

90.9wbur Brown Puts Together An Eager New Staff

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Sen. Scott Brown speaks during his first news conference as a senator on Feb. 4 in Washington. (AP)

The new senator's high profile has made a position on his staff the hottest ticket in town.

Sen. Scott Brown "is an absolute rock star in this town right now," said Brandon Arnold, director of government affairs at the libertarian CATO Institute. "Brown has a tremendous amount of influence right now in Washington, D.C., and I think a lot of people would like to be part of his staff because he's going to be the senator of so much attention on the Republican and Democratic side."

This is Brown's first week of work in Washington. The Senate calendar has several nomination confirmations, one of them controversial, and the introduction of a jobs bill. To get up to speed on

everything before him in the Senate, Brown will be relying on his new staff, which he is still selecting.

Brown probably has thousands of resumes to choose from. “One of the unique things about Scott Brown is you pretty much have every Republican in Washington, D.C. wanting to work for him,” said Brian Darling, director of Senate relations for the conservative think tank, the Heritage Foundation. “Because they’ve never had the opportunity to work for a Republican senator for their home state.”

The top job is already filled. Brown selected Steven Schrage, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, as his chief of staff. Schrage is a Harvard MBA who grew up in a military family.

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–Brian Darling, Heritage Foundation

Arnold said the choice reflects Brown’s priorities. “Bringing a chief of staff as somebody who has both defense and military policy experience certainly points in the direction that Sen. Brown has stated before, that he wants to work on armed services issues, veteran’s issues,” Arnold said.

Schrage was foreign policy and trade director for Mitt Romney during his presidential campaign. Brown’s new director of communications, Gail Gitcho, also worked on Romney’s campaign. Most recently she was head of communications for the Republican National Committee.

Leaving that influential job for a junior senator’s office might not be a typical career path. But this isn’t a typical senator. “I think what people are looking at is the excitement of working for a figure that’s looked upon nationally as an emerging Republican leader,” said Darling, of the Heritage Foundation.

Brown’s early selections complement what he brings to the table, which is a knowledge of Massachusetts, said Marty Linsky, of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. “These are both pretty experienced people, they are not neophytes,” Linsky said. “I think he was looking for people who have experience as Republican operatives, knew the role he was casting for, have some feel for the context.”

Brown has also reached out to a few of the late Sen. Edward M. Kennedy’s staff members. Most are retiring or moving to other jobs, but one case worker on immigration issues accepted Brown’s offer to join his staff.

Brown has repeatedly said he wants to be a Scott Brown Republican. His staff choices will be one indicator of what he means by that.

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