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People

By **Christopher Snow Hopkins** and **Naureen Khan**

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Lobby Shops: AmyClaire Brusch, Caroline Powers

For AmyClaire Brusch and Caroline Powers, joining O'Neill and Associates was the next best thing to going home.

Both are former Capitol Hill aides and Massachusetts natives who are unapologetic about their New Englander pride. They joined the federal-relations practice of the Boston-based lobbying and public-relations firm earlier this year—Brusch as vice president and Powers as an associate. Former Massachusetts Lt. Gov. Thomas O'Neill, the son of the late House Speaker Tip O'Neill, D-Mass., heads the firm.

Brusch, 35, knew that D.C. would be her ultimate destination at the ripe young age of 8. That's when she took a tour of the Hill organized by the office of then-Rep. Tip O'Neill, who represented her home district.

"I just fell in love. I knew that's where I wanted to be," Brusch says. "There's a certain poetry to the fact that I'm going back to New England," at least in spirit, "and that I'm going back to work for his son."

Brusch was instantly enamored of the inner workings of government and policy-making but not necessarily with O'Neill's political leanings. In fact, the mini-politico revolted when her Girl Scout troop went on a field trip to the campaign office of Walter Mondale in 1984 and the scouts were told to wear buttons and pass out materials for his presidential bid. She refused and, by way of protest, enlisted one of her classmates to join her in voting for Ronald Reagan in her school's mock election.

Having to defend her political views in her decidedly left-leaning state has strengthened her convictions, Brusch says, and has made it easier to interact with colleagues of all political stripes on the Hill and elsewhere.

"It's harder for me to work with a Yankees fan than with a Democrat," she jokes.

Brusch began her career as a GOP political operative in the offices of then-Massachusetts Gov. Paul Cellucci and Rep. John Boehner of Ohio, while she was an undergraduate at Johns Hopkins University. After graduating, she was a legislative assistant and correspondent for Boehner before moving on to work for Rep. Todd Tiahrt, R-Kan. Eventually, Brusch became the deputy chief of staff in his office and aided Tiahrt with his work on the Appropriations Committee.

"The best part is the people, and going in every day and working on something you believe in even if you're a small cog in the wheel," Brusch says. "One thing that I don't miss," she amends: "budget day."

Powers, 37, is also keeping in touch with her roots by joining O'Neill and Associates. Hailing from the Boston suburbs where much of her family is involved in the health care industry, she spent the past 10 years in Washington working for Massachusetts politicians.

"My husband always laughs, because when people ask, 'Where's home?' I say, Massachusetts," she says. "That's how I identify myself."

Her first job out of college was as a legislative aide for Democratic state Sen. Stephen Lynch. In 2001, when Lynch decided to run in a special election for the vacant seat of the late Rep. Joe Moakley, D-Mass., Powers signed on to Lynch's campaign and ultimately became his legislative director.

"I think the congressman knocked on every single door in the 9th Congressional District," Powers remembers of the rapid-fire turn of events.

Further complicating matters was the fact that the election was held on September 11. Lynch won, but none of his staff could get into his Washington office when they arrived in the city.

In 2007, when offered the opportunity to represent the interests of her home state in Washington, Powers joined the office of federal-state relations for Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick. Most recently, she served as director and helped to negotiate a \$21.2 billion Medicaid waiver agreement with the Health and Human Services Department. In her new role at O'Neill and Associates, Powers will continue to focus on health care issues.



CHET SUSSLIN

At O'Neill and Associates: AmyClaire Brusch and Caroline Powers