In the middle of the country, these two Senate races pit Democratic incumbents against strong Republican challengers in what promise to be very close races. Democrats must hold onto these seats to have any chance at all of winning control. If they lose both seats, the GOP will solidify its majority, giving Mitch McConnell more maneuvering room on legislation and judicial confirmations. Both Democratic incumbents have moderate records on the environment, whereas their opponents seem staunch opponents of environmental regulation These are states that Trump won easily, so these won't be easy races for the Democratic incumbents.

Missouri: McCaskill v. Hawley.

The incumbent, Claire McCaskill (D), has a 74% lifetime LCV score. She faces Josh Hawley.

McCaskill's website presents an interesting portrait of her environmental views. It begins by saying that she fought back against efforts to weaken air and water pollution standards. It also emphasizes her support for renewable energy. It takes a passing bow at the "all of the above" approach while saying that she "also knows the value of protecting our national treasures and outdoor heritage." And finally, it emphasizes her independence from the national party:"Unafraid to stand up to anyone in her pursuit to do what's right for Missouri, Claire broke with her own party and voted in favor of the Keystone Pipeline because of the benefits it would provide to Missouri. She has also opposed burdensome regulations, including the 'Cap & Trade' proposal that would have hurt Missouri families."It remains to be seen whether her effort to thread the needle on environmental issues will pay off with the Missouri electorate.

Her opponent, Josh Hawley, has been the state's attorney general. His website spotlights his efforts against "the Washington overreach threatening our farms and family businesses, including the Waters of the United States Rule and the Clean Power Plan." Calling himself a constitutional conservative, he had Trump's endorsement in the primary and bills himself as "the conservative candidate for Senate." Hawley went to Stanford, then Yale for law school, and then clerked for Michael McConnell on the Tenth Circuit. (McConnell is now a law professor at Stanford). Interestingly, Hawley's website doesn't mention any of these elite, out-of-state experiences, instead stressing his Missouri roots. In many respects, Hawley sounds very much like Ted Cruz in background and ideology, if not in personality.

Indiana: Donnelly v. Brown.

The incumbent is Joe Donnelly (D), who has a 58% lifetime LCV score. He faces businessman Mike Braun, who benefitted in the primary from Trump's endorsement at an Indiana rally.

Donnelly's campaign website doesn't mention energy or environment. His Senate website has tabs for both. On energy, he endorses the Keystone XL pipeline and expresses a friendly attitude toward coal, criticizing EPA regulations for new coal plants. Like McCaskill, he tries to thread the needle on climate change: "A strong supporter of developing new clean coal technologies, Joe is working to establish carbon emissions that protect our environment without hurting our economy." On the environment more generally, he calls for a balance between "our responsibility to the environment and our need for a healthy economy." (I realize that seems a bit garbled, but that's what the website says.)

That's pretty tepid stuff, but there's still a big contrast with Donnelly's opponent. Republican Mike Braun doesn't think Trump has gone far enough in his regulatory rollbacks. According to his website, Braun believes "President Trump's work to remove burdensome red tape and lower taxes for families and businesses are a start, but now is the time to double down on empowering the private sector and job creators." His website consistently emphasizes his conservatism, highlighting his views on hot button issues like gun control, abortion, and the Trump's proposed border wall.