

Meet Kriss: The Democrat Farmer Running Against Marklein in State Senate District 17

Kriss Marion is running against Howard Marklein for the Wisconsin State Senate in District 17. A farmer and small business owner from Blanchardville, she has been married for 30 years to her college sweetheart, Shannon. They have four grown children, a pair of Great Pyrenees dogs named Willie and Waylor, and too many chickens to count.

Kriss's run for the State Senate is motivated by a strong belief that the small towns and rural communities of Southwest Wisconsin can survive and thrive, but that their interests are not being served by career politicians with special interest obligations. Kriss calls for robust investment in rural schools, roads, broadband, Main Streets and entrepreneurs - including family farmers - to create more and better jobs. She is committed to returning local decision-making control to counties, towns and municipalities. New to government, but deeply involved in community organizations, Kriss has a public record of working with partners to repair Wisconsin's renowned land and water ethic.

Born in dairy country outside of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, to a steel worker dad and a stay-at-home mom, Kriss moved to the Midwest at age 17 to study journalism at Northwestern University. On her first day of classes she met Shannon, and they got hitched before she graduated in 1989.

Kriss worked in Chicago newspaper and magazine journalism for a decade, freelancing while homeschooling. The family moved to Blanchardville 13 years ago, where the children were embraced by the public schools and Kriss focused on building several small businesses. She's a certified organic vegetable farmer and runs an award-winning bed and breakfast in the 130-year-old farmhouse that Shannon restored. The pastoral homestead is dotted with restored barns and new outbuildings he built for their livestock.

As someone who tirelessly pursues what she believes in, Kriss is known nationally as one of Wisconsin's famous "Cookie Bill Ladies," who fought the state for four years and finally won the right for home bakers to sell their products in 2017.

Kriss has served on the Lafayette County Board for one term and sits on the Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Lafayette County Development Corporation, Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program Board and FairShare CSA Coalition Board.

She is co-founder of the Soil Sisters' farm tour, immediate past president of Wisconsin Farmers Union South Central Chapter, founder of the Pecatonica Pride Watershed Association and a member of Blanchardville's Chamber of Commerce and Woman's Club. She started the Blanchardville Farmers Market. Acknowledging the power of collaborating to solve problems, the motto of Kriss's campaign is Moving Forward Together.