent, renewable sources to power electric grids."

in the mix, though he dropped out a couple of days ago. He is likely to take another top position in the Senate GOP leadership instead, so it's worth taking a look at him. His lifetime LCV score is 7%, like Cornyn. In 2021, Barrasso said, "We all believe climate change is real. We believe mankind is certainly contributing to that....We want to make sure the American people have affordable energy and we want to make energy as clean as we can, as fast as we can."

Yet, Barrasso is vehement in rejecting Democratic efforts to reduce emissions: "The Democrats in Washington are utterly obsessed with the green dreams of the coastal elites who run the Democratic Party, who call the tune. Again and again, the Democrats side with the climate elites over the common folks."

Along with Cornyn and Thune, this gives you a sense of the center for gravity among Republican Senators — not adopting climate denial or willing to oppose renewables on

principle, but far from ready to endorse much climate action, except perhaps expansion of nuclear power.

Of course, the ultimate choice to replace McConnell could be someone entirely different. Although neither Thune nor Cornyn would be cause to celebrate, their views compare favorably to those of some other Republicans — most prominently, the man who will almost certainly carry the GOP standard in November.