In the movie *Sliding Doors*, Gwyneth Paltrow is racing to catch the subway, only to have the doors slide shut when she's inches from boarding. This turns out to be a crucial fork in the road— if she'd caught the train, it turns out, her whole life would have been different. In 2016, Hillary Clinton missed winning the presidential election by the narrowest of margins. The trajectory of climate policy would have been entirely different if she'd just squeezed through those sliding doors.

If Clinton had won, she rather than Trump would have nominated the replacement for Justice Scalia. Even if the Senate had stonewalled the appointment, the Court would have been evenly split; otherwise, the Court would have had a liberal majority. Obama's signature climate policy, the Clean Power Plan, would not have been overturned by the Supreme Court. This would have positioned Clinton to replace it with a stronger plan, as she had pledged to do.

Unlike Trump, of course, Clinton would not have conducted administrative repeals of nearly all of Obama's other climate regulations. In short, rather than having climate policy suddenly gutted, the U.S. would have built on Obama's work with even stronger limits on carbon emissions from power plants and transportation. And of course, the U.S. would never have left the Paris Agreement.

All of this could easily have happened. Two weeks before the election, Clinton had a clear lead in the polls, and in the end, she readily won the national popular vote. Her losses in the key swing states were razor thin. Even a small shift in the vote in a few states would have made all the difference. For instance, as a Politico analyst observed, "had voters in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin cast their ballots for Clinton rather than the Green Party's Stein, Clinton would be president."

There were any number of postmortems on the election results and numerous theories of just why Clinton lost out to Trump. The pain has faded a bit with time, though for anyone who cared about the environment, the result was heartbreaking. But it was not foreordained. And if she had won, we would be much further along today in the battle to cut carbon emissions and control climate change.

The bottom line: Elections do matter. Not just for politicians but for all of us.