

Vote of Confidence Biographies

Michigan Senate
31st District

Democratic
Chris Kleinjans

From the age of 18 to today, my life's work has centered on building and strengthening the community around me.

My time in the military shaped that commitment in lasting ways. Service—especially during conflict—teaches you quickly that going it alone invites failure. Trusting the people beside you is what carries you through when things get hard. That lesson stayed with me. Ever since, I've found the greatest fulfillment in helping others grow, succeed, and achieve their goals.

Years of nonprofit community work, alongside raising two boys with my wife, Sarah, have been deeply fulfilling, but not without struggle. The 2009 housing crisis and the recession that followed hit the nonprofit sector hard, and I experienced a long stretch of unemployment and underemployment. Like many families, we faced moments of uncertainty—times when simply keeping the heat on, food on the table, and opportunities open for our kids felt fragile. To make ends meet, I've been a line cook, a commercial cleaner, and, briefly, a tree trimmer. Those jobs are a reminder that hard work takes many forms, and that dignity is found in all of it.

While I've always been politically aware and engaged, it was until the 2022 election, when Ottawa Impact gained a majority of the county commission, that I saw just how directly local government decisions can impact people's lives. Watching essential services reduced made it clear how quickly communities can be affected.

This was when I got into active politics, as I helped organize a successful recall effort and then defeated the incumbent in the special election. I became the first Dem to represent my district, the 2nd Dem to ever be a commissioner, and the only veteran to sit on the Board at that time.

Throughout my career, my focus remained the same: making sure people have the tools and opportunities they need to define and achieve their own success. My campaign for State Senate is an extension of that work.