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2020 Election Results and What They Means for Scientific and Environmental Policy

November 9, 2020

Ecological Society of America Public Affairs Office

Nicole Zimmerman, Public Affairs Manager

Alison Mize, Director of Public Affairs

www.esa.org



[Ecological Society of America](#) is a community of 9,000 scientists, researchers, decision makers, policy managers, and educators who are dedicated to understanding life on earth. ESA publishes six journals and holds an annual conference with 4,000 attendees.

We are an advocate for ecology and a voice for ecologists.

ESA Member Opportunities

- Join the Policy Section
- Join the Public Engagement and Communications Section
- Coordinate Hill visits with the Public Affairs Office
- Apply for the Graduate Student Policy Award
- Travel Awards to attend Annual Meeting
- Communication Training
- Guest blog *Ecotone*
- Contact the Public Affairs Office

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ESA Resources

Cabinet level and other nominees must be approved by the Senate

4,000 political appointees in agencies; [“Plum Book”](#) lists all the political positions open

FACA and other Committee appointments

- Policy News
- Transition Tracker
- Federal Register Tracker (committee openings)

The screenshot shows the ESA website's navigation bar with links for ESA, Ecotone Home, Research, Commentary, Society News, and Policy News. The main content area features a section titled "Federal Agency Transition Tracker" with a date stamp of November 2020. The text explains that the page provides selected information about the President's federal agency picks of interest to the ecological community and is continuously updated to include President-elect Joe Biden's picks. It also lists "Positions that require Senate Confirmation" and notes that all cabinet-level officials, except the White House chief of staff, require Senate confirmation. The page includes a "Meeting website" button and a "Join ESA" section with a group photo of ESA members.



First 100 days- Federal Agencies: secretaries and political appointments

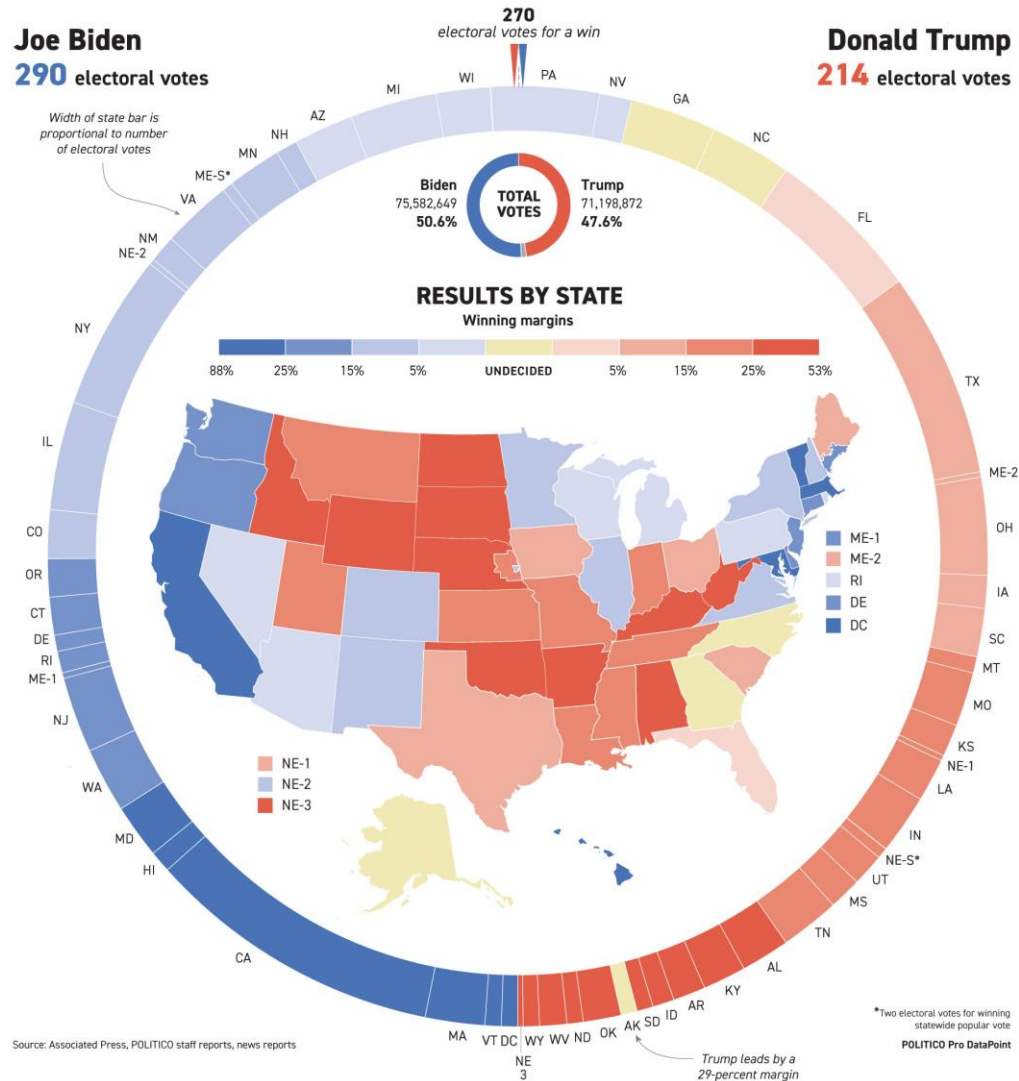
- All Cabinet secretary positions open; an “Acting Secretary” will be put in place; usually a career civil servant until a nominate is approved
- All 4,000 political appointments vacant; an “Acting” civil servant will serve until the new ad min makes an appointment
- A Biden “Landing Team” will go to each agency and start the transition of political power; Biden will have plans in place and his former experience as Vice President will speed getting the agencies up and running with new policies
- President Elect Biden has policy positions and plans in place, ready to go

Nov. 9, 2020

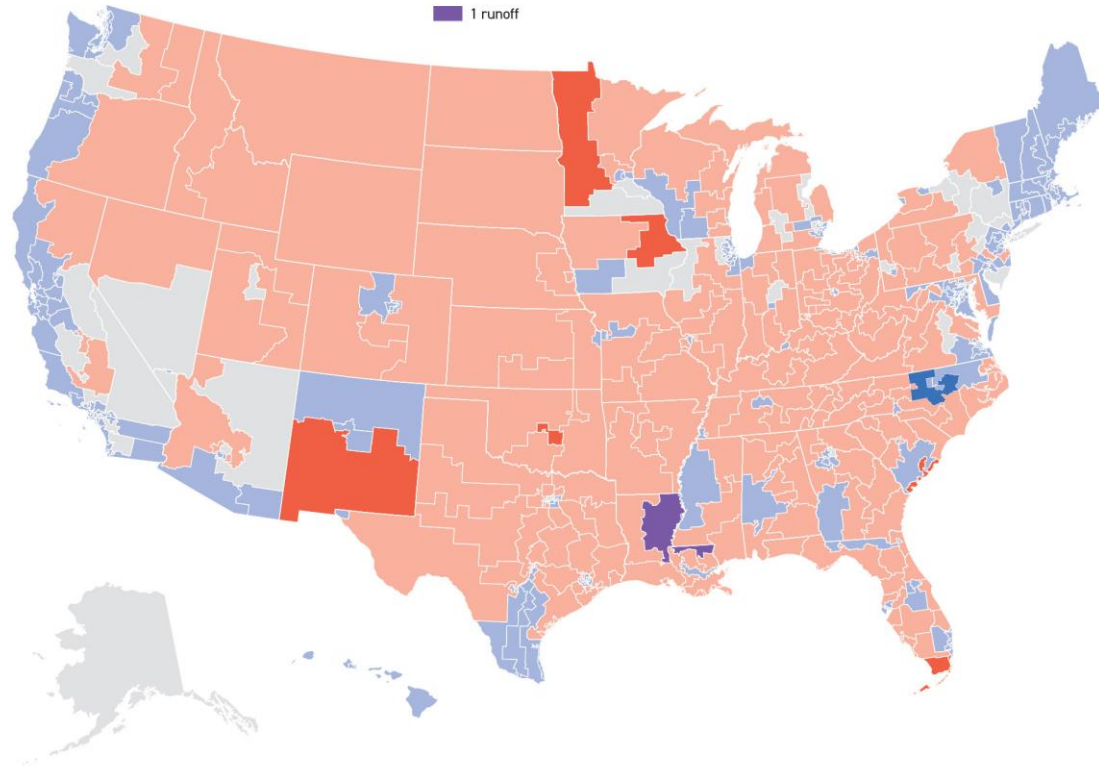
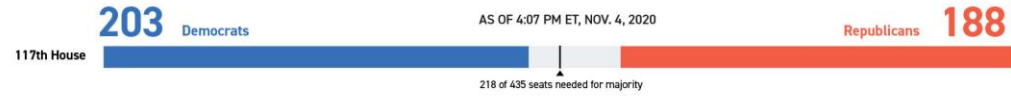
Biden defeats Trump

A slow-breaking blue wave of mail ballots tallied after election day flipped Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania to Biden.

As of 9:11 a.m., Nov. 9; preliminary results

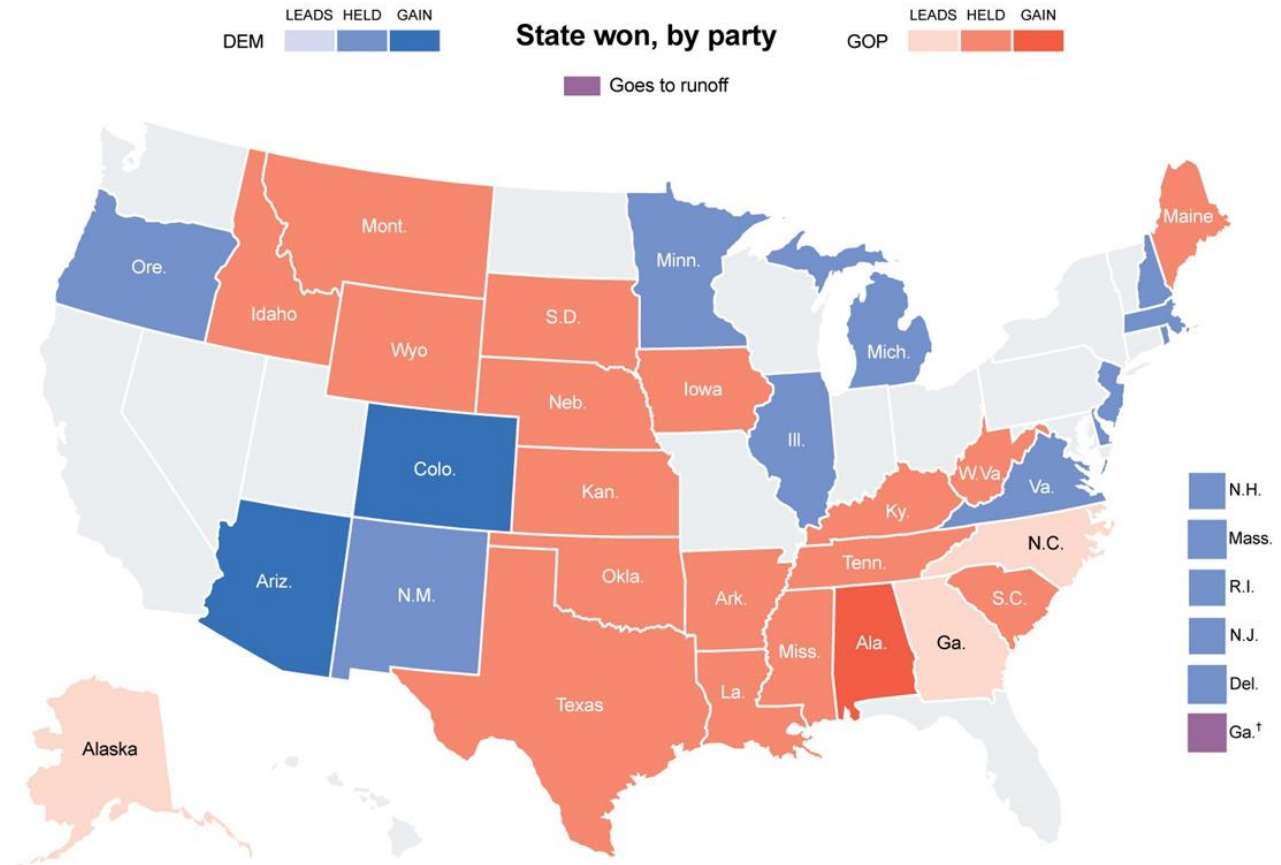
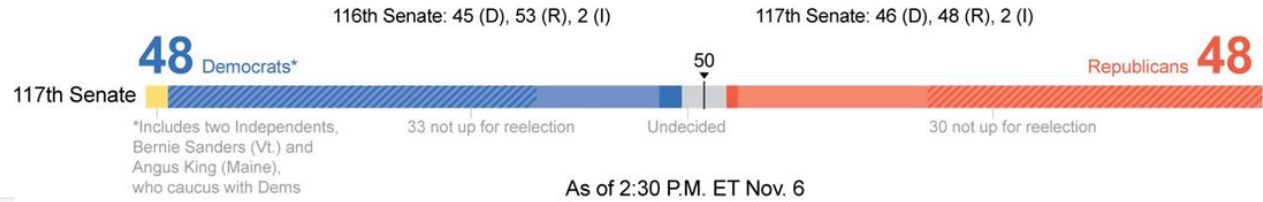


2020 House Election Results



Notes: The North Carolina 11th District and Texas 4th District were vacant at the time of the election but were most recently held by Republicans. They are noted as held by the GOP. Nonvoting members not shown.
Sources: POLITICO staff reports, Associated Press

2020 Senate Election Results



†Special election



Science, Environment and Conservation

Congress, Executive Branch and Judicial

- Congress: Laws, depends on majority party
- Major focus of a Biden administration: Revoke and replace Executive Orders Day 1, regulations and infrastructure
- Courts: conservative Supreme Court

LEGISLATIVE



- ★ Makes laws
- ★ Approves presidential appointments
- ★ Two senators from each state
- ★ The number of congressmen is based on population

EXECUTIVE



- ★ Signs laws
- ★ Vetoes laws
- ★ Pardons people
- ★ Appoints federal judges
- ★ Elected every four years

JUDICIAL



- ★ Decides if laws are constitutional
- ★ Are appointed by the president
- ★ There are 9 justices
- ★ Can overturn rulings by other judges

Biden-Harris: Top Priorities Day 1

- COVID (science driven response)
- Economy
- Racial Equity
- Climate (environmental justice and equity theme throughout all efforts)



Climate Policy: Likely Scenarios

(mitigation and adaptation)



Themes of Biden Environmental Plan

Restore U.S. leadership in fight against climate change

- Possible establishment of a “Climate Cabinet” and create an Equity Council
- Restore transparency and scientific integrity: Scientific Integrity Executive Order
- Begin reversing and replacing Trump rollbacks on day 1
- Use a whole-of-government approach, agency capacity and morale
- Jobs and Environmental Justice
- Resilient America Initiative (Natural Infrastructure)

Likely Climate Policy Details



- **Agriculture and Rural Development: focus on climate smart US agriculture and forestry, carbon sinks, use advanced biofuels**
- Requiring aggressive **methane pollution limits** for oil and gas operations.
- Using the **Federal government procurement system** – which spends \$500 billion every year – to drive towards 100% clean energy and zero-emissions vehicles.
- **Buildings:** Ensuring that all **U.S. government installations, buildings, and facilities are more efficient** and climate-ready, harnessing the purchasing power and supply chains to drive innovation.
- **Vehicles reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation** – the fastest growing source of U.S. climate pollution – by preserving and implementing the existing Clean Air Act and developing rigorous new fuel economy standards aimed at ensuring 100% of new sales for light- and medium-duty vehicles will be electrified and annual improvements for heavy duty vehicles.

Likely Climate Policy Details



- Research- ARPA-e, “Carbon Shot (*ARPA-C*)”
- Appliance Standards (ENERGY STAR), 48c tax credit or loans to business, weatherization, building-efficiency standards
- Committing that every federal infrastructure investment should reduce climate pollution and require any federal permitting decision to consider the effects of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.
- Requiring public companies to disclose climate risks and the greenhouse gas emissions in their operations and supply chains.

Environment and Conservation Policy Details



- Environmental Justice, White House and in agencies
- Permanently protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Bears Ears, Grand Staircase-Escalante, Northeast Canyons and Seamounts National Monuments, Tongass National Forest, and other areas impacted by President Trump's attack on federal lands and waters, establish national parks and monuments, ban new oil and gas permitting on public lands and waters, modify royalties to account for climate costs, and establish targeted programs to enhance reforestation and develop renewables on federal lands and waters with the goal of doubling offshore wind by 2030.
- Review more than 100 Trump rollbacks and restore the nations' environmental legacy
- Protecting biodiversity, slowing extinction rates and helping leverage natural climate solutions by conserving 30% of America's lands and waters by 2030, "30X30"
- Natural Infrastructure as part of any economic relief.

80 Trump's Regulatory Rollbacks

EXECUTIVE ORDERS



Revoked the National Ocean Policy that provided a comprehensive plan to protect and improve the ecological health and economic value of oceans, coasts and Great Lakes.



Instructed multiple agencies to focus on supporting onshore and offshore fossil energy development.



Asserted presidential power to approve permits for transboundary projects.



Justified rolling back climate and environmental protections in the interest of fossil fuel development.

FINAL RULES IN EFFECT



Extends timelines for effluent limits compliance; exempts coal plants that are closing, repowering or switching to natural gas by 2028.



Eases emissions controls and compliance requirements for major sources of hazardous air pollutants.



Repeals certain prohibitions on targeting bears and other predators in national preserves in Alaska.



Opens Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas leasing



Rolls back "unduly burdensome" safety requirements for offshore drilling equipment.



Withdraws a rule to limit gill net bycatch of turtles, whales and dolphins.



Repeals policies requiring that environmental harm caused by the use of public lands be mitigated.



Stops requesting national parks ban the sale of disposable plastic water bottles within the parks.



Cancels directive that states implement pollution control to improve visibility and air quality at national parks.



Weakens regulations on oil refinery air pollution.



Drops rule requiring hard rock mines on public lands to clean up contamination.



Dismantles efforts to require emissions controls at sewage treatment plants.



Disbands an interagency group that calculated the social costs of carbon emissions and withdraws the group's technical documents.



Repeals rule preventing coal strip mines from dumping rubble into streams and valleys.



Repeals rule designed to bring more stakeholders into the land management process to better account for ecological systems and multiple uses.



Ceases efforts to tighten offshore air pollution standards, which would have required improved pollution control technology.



Withdraws a proposed rule affecting health and environmental standards for uranium mill tailings.



Rescinds guidance for requiring additional financial assurance for leases, pipeline rights of way and rights of use, and easements.

Systems affected Air Water Ecosystems Public lands Human health Climate Waste

NOTE: An impact on a single system can cascade throughout all systems. This key attempts to highlight the primary system(s) affected.

See ESA Policy News for Full Graphic

<https://www.esa.org/esablog/ecology-in-policy/policy-news-november-9-2020/>

Major Regulations to Rollback (many more...)

- **NEPA rule:** Trump weakened implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA regulation, finalized July 15, 2020. NEPA require environmental impact assessment of major federal actions.
- **Methane rule:** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency finalized Aug. 13. Potent methane leaks and venting of methane can be easily fixed by oil and gas companies.
- **“Secret science” rule:** This rule would restrict what science EPA could use to justify its pollution-control regulations. It is not a final rule, so the Biden ad min would most likely withdraw it.
- **Waters of the U.S., or WOTUS, rule:** Lengthy rollback; end up in Supreme Court; Possible revert back to 2008 definition as a quicker fix to avoid legal tie-ups. Difficult as the Clean Water Act needs updating, not likely with Senate in Republican control.
- **Endangered Species Act regulations:** critical habitat, listing

Environment and Conservation Policy Details



- Review more than 100 Trump rollbacks and restore the nations' environmental legacy
- Executive Orders easier
- Regulation Harder, more lengthy process

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Questions?

Alison Mize

Director of Public Affairs

Ecological Society of America

alison@esa.org

Nicole Zimmerman

Public affairs Manager

Nicole@esa.org

<http://esa.org>