









Oct. 30, 2018

Where Midwest Senate Candidates Stand on Trade

President Donald Trump’s trade policy has been a key issue across several toss-up races in the Midwest, especially in states that have been affected by retaliatory tariffs from key trade partners. In some states, candidates in both parties have supported the steel and aluminum tariffs and actions against China, while elsewhere, candidates and incumbents have voiced concern over the effect of the tariffs on local economies.

Candidate statements on trade in select Midwest Senate races

	TOTAL TRADE IN GOODS BY PARTNER, 2017	Democratic candidates	Republican candidates
<div>Indiana COOK RATING: TOSS UP</div> <div></div>	<div><div></div>23% Canada</div> <div><div></div>12% China</div> <div><div></div>11% Mexico</div> <div><div></div>31% EU</div> <div><div></div>23% REST OF WORLD</div>	<p>In March, incumbent Sen. Joe Donnelly said he was “pleased” Trump was acting on steel and aluminum tariffs, and in an October interview said he supports “measured and precise” actions on steel and aluminum and protecting intellectual property. In the same interview, he said U.S. farmers and manufacturers have “become collateral damage.”</p>	<p>In an October interview, Mike Braun said the president’s trade policy “has already yielded phenomenal results with the EU and Mexico,” and said tariffs were an “important tool” to deal with China.</p>
<div>Michigan COOK RATING: LIKELY D</div> <div></div>	<div><div></div>36% Canada</div> <div><div></div>7% China</div> <div><div></div>33% Mexico</div> <div><div></div>11% EU</div> <div><div></div>14% REST OF WORLD</div>	<p>In a July interview, incumbent Sen. Debbie Stabenow said she supported “trade enforcement” but said the “all-out, broad efforts” that affected agriculture were “the wrong approach.” Stabenow praised an early 2018 decision to impose tariffs on Chinese washing machines.</p>	<p>In an October debate, John James praised the president for “modernizing NAFTA.” He also said trade policy “sometimes ... requires sticking up for yourself.” On Twitter, James has supported the president and called for “free, but also fair, trade.”</p>
<div>Minnesota (Klobuchar) COOK RATING: SOLID D</div> <div></div>	<div><div></div>27% Canada</div> <div><div></div>26% China</div> <div><div></div>9% Mexico</div> <div><div></div>15% EU</div> <div><div></div>23% REST OF WORLD</div>	<p>In an October interview, incumbent Sen. Amy Klobuchar said the U.S. “must come back to the negotiating table ... so we can have trade agreements instead of tariffs.” She praised Canada’s re-entry to the USMCA, and previously supported tariffs against steel overproduction.</p>	<p>In an October interview, State Rep. Jim Newberger said he supported the steel tariffs “because they have jump-started” part of the Minnesota economy, but added tariffs were a “short-term solution.”</p>
<div>Minnesota (Smith) COOK RATING: LEAN D</div> <div></div>		<p>Incumbent Sen. Tina Smith said the U.S. should “crack down” on countries like China that “violate international trade rules,” and said she was “glad” Trump had taken steps to support agriculture. She expressed concern he lacks a “long-term strategy” for Chinese steel subsidies, but was “glad” the administration acted on steel and aluminum tariffs. In a separate interview she said Trump has a “scattershot approach” on negotiating.</p>	<p>State Sen. Karin Housley said the steel tariffs have had a “positive impact” in northern Minnesota and Trump has “taken the appropriate steps toward leveling the playing field.” In a separate interview she said “we’ve got to be patient” and hope the president resolves the dispute “sooner rather than later.”</p>
<div>Missouri COOK RATING: TOSS UP</div> <div></div>	<div><div></div>26% Canada</div> <div><div></div>17% China</div> <div><div></div>17% Mexico</div> <div><div></div>18% EU</div> <div><div></div>22% REST OF WORLD</div>	<p>In an October debate, incumbent Sen. Claire McCaskill said the tariffs on China are “brutal for Missouri,” and they have “killed commodity prices.” McCaskill introduced legislation in July to aid farmers affected by retaliatory tariffs.</p>	<p>In an October debate, Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley said “if we’re going to be in the [trade] war, I want to win it.” On Twitter, he has said it is “clear” China “abuses the global trade system,” and also said the U.S. should prioritize workers in trade deal negotiations.</p>
<div>North Dakota COOK RATING: LEAN R</div> <div></div>	<div><div></div>75% Canada</div> <div><div></div>2% China</div> <div><div></div>4% Mexico</div> <div><div></div>13% 6% EU</div>	<p>In March, incumbent Sen. Heidi Heitkamp said the steel and aluminum tariffs were “shooting our economy in the foot.” She introduced legislation to use tariff revenue for trade promotion assistance for farmers and ranchers and to limit the president’s ability to set tariffs. In September, she said Chinese tariffs were “going into high gear at the worst possible time for North Dakota farmers.”</p>	<p>Rep. Kevin Cramer tweeted in August that while he would prefer a “different approach” to trade policy than tariffs, “it’s essential we support” the president in negotiations. In April, he said the president “is right to stand up to China,” and in July, testified at a U.S. Trade Representative hearing that Trump should “engage directly with President Xi” to reach an agreement.</p>
<div>Ohio COOK RATING: LIKELY D</div> <div></div>	<div><div></div>26% Canada</div> <div><div></div>14% China</div> <div><div></div>13% Mexico</div> <div><div></div>20% EU</div> <div><div></div>27% REST OF WORLD</div>	<p>Incumbent Sen. Sherrod Brown has said he supported the steel and aluminum tariffs “from the beginning,” but was “open” to exempting allies. In June, he voted against limiting the steel tariffs on China. He has criticized Chinese trade practices.</p>	<p>Rep. Jim Renacci has supported the president’s tariffs on China. He acknowledged Trump’s actions towards China and U.S. trade partners is “going to be a little uncomfortable,” and said negotiating is “what this president does best.”</p>
<div>Wisconsin COOK RATING: LIKELY D</div> <div></div>	<div><div></div>22% Canada</div> <div><div></div>18% China</div> <div><div></div>12% Mexico</div> <div><div></div>23% EU</div> <div><div></div>24% REST OF WORLD</div>	<p>Incumbent Sen. Tammy Baldwin has criticized China and introduced legislation to address Chinese trade practices. She supports “buy American” measures for steel, iron and manufactured goods. She has also encouraged Trump to assist farmers affected by tariffs.</p>	<p>State Sen. Leah Vukmir has called China a “bad actor” on Twitter, and said the president “is working really hard through the tariffs to create fair deals.” She also praised the dairy provision in the USMCA.</p>

State trade data from USA Trade database at the U.S. Census Bureau; race ratings from Cook Political Report. State information: **Indiana**: U.S. Senate, AgriNews, IndyStar; **Michigan**: U.S. Senate, The Detroit News, CBS News, Up North Live, Twitter; **Minnesota**: Minnesota Newspaper Association, Star Tribune, Brainerd Dispatch, Duluth News Tribune, WCCO, Pioneer Press; **Missouri**: U.S. Senate, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Twitter; **North Dakota**: U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, the Wall Street Journal, Duluth News Tribune; **Ohio**: U.S. Senate, Dayton Daily News, Columbus Dispatch; **Wisconsin**: U.S. Senate, Post Crescent, Twitter

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