

Roll Call

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Aides See Opportunity In New GOP Majority

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New staff members in the office of Rep. Bob Latta hail from prestigious universities and previous jobs. But having an impressive résumé doesn't mean one is prepared for some of the simpler tasks.

Like using the copy machine.

Communications Director Izzy Santa described her tussle with the machine as one of her most memorable on-the-job moments so far. Someone at the district office had sent a fax, but Santa couldn't figure out how to get it. Legislative Correspondent Jason Isakovic, also new to the office, tried to come to her rescue. But neither knew what they were doing.

"Our legislative director interrupted and said, 'Actually, it just gets e-mailed to you,'" Santa recalled.

Isakovic chimed in, "It was like the blind leading the blind."

Both staffers are new to the Ohio Republican's office, along with Legislative Assistant Shane Skelton. Each brings something different to the table: Isakovic is a Buckeye State native, Skelton is a self-professed policy wonk and Santa is strongly driven by ideology.

Although they met for the first time this month, Isakovic and Skelton unknowingly crossed paths on Election Day in 2010. Both men, who had campaigned for various Ohio races, were at the Renaissance Hotel in Columbus to help the GOP celebrate a slew of victories.

"We worked on 12 Congressional races - some Congressional, some state - and we won every single one," Skelton said with a smile. "So it was pretty awesome."

Meanwhile, across the country, Santa was working at the Cato Institute, transcribing television commentary and monitoring political pundits.

Santa, 26, was born in Puerto Rico and moved to Florida with her family when she was 14 years old. She graduated from Florida State University in 2005 with degrees in economics and political science. The wide-eyed graduate didn't know exactly what she

wanted to do for a living, but she wanted to help "empower people and make a change in the system."

Education became her niche when she took a job with the D.C.-based Hispanic Council for Reform and Educational Options, where she worked on getting school vouchers into school-choice program charter schools across the country, including in Ohio.

In 2008, Santa became Cato's manager of media relations. And when Republicans won back the House majority in 2010, she thought it was a great time to get her footing on Capitol Hill and took the job with Latta this month.

Skelton also saw the majority shift as a great opportunity. "As a conservative, there was really no better time to get involved than in 2010," he said.

The 27-year-old staffer, who hails from Madison, Wis., graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 2005. He then pursued a law degree from Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles, although he never intended to become a lawyer.

"I'm just a books and history guy," he said. "I like the policy side and was always dying to work in public policy."

After completing his degree in 2010, he came to D.C. to intern for Rep. Jim Jordan, figuring it was the best way to get his foot in the door. His stint in the Ohio Republican's office gave him the necessary ties to Latta's office.

Skelton started in the office in February and calls his portfolio, which includes energy, agriculture and defense, "awesome" and "fun."

As a college student, Isakovic had his eyes on the Capitol. At Kent State University, he joined several student organizations and did a social justice internship. After graduating in 2006, he was a personal aide for then-Sen. George Voinovich (R-Ohio) in his district office.

"I spent a lot of time with Voinovich helping him wind down the end of his career, which was great," the 26-year-old staffer said. "But after he retired, I knew it was time to get to D.C."

Since starting in January, Isakovic has focused on constituent outreach and the Congressman's mail system. Although it was an adjustment to move to a significantly smaller office, he says it's a welcome change.

"You get to know people a lot more," he said. "Everyone just really works together. It's a positive environment, and it's really enjoyable to work in."

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