

ROLL CALL



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The Expanding Universe of Barbour Griffith

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Barbour Griffith & Rogers, with its once-militantly all-Republican employee roster, not only has gone bipartisan, it has started a public relations unit and is going international to boot.

Last week, at the same time BGR Holding's PAC was handing out its first campaign check ever to a Democratic lawmaker, the company opened the doors to a London-based international business as well as a public relations unit, which is headed by Democrat Michael Meehan.

"We've always said elections don't decide our hiring strategy and that clients do," said BGR's Loren Monroe, who said clients have made it clear that they want Democrats, PR and help with international lobbying.

On the international front, he said, "There just was a tremendous need where we were referring business to people in Europe. We felt it was a potential area of growth for the firm."

The European operation, BGR Gabara, will be run by longtime EU lobbyist and former journalist Ivo Ilic Gabara. Neither Gabara nor Monroe would reveal the international firm's projected revenue.

Last year when Democrats won control of the House and Senate, BGR held its overall lobbying revenue steady, reporting

\$22.7 million in lobbying disclosure fees.

That's slightly more than it brought in for 2006, when it reported earning \$22.6 million. The firm, which both years came in at No. 5 on the Roll Call survey of top grossing law and lobby firms, made it to the upper echelon of lobby shops during years of Republican control of Congress and the White House.

BGR's list of clients includes Citigroup, IBM, Lorillard Tobacco Co., Raytheon, the State of Qatar and the Republic of India.

"What we are setting up in London is a separate entity, a company in its own right," said Gabara, who is Italian and speaks five languages. A former head of the European Commission's press office in Sarajevo, he most recently worked in Europe for Apco Worldwide.

BGR Gabara will focus on government relations across Europe, including Brussels, the EU capital. The firm also will handle media relations and American-style political campaign management, such as polling and grassroots outreach, particularly in the continent's new democracies.

"I can't give specific examples, but we are in the process of negotiating new business," Gabara said. "My job is to bring one of the best brands to Europe and adapt it to the European sensitivities."

Gabara said he is in the process of hir-

ing more employees for the London outpost, and he expects five hires within the year. "We'll have prudent growth, which is going to be backed by the growth of the clients," he said.

As for the other big move at BGR — going bipartisan — Democrat Meehan, who has been a top communications strategist for former Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) and for Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), said, "You don't get anything done unless you have a bipartisan offering."

Meehan, the former chief of staff for Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), last week delivered BGR's first PAC check to a Democrat, \$500 to House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-Md.). In the 2006 election cycle, the firm's PAC gave out more than \$70,000 in donations, all to Republicans.

"The PAC director told me I get a chance to sit down next week and discuss the whole strategy," said Meehan, who also will work with Gabara on international clients.

"As far as I can tell, I seem to be the lone Red Sox fan there as well," Meehan said of his new firm. He adds that firm founder, Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour, "had an amazing view from his office," which just happens to be Meehan's office now. "I'm the first of others to follow," Meehan said.