

# Ripon

---

## Profile

**Name:** Kristi Noem

**Occupation:** Congresswoman (R-SD)

**Who were your heroes growing up?** I truly admired my father. He was a hard worker and never shied away from a challenge if it was the right thing to do. He taught me the value of responsibility, integrity, and pride in a job well done. We did everything together as a family and I especially enjoyed working by his side on the family farm and hunting trips to the mountains.

**How did your upbringing as a farmer and rancher in South Dakota shape your view of Washington and the federal government today?** When my father passed away in a farming accident, I was only 22 years old. Our family was immediately confronted with the burden of estate taxes. Trying to deal with the tragic loss of my dad and figuring out how to pay that bill to the federal government changed me forever. I saw how policies can dramatically change lives and threaten family owned businesses. I started to get active in the policy making process so that the everyday person who knew how to put together a budget and stick to it could have a voice in such decisions.

**You've been in office now for just over a year. What's been the toughest vote you have cast and how did you explain it to the people back home?** Voting for the Budget Control Act was not an easy choice for me. I believe that the people sent us here to govern so I didn't think shutting down the federal government was the right answer. But I came to Washington to help stop the spending spree that is bankrupting our country. The BCA wasn't perfect by any means but I believe it has helped shift the focus in Washington from spending to responsible cutting and gave us the opportunity to put words into action. The provision requiring a vote on a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution is an essential component of the Act.

**When you return home and hold town hall meetings, what one question are you are most commonly asked?** When I'm back in South Dakota traveling around the state, folks often ask me "is it as bad out there in DC as it seems?" Often, my answer is "yes."

**When you leave office, what do you hope your greatest accomplishment will be?** I hope I will be remembered as someone who always worked for what was best for South Dakota and our great country. I want them to remember that I was a common, ordinary person who would do whatever I could to help them succeed.

**Finally, 17 years after leaving college to run the family business in the wake of your father's death, you're about to receive your degree. What one lesson do you hope young people take away from your journey to earn your college diploma?** Earning my degree has not been an easy journey. I turned in my final paper in December and received word that I will graduate with the Class of 2012 from South Dakota State University in May. I had always wanted to go back to finish my degree but marriage, children, businesses, public service and life always convinced me that the time would have to be "later". One day my sister told me she was surprised I had never finished my schooling because I never quit anything. That was the trigger that got me back on track again and hitting the books again. Life was never going to slow down, so it was time to just make a little more time in each day.

I hope young people understand that life is full of surprises which may change your current plan for your life. It's okay to do things in a non-traditional manner. Don't be afraid to pursue an opportunity. Continue to grow in knowledge, expand your horizons, and be a life-long learner.

