

Influencers



SHOWING THE WAY: Work with McConnell makes Bates a guide to the Trump era.

Tom Williams/CO Roll Call

LOBBYING

New World Navigator

When Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld hired Republican lobbyist Hunter Bates before the election, the conventional wisdom held that Democrats would take control of the Senate and keep the party's grip on the White House with a Hillary Clinton victory.

Now the firm seems prescient, or lucky, for adding a former chief of staff to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky. McConnell will be at the center of brokering legislative deals between Congress and the incoming administration of President-elect Donald

Trump.

"Part of the beauty and longevity of a firm like Akin Gump is they don't live election cycle to election cycle," says Bates, who previously ran his own lobbying outfit, Republic Consulting, and was looking to join a global, bipartisan team.

Bates, a graduate of Harvard Law School, says he wanted a firm that had a "strong legal reputation and deep policy acumen and a broad respect on both sides of the aisle. I concluded Akin was hands down the winner in all those areas."

He officially will join as a part-

ner in January, based in D.C., though he keeps his permanent home in Kentucky.

Bates' clients at Republic Consulting this year included tobacco giant Altria Client Services, pharmaceutical company Amgen USA, Citigroup, the Humane Society Legislative Fund, Procter & Gamble and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for Legal Reform, among others, according to congressional lobbying disclosures.

The workload for Akin Gump, and Bates in particular, may be more frenetic with Republicans controlling the executive and

legislative branches of government. The new dynamic puts major policy overhauls in health care, financial services and tax laws on the agenda.

"Republicans have spent decades dreaming of tax reform and years yearning for an Obamacare repeal," says Bates, 49. "We woke up the day after the election to a different world, one where businesses have moved from fear of more regulations to hope for more opportunities to grow and create jobs. ... So it is going to be a very broad and aggressive change in direction for the country starting on Jan. 20 at 12 noon."

Akin Gump also brought on another Republican at the same time as Bates: Justin McCarthy, a former official in the George W. Bush White House, who joined from Peck Madigan Jones. "Hunter and Justin bring outstanding experience and have sterling reputations throughout Washington," says Akin Gump's Donald Pongrace, who chairs the public law and policy group.

Clients are clamoring for intelligence about what might happen early next year, Bates says.

"Already you have companies and trade associations trying to get their arms around how the Congressional Review Act works or how the budget reconciliation process works, so having a large team available to help answer those questions quickly is invaluable to clients," says Bates, who previously worked at the C2 Group firm. "While some of President Trump's agenda can be achieved on a partisan basis, much of it will still require bipartisan cooperation."

—Kate Ackley