Because of polarization, environmental policy is closely tied to political party. It's sad, since these should be non-partisan issues, but it's a reality. With that in mind, I've been providing election information for about the past ten years. I don't claim any special expertise in political forecasting. My assessments are based on two respected politics websites, Cook and Sabato.

Given all that's happening, the situation will surely shift in the six months, but here's what things look like right now. Basically, the situation has moved in favor of the Democrats since my last post in November, but it's still too early to know whether this will develop in a wave election.

Will Republicans hold the Senate?

The "out-party" typically does well in off-year elections, but the Senate map is tough for the Democrats. Republicans currently hold 53 seats and the Vice-Presidency, so Democrats need to hold all their seats and pick up four more for control. Holding all the current seats isn't a given. Sabato and Cook rate Michigan as a toss-up. Democrats can't afford to lose that race.

In terms of pickups, Cook lists Maine and Ohio as tossups, and North Carolina as leaning Democratic, . After that, Democrat's best bet would be Alaska (leans Republican). Sabato views Maine, Michigan, and North Carolina as toss-ups, and Ohio as lean Republican. It would be interesting to know more about the reasons for Sabato's more pessimistic view of the Democrats. Regardless, this picture has improved for Democrats since my November post. They would still need a lot of things to fall the right way, but winning control of the Senate has become a realistic possibility.

Even if Democrats can't flip control of the Senate, closing the gap could still make a big difference. For instance, if the Democrats hold all their current seats and win North Carolina, Maine, and Ohio, then the Senate would be tied. Vance's tie-breaking vote would give the Republicans control. But Lisa Murkowski would then be an essential vote for Republicans, and she's a maverick who would play a role like Manchin did for Democrats under Biden.

Control of the House would allow Democrats to block further anti-environmental legislation, open investigations into Trump's rollbacks, and potentially bargain for some pro-environmental provisions. Control of the Senate, while less likely, would also allow them to block appointments of extremist anti-environmentalist judges

and officials.

Will Democrats flip the House?

Gerrymandering will make a big difference next November, since Republicans are trying to eliminate competitive seats in their states and Democrats are retaliating in their own states. Putting any new gerrymanders aside, the House outlook has shifted toward the Democrats since September.

In September, Cook and Sabato both saw 18 toss-up House races. Democrats needed to win 15 of them to win control, Republicans only needed 3. This advantage was a tribute to the success of Republican gerrymandering in eliminating competitive districts. (I'm simplifying things – there are also a bunch of "Lean" districts and wins in those districts would provide a cushion for either party in the toss-up races.)

Six months later, the situation has shifted dramatically. Cook sees 16 toss-up races where Sabato sees 13. But they agree that Democrats only need to win one of the toss-ups to gain House control. Thus, everything would have to break just right for the Republicans to keep control, and the odds are good that the Democrats will end up with a significant margin.

The Democrats had two big advantages going into the race. The first is the long history of out-party success in off-year elections. The second is that turnout in those elections is lower than in presidential elections, and Democrats now have strong support from the affluent, educated voters who have the highest turnout. Trump won with the support of people who don't usually vote but turned out for him. It will be hard to duplicate that when he's not on the ballot. The Republican gerrymandering campaign was intended to counter these Democratic advantages, but it now seems like gerrymandering will turn out to be a draw rather than giving the Republicans a big boost

Candidate quality will make a difference in these close races. But the biggest factor will be the nation's political mood. Will Trump's support erode further? That may turn on the state of the economy as much as anything. The Democrats are very likely to pick up seats, but will they pick up enough of them?

What About the Statehouses?

Governors are important players in state climate policy. Cook sees many of the races as toss-ups, including Arizona, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, and Wisconsin. Sabato sees three of those races (Arizona, Iowa, and Nevada) as leaning Republican. Both see Kansas and Ohio as leaning Republican. I suspect that the outcomes will be driven partly by candidate quality and partly by whether there's a national wave (although governor's races seem slightly less nationalized than House race or Senate races).

Six months is a long time in politics, especially in the Trump era. What we can say at this point is that, compared with last November, the landscape has shifted toward the Democrats. They are now strongly favored to win the House.. Republicans still clearly have edge in winning the Senate, but it's a smaller edge than it was six months ago. At this point, many governors races seem highly competitive, though the Republicans may have a small edge.

Political shifts can happen quickly these days. There are still six months to go, but at this point, it seems unlikely that Trump will continue to enjoy the benefit of a subservient majority in Congress.