
POLITICO

Top 50 Politicos

One of the wonderful things about Washington is its fluidity. The college grad working advance for a presidential campaign may finish the administration as press secretary for the National Security Council.

What's more, Washington, in general, is a meritocracy. The people who get ahead are usually the smartest and most energetic. (We know of, um, some exceptions.)

Politico's staff assembled a list of 50 politicians to watch. To be sure, this list was entirely subjective. But these people caught our reporters' eyes. They aren't necessarily the most powerful people (although several may be someday). They are of different ages, party affiliations and backgrounds.

Their common theme is that they are on interesting career trajectories - and well worth watching.

Lauren A. Rothman

POSITION: Principal, Styleauteur

REASON TO WATCH: With her high-powered confidential clientele, we'll never know if this premier Washington fashion consultant was the auteur of Condi Rice's black knee-highs, but we'll bet she had nothing to do with Hillary Rodham Clinton's recent bumblebee outfit.

More politicos to watch

Huma Abedin

POSITION: Traveling chief of staff, Hillary Rodham Clinton

REASON TO WATCH: The awe of CapHill folk everywhere, Abedin began as a White House intern, and now HRC is never without her. She has been rumored to hang out with Hollywood elite, such as actor John Cusack, and she made Vogue's Top 10 Best Dressed List of 2007.

Michael Bassik

POSITION: Vice president of Internet advertising, MSHC Partners

REASON TO WATCH: This tech-savvy hotshot ad man consults for some of the edgiest liberal interest groups in D.C., and is also known for throwing some of the best parties in town.

Robert B. Bluey

POSITION: Director, Center for Media and Public Policy, The Heritage Foundation

REASON TO WATCH: Bluey edits the conservative think tank's website and contributes to several major conservative blogs (including his own, at RobertBluey.com). Conservative wonks say he's also a happy hour regular — one of the most social young conservatives around.

Todd Boulanger

POSITION: Senior vice president, Cassidy & Associates

REASON TO WATCH: From his successful weathering of the Jack Abramoff storm to his many cable TV appearances, Boulanger has proven his nattily attired, outside-the-box staying power.

Stacy Kerr

POSITION: Special assistant, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

REASON TO WATCH: Pelosi is rarely without the presence of the poised Kerr, who's been with the speaker for five years. Her relative youth (she's 30) hides her pedigree as a House vet who started out as Dem strategist Jenny Backus' assistant at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Stephanie Kotuby

POSITION: Editorial producer, CNN

REASON TO WATCH: As the guest booker for "The Situation Room With Wolf Blitzer," Kotuby is responsible for nearly 20 hours of television a week, bringing hip-hop's P. Diddy and Pakistan's Pervez Musharraf to millions of wonky viewers.

Michael Steel

POSITION: ChiPress secretary, House Minority Leader John A. Boehner

REASON TO WATCH: The consummate gentleman, Steel is well-schooled and well-versed in politics and spends his vacation time volunteering for various pols. He's also an equal-opportunity socializer — a recent Steel party featured GOP-ers, journos and even a few Democrats.

Erica Williams

POSITION: Issue campaigns manager, Center for American Progress' Campus Progress

REASON TO WATCH: This thoughtful progressive activist moved from the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights to the youth outreach arm of CAP, where she wages witty battle, sometimes via video, with young conservatives.