

People

Lobby Shops

LeAnne Wilson has spent much of her government career with one boss: former Gov. **John Engler**, R-Mich. But now that Engler has become a distinguished fellow at the Council on Competitiveness, Wilson is striking out on her own as a senior consultant at the Washington office of Bingham Consulting Group, a lobby shop affiliated with the law firm Bingham McCutchen. Wilson, 40, landed a job as a staff assistant for Engler when he was a state senator. She was deputy director for **George H.W. Bush's** presidential campaign in Michigan, and in 1989 and 1990, she served as Engler's political director for his first successful run for governor. Wilson then went straight to Washington to run Michigan's federal lobbying shop. She's been there ever since, handling a bevy of issues, including Engler's groundbreaking work on welfare reform. She also assisted Engler when he was chairman of the National Governors Association. Her work connected her to the then-governor of New Hampshire, Republican **Stephen Merrill**, who is now the president of Bingham Consulting. Wilson said that Bingham was a great fit because of its niche market: "We help bridge the gap between the business sector and the government sector for clients that have multistate interests."

Former Rep. **Sonny Callahan**, R-Ala., who just retired after 18 years in Congress, has landed at Dawson & Associates, a lobby shop founded by **Robert K. Dawson**. The firm specializes in energy, environment, natural resources, infrastructure, and water policy issues. Callahan, 70, will be the fourth consecutive former chairman of the House Appropriations Committee's Energy and Water Development panel to join the firm. The former congressman also served six years as chairman of the Appropriations Committee's Foreign Operations Subcommittee. Although the law bars Callahan

from lobbying Congress for a year, he told *National Journal* that he expects to provide strategic advice to Dawson clients. He'll split his time between Washington and his home in Mobile, Ala. For Callahan, the switch from congressman to private citizen has been a breeze: "I'm already adjusted. I feel adjusted every Tuesday morning—when, before, I had to get up at 5 a.m. to catch a plane to Washington."

Brian Darling, who most recently was general counsel to former Sen. **Bob Smith**, R-N.H., has joined the Alexander Strategy Group. Darling, 37, co-founded and co-chaired the Conservative Working Group, a weekly legislative strategy meeting of conservative congressional staffers. Previously, he served as a coun-

sel to the Senate Judiciary Committee and as an aide to then-Sens. **Paul Coverdell**, R-Ga., and **Steve Symms**, R-Idaho. Darling is originally from Massachusetts, but some of his most interesting political experiences occurred in Florida. When the Elián González controversy was brewing in January 2000, Smith happened to be there for meetings about the Everglades restoration. Smith and Darling visited the home where the young Cuban refugee was staying—an experience that persuaded them to draft legislation that would have provided Elián with permanent residency. That fall, Darling worked on the Bush-Cheney recount team in Miami-Dade County. In one incident, Darling says, he successfully demanded that nine votes sought by backers of Al

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LEANNE WILSON: Longtime Engler aide strikes out on her own