Given the stark differences between the perspectives of the two parties, the outcome of the 2024 election will be pivotal for climate and energy policy. With a month to go, things are still incredibly close. Harris has a tiny edge in the electoral college, and the Republicans have a similar edge in the House. I wrote about the Senate yesterday, where Republicans are somewhat favored to win control because the key Montana race is starting to lean Republican. But even that could shift if the Democratic candidate mounts a comeback or if Democrats manage to win a long-shot race in Nebraska or Texas.

Today, I'll look at the White House and House of Representatives, then sum up with something about policy implications. As usual, I'm basing my assessment on two experienced prognosticators, Sabato and Cook, so at least you know I'm not cherry-picking assessments. They may be wrong, but at least they know more about these things than I do.

In terms of the presidential race, Harris seems to have a small though persistent edge in the popular vote. But the Electoral College is far too close to call. Eight states are considered toss-ups: Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Democrats have the slightest of edges because they have seven more electoral votes in their pockets at this point than Republicans, so they don't need to pick up quite so many of the toss-up votes.

Modelers are suggesting that Trump has about a 45% chance of winning. To put that in more vivid terms, suppose the election would be decided by drawing a card out of the deck. Trump wins if he draws any red card above a 2 except the queen of hearts. If he wins, he gets to run the country. That's basically where we are now.

In terms of the House, my sources agree that control will also turn on the toss-up races. They disagree about how many races are toss-ups (18 versus 25), but agree that the Democrats will need to win about two-thirds of the toss-ups. So Republicans seem to have a slight edge in terms of House control at this point. Still, things remain very close, and if they do keep House control, it seems likely that they won't grow their current slim majority.

What will all of this mean for policy going forward? Given the difficulty of holding the Senate, a Democratic trifecta remains unlikely. That means that, if she wins, Harris will probably need to negotiate with Senate Republicans (and if she's unlucky, with the generally more recalcitrant House Republicans).

Correspondingly, the Republicans have a better chance of a trifecta. That would allow them to use the Senate reconciliation procedure to avoid a filibuster and cut energy and environmental programs. Parts of Biden's big climate law, the IRA, could be at risk. But Democrats do have a good chance of taking the House even if they lose a close presidential race, so Trump just might be faced with Hakeem Jeffries as House Speaker, making it much harder for Trump to get what he wants from Congress.

There are a few weeks to go before we'll know the answers. A last-minute "October surprise" is still possible, and it's also possible that polls will turn out wrong. So hang onto your hats for the final stretch of this rollercoaster ride.