



BIPARTISAN FIXERS:
From left, Bonjean,
Mollineau and Walsh

Tom Williams/CQ Roll Call

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Crises R Us

Despite the many differences between the political and corporate worlds, they often employ similar tactics for strategic communications and crisis management. That fact of life in Washington inspired three Capitol Hill veterans to put party ties aside and form Rokk Solutions, a public affairs firm that uses campaign tactics to promote the interests of corporate clients.

“We have years of some of the highest levels of experience working in both the House and Senate leadership as well as the campaign world in both Republican and Democratic circles,” says GOP strategist Ron Bonjean, a former leadership aide who teamed with Republican colleague Brian Walsh and Democratic counterpart Rodell Mollineau, former president of the liberal American Bridge 21st Century PAC, to launch the firm in May.

All three know something about political strategies and especially crisis management. Both Bonjean and Walsh were hired during the last Congress by two House Republicans — Florida Rep. Trey Radel and Illinois Rep. Aaron Schock — when they became embroiled in scandals. Radel, who was convicted of cocaine possession, and Schock, who faced an ethics inquiry into his use of office

funds, both resigned.

Mollineau also has more than 15 years experience in political campaigns and legislative battles, including four years as staff director for the Senate Democratic Communications Center when Harry Reid of Nevada was majority leader.

“No one ever goes out to be a crisis management expert,” Mollineau says. “You’re working for a member and you’re reading in the newspaper, ‘He said what?’ And the next thing you know, you’re spending the next days, weeks, months pushing back.”

“Communication professionals usually consider crises as very challenging and stimulating,” Bonjean says.

Rokk is Norwegian for “spinning wheel,” a fitting name for a team of operatives who are always spinning for their clients.

Each of the men have their own public affairs and consulting firms that they will continue to run. Bonjean has owned The Bonjean Company since 2008, Walsh opened Townline Strategies in 2013 and Mollineau launched Protagonist Strategies last year.

“We keep our political work separate for obvious reasons,” Walsh says. “But that also helps keep us very closely tied in with what is going on and key races around the country, which is important too.”

— Kaitlyn Ridel

LOBBYING

Liz Hunger

NEW JOB: Director for state government affairs at the Retail Industry Leaders Association.

OLD JOBS: Government relations manager for the Security Industry Association; project assistant for Delaware Democratic Sens. Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Ted Kaufman.

ORIGIN

STORY: A 2007 University of Delaware graduate, Hunger got her start as a volunteer for Beau Biden’s 2006 campaign for attorney general.



QUOTE OF NOTE: Her interest in the retail industry stems “particularly [from] how technology is evolving. We’re seeing it come more into the retail space and some of the cool things you can do with payment on mobile phones.”

CONGRESS

Alex Nguyen

NEW JOB: Communications director for Rep. Linda T. Sánchez, a California Democrat.

OLD JOBS: Communications director for Wisconsin Rep. Mark Pocan; deputy press secretary for House Ways and Means Committee Democrats.

ORIGIN STORY: The 28-year-old landed an internship with Rep. Jane Harman’s district office after graduating from the University of California, Los Angeles. He became a press assistant a year later.



QUOTE OF NOTE: “It’s actually really nice to work for a UCLA grad. [Sanchez] went to law school at UCLA, so it’s all in the family.”

— Interviews by David Michaels, Kaitlyn Ridel