

BUSINESS INSIDER

These 22 people in Republican rising star Kristi Noem's circle are worth watching with 2024 looming

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South Dakota Republican Gov. Kristi Noem's national profile is quickly rising.

She's introducing herself around the country and many in GOP circles consider her a potential candidate for the White House. She's making headline-grabbing moves that appeal to the party base.

She rejected most of the coronavirus prevention measures embraced by her fellow governors — including Republican ones — such as mask mandates, social distancing, and lockdowns. Those decisions were cheered by conservatives, but South Dakota suffered a large outbreak at a meat processing plant early in the pandemic and had some of the worst rates of infection during the winter of 2020. She also sent 50 National Guard troops to the southern border in June 2021, paid for by an out-of-state megadonor.

As Noem's star rises, people surrounding her are worth watching as well. Several members of her inner circle have been with her since her days in the state legislature and helped her run for Congress. Others have jumped back and forth between her governor's office and her campaigns.

Insider has compiled a guide to Noem's circle. They include family members, officials in her administration as well as longterm political allies. Keep an eye out: They might just wind up on her presidential campaign staff one day.

Beth Hollatz, longtime aide

Beth Hollatz has been in the governor's circle since at least 2010. She started out as a regional director when Noem was in the US House of Representatives, and later rising to state director, a

powerful role in any member of Congress' office. Hollatz became Noem's deputy chief of staff in Pierre after the latter won her gubernatorial race.

Hollatz took an unpaid leave of absence from the governor's office in 2020 to work on Noem's re-election campaign, [KELO News reported](#). She's worked on several of Noem's campaigns, including all of her congressional bids, throughout the years.

Matt McCaulley, lobbyist and attorney

McCaulley is one of the top lobbyists in South Dakota, and a partner at Redstone Law Firm. He served in the state legislature from 2001 to 2004. He's also close with the Noem administration, and the two go back a long time.

Redstone has tens of thousands of dollars worth of contracts with the governor's office, [South Dakota News Watch](#) and [KELO News reported](#). McCaulley was Noem's campaign attorney when she ran for South Dakota's at-large House seat in 2010, and stayed on through her re-election campaigns. When she won the governorship, [he chaired her transition team](#).

Corey Lewandowski, political advisor

Lewandowski, who is also a longtime Trump advisor, has been traveling the country with Noem, shepherding her to Republican fundraisers and conservative conferences, guiding her along as she builds a national profile.

Noem's bringing on of Lewandowski, even as he continues working with Trump as head of his super PAC, has stoked speculation among Republicans that Noem may be angling for a spot on a Trump 2024 ticket instead of flatly running for office herself.

Kennedy Noem, daughter and in-state finance director

Noem's daughter, Kennedy Noem, is also a key figure in her mother's political operation. She was a field director for Noem's gubernatorial campaign, worked on the transition, and joined her in the governor's mansion on day one [as a policy analyst until August 2020](#). Her hiring [prompted a failed effort in the South Dakota legislature to pass an anti-nepotism bill](#).

In May 2021, Kennedy Noem became finance director for the governor's re-election campaign.

Kennedy Noem was at the governor's side [during trips to the Trump White House](#) and at a [February 2020 photo opp](#) with former Vice President Mike Pence.

Bryon Noem, husband

Bryon Noem is the second gentleman of South Dakota. He and Kristi Noem married in 1992 and have three children, Kennedy, Kassidy, and Booker. He's the founder of [Noem Insurance](#), which he maintains alongside his public duties.

Kyle Peters, son-in-law

Peters, who is married to Noem's daughter Cassidy Noem-Peters, also raised eyebrows when he joined the Governor's Office of Economic Development. He worked there for two and a half years, before leaving in June 2021 to become a consultant in the agriculture industry.

Larry Rhoden, lieutenant governor

South Dakota's second-in-command Larry Rhoden served with Noem in the state's House of Representatives, where he'd held a seat since 2000. She chose him as her running mate during the 2018 race, and once they'd won, she also made him the state's interim agriculture secretary from May to September of 2020.

According to his official bio, Rhoden continues to run a cow-calf operation, which raises livestock intended for beef, and a welding business.

Madison Sheahan, campaign aide

Sheahan, a former policy analyst in the governor's office, moved over to Noem's re-election effort in June 2021, KOTA TV reported. She previously worked for Donald Trump's 2020 re-election campaign in Ohio, and for the National Republican Senatorial Committee.

Herb Jones, former chief of staff

Since taking office as governor, Noem has had four chiefs of staff. Jones was the very first. He served as deputy campaign manager on her 2018 bid for governor and later worked on the transition team after she won, the Argus Leader reported.

Josh Shields, former chief of staff and ex-campaign manager

Shields and Noem go way back; he was her campaign manager on her very first run for Congress in 2010, and again during the 2015 cycle. When Noem first got elected to the House, Shields went to Washington with her, serving as Noem's communications director until 2012.

After Noem became governor, she appointed Shields as her second chief of staff. He served in the role for just a few months, from October 2019 to the following January, before he left for the private sector.

Tony Venhuizen, former chief of staff

Venhuizen has been in and out of the Noem administration since she took office. He started out as a senior advisor before leaving her office to rejoin McCaulley's Redstone Law Firm in 2019. But not much later, he was back. Venhuizen was Noem's third chief of staff in the governor's office, from March 2020 - April 2021. He left when she appointed him to the Board of Regents.

He also happens to be the son-in-law of former South Dakota governor Dennis Daugaard, Noem's immediate predecessor. And he served as chief of staff in that administration as well.

Aaron Scheibe, chief of staff

Scheibe is Noem's fourth chief of staff since she became governor in 2019. A 12-year veteran of the State Department who served under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, Scheibe returned to South Dakota in 2014 to work for the governor's Office of Economic Development.

He signed on with the Noem administration as a senior policy advisor in 2019 but stayed less than a year, heading to a law firm until 2021. He returned to the governor's office as a chief of staff in May.

Ian Fury, spokesman for the governor

Fury, Noem's top spokesperson, shapes her image and serves as the main mouthpiece for the administration. He spent two years as communications director for Rep. Jim Jordan, an Ohio Republican and staunch ally of Trump in the House.

Liza Clark, chief financial officer

Clark served on Noem's transition team and was once a policy advisor for Daugaard, the former governor. She's currently the CFO for Noem's administration, as well as the Commissioner of the Bureau of Finance and Management and a member of the South Dakota Retirement System Board of Trustees.

Steve Westra, commissioner of economic development

Westra was a member of the statehouse from 2013 to 2016 and was the chief operating officer of Hegg Hospitality Management before joining Noem's administration. He also served on her gubernatorial transition team, and did a stint with the State Tourism Advisory Board.

Mark Miller, general counsel

Miller is the top lawyer in Noem's administration as well as the "preborn person advocate". Noem, who is anti-abortion, [posted on Facebook](#) she had "assigned an Unborn Person Advocate in my office to recommend legislative and policy changes that protect life."

Miller came to South Dakota by way of Florida, where he was a longtime attorney and a former law clerk for US District Judge Henry Lee Adams and Florida state appellate court judge Emerson R. Thompson.

Katie Hruska, deputy general counsel

This North Dakota native has acclimated to the South Dakota legal scene over the past decade, interning for Cutler Law Firm, LLP in Sioux Falls in 2013, and spending nearly three years as an associate attorney at May, Adam, Gerdes & Thompson LLP in Pierre.

Hruska clerked for the Sixth Judicial Circuit of South Dakota – delving into areas including election law and workers' compensation appeals – between her stints in private practice.

Melissa Klemann, senior policy advisor

This South Dakota native spends her days in Pierre advising Noem about administrative programs ranging from social services to law enforcement. Klemann previously worked as analyst for Wells Fargo and dealt with health insurance during a stint at the state's Labor Department.

John Coleman, senior policy advisor

Coleman is a Capitol Hill vet who's worked for two conservatives that fell from grace.

His first boss on the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Trent Franks of Arizona, abruptly resigned in December 2017 after news broke about a sex scandal involving female staffers, proposed surrogacy, and a \$5 million payday. Coleman closed out his time in Congress counseling former Rep. Steve King of Iowa – the outspoken Republican who spewed racist rhetoric for nearly two decades before losing his seat in November 2020.

Coleman's current portfolio includes labor, human resources, and telecommunications.

Allen Cambon, policy advisor

This Northern Virginia native worked exclusively for Louisiana Republicans during his tenure on Capitol Hill. His former bosses include: sex-scandal plagued Sen. David Vitter; one-term "kissing congressman" Rep. Vance McAllister; and three-term Rep. Ralph Abraham. Cambon worked his way up in Congress, rising from staff assistant in 2013 to legislative director in 2019.

Carbon's current portfolio includes agriculture, natural resources, and sportsmen's issues, among others.

Rachel Oglesby, policy advisor

This Maryland native got her first taste of politics interning at the right-leaning Cato Institute in DC, later hopping across the Potomac River to work at the Charles Koch Institute in Arlington, Virginia. Oglesby spent a few years doing public relations work for some trade groups – including the American Property Casualty Insurance Association and US Travel Association – before signing on with Noem's office.

Oglesby's current portfolio includes transportation, tourism, and public safety.

Megan Goltz, deputy policy advisor

A South Dakota native, Goltz has climbed into Noem's inner circle over the past three years. The one-time veterinary technician and horse trainer rose from field office director of Noem's gubernatorial campaign to scheduler and now policy advisor.