

New Lansing liaison comes from other side of desk

As L. Brooks Patterson's new staff takes office, the Observer & Enterprise is spotlighting his appointees and the jobs they will perform for county residents.

By TIM CARVELL
STAFF WRITER

When it came time for L. Brooks Patterson to appoint his state government liaison, he didn't have to look far; the right woman for the job, it turned out, was right outside his office — his personal secretary, Carmen Talbot.

Talbot, 47, said she was pleased — and a bit surprised — to find herself with an office and a secretary of her own.

"It's very strange," she said of being on the other side of the desk. "It's going to take some getting used to."

Patterson and Talbot have known each other since they coordinated the Michigan delegates in George Bush's 1988 presidential campaign. Patterson was sufficiently impressed with her skills to ask her to be his personal secretary.

"I thought about three seconds and said, 'I'd love to,'" she recalled.

Now, she's moved up again, this time to representing Oakland County's interests in the state's capitol.

Talbot's first priority has been to draw up a blueprint for her activities in Lansing. The main objective of her office, she said, is to make the state Legislature take Oakland County's needs seriously.

"We aren't so rich"

"Our biggest problem is convincing Lansing that we're not so rich that we don't need money," she said.

In order to accomplish this goal, Talbot said she plans to become "a pro-active force, not a reactive force. We want to make things happen."

A mixture of aggressiveness and diplomacy should do the trick, according to Talbot.

"We don't want to get up there and bully our way through," she said. "We don't expect to get our way every time. We just want to get them to listen."

Those frequent references to "we" are a clue to one of her office's assets: her strong rapport with Patterson.

"He is the most even-tempered, understanding, kindest. . . . She pauses. "He's very generous. . . (People) see toughness, and he's a teddy bear. Hopefully, some of him has rubbed off on me."

As part of her job, Talbot will have to make the one-hour drive to Lansing from her home in Highland Township two or three times per week, but she said it's a small sacrifice to make for a job which suits her so well.

"I'm quite political," she said. "This is the perfect job for me."

Indeed, Talbot has worked in and out of the political sphere for over a decade; she has served as an assistant to State Rep. Willis Bullard, as a Highland Township trustee, and as an influential member of the Oakland County Republican Party.

Likes problem-solving

"It's always been something I've been attracted to for some reason or other," she said. "I guess there's a real sense of accomplishment when you can help somebody or solve a problem."

"My first question this morning was, 'Where's the Xerox machine?'" she said, smiling.



DAN DEAN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Her realm: Carmen Talbot, recently appointed state government liaison by County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, used to work as Patterson's personal secretary.

Finance leadership up for grabs

Oakland County commissioner Marilyn E. Gosling, R-Bloomfield Hills, is one of two leading candidates vying for leadership of the county board's influential finance committee.

John McCulloch, R-Royal Oak, will be considered by their Republican colleagues during a GOP caucus today prior to the board's organizational meeting.

The caucus begins at 5 p.m. in the County Auditorium at 1200 N. Telegraph in Pontiac. The

board meeting follows at 5:30 p.m.

Gosling and McCulloch are vying to succeed G. William Caddell, R-Walled Lake, as chairman. Caddell is resigning as a commissioner to become deputy county clerk.

Gosling and commissioner

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