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FYI --

POLITICO

Boehner chief of staff dies at 46

By: Patrick O'Connor
January 10, 2010 01:40 PM EST

Paula Nowakowski, the longtime chief of staff to House Republican Leader John Boehner, died unexpectedly Saturday night, according to the leader's office. She was 46.

"It is with profound sadness and shock that I announce the passing of Paula Nowakowski, my longtime chief of staff, trusted aide and friend, who died suddenly last night," Boehner said in a statement early Sunday afternoon. "Words cannot adequately express the sorrow and disbelief I and every member of our team are grappling with today in the wake of this stunning news."

A Boehner aide said the cause was an apparent heart attack.

President Barack Obama and Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) were among those who called Boehner Sunday to offer their condolences on Nowakowski's death.

"The entire Capitol Hill community is shocked and saddened by the sudden passing of Paula Nowakowski," Pelosi said in a statement. "As Chief of Staff to Republican Leader John Boehner, Paula earned the respect not only of her Leadership and Conference, but all House Members on both sides of the aisle. She served Leader Boehner both in his current position as well as previously at the Committee on Education and the Workforce with great distinction.

"Paula was a thorough professional who loved the House and worked in a constructive and bipartisan fashion to implement policies to help the Congress function efficiently. On behalf of the entire House, I express our deep sadness to Paula's family, friends and our colleague, Leader John Boehner."

"Paula had some of the finest qualities a public servant can have: she was committed to advancing the cause of freedom, she cared deeply about the people she served, and she was a patriot," said Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY.).

"On behalf of her senate colleagues, I pass on my condolences to her family, Leader Boehner and his staff, and the whole House family for this tragic loss of our friend."

It would be hard to overstate Nowakowski's role in Boehner's tight-knit office. She has worked for the Ohio Republican almost continuously since 1995, when she joined his staff as communications director for the Republican Conference.

In the years since, she has worked as staff director for the Education and Labor Committee and served as his chief of staff since he returned to the leadership in early 2006. She briefly left Boehner's side in 1998 after he lost the conference post following a tough election for Republicans but rejoined him in 2001 when he assumed the chairmanship of the Education and Labor Committee.

Along the way, she counseled Boehner on just about every decision he made and often served as an enforcer of sorts for the collegial Republican leader. It would be hard to find any chief of staff on Capitol Hill who maintained a closer relationship with her boss than the one she shared with Boehner.

Aides said Sunday that Boehner's office and extended network of former colleagues, known to many as "Boehner-land," were collectively shocked by the news.

"We will remember Paula as she would want to be remembered — as a tireless worker, faithful friend, rabid Detroit sports fan, whip-smart strategist, warrior for freedom and devoted Catholic who counted President Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II among her greatest heroes. She will never be replaced or forgotten," Boehner said. "I ask for your prayers for Paula's family."

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The Washington Post

Paula Nowakowski, Rep. Boehner's chief of staff, dies at 46

By Martin Weil
Washington Post Staff Writer
Monday, January 11, 2010; B04

Paula Nowakowski, 46, chief of staff for House Minority Leader John A. Boehner, was found dead Jan. 10 at her home in Alexandria.

No official cause of death was available. Antonia Ferrier, a spokeswoman for Boehner (R-Ohio), said it appeared that Ms. Nowakowski died of a heart attack.

A longtime Hill aide, and Boehner's staff chief since 2006, Ms. Nowakowski was named by the Capitol Hill publication Roll Call to its 2009 list of the "Fabulous Fifty" staff members. The accolade recognized her savvy, her clout and her access to the top people in Congress.

Ms. Nowakowski, an avowed conservative, was highly regarded by leaders of both parties.

She was praised by Boehner and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.).

"It is with profound sadness and shock that I announce the passing of Paula Nowakowski, my longtime chief of staff, trusted aide, and friend, who died suddenly," Boehner said in a statement.

"Words cannot adequately express the sorrow and disbelief I and every member of our team are grappling with today in the wake of this stunning news," Boehner said.

Pelosi called Ms. Nowakowski a "thorough professional who loved the House and worked in a constructive and bipartisan fashion to implement policies to help the Congress function efficiently."

According to WhoRunsGov. com, a Washington Post Co. Web site, Ms. Nowakowski grew up in St. Clair Shores, Mich., and studied English at Cornell University in Ithaca, N. Y.

She told Politico of being made more conservative by the campus "rise of the loony left," citing "wacky, wacky stuff," which shaped her politics.

According to a reference book on congressional aides, she worked for the Republican National Committee in the late 1980s and early 1990s, then joined the staff of the House Republican Conference. After two years as a public affairs vice president of the American Insurance Association, she worked from 2001 to 2006 as staff director of the House Committee on Education & the Workforce. A Boehner aide said she worked for him at both the Republican Conference and the Education Committee.

Pelosi's staff chief, John Lawrence, who was Ms. Nowakowski's Democratic counterpart on the education committee, said they transcended political differences to "work in a very collegial way to strengthen the House itself." He called her "a great professional."

After the GOP lost its House majority in 2006 , Ms. Nowakowski said she experienced "the seven stages of grief," according to the Almanac of the Unelected 2008, a reference on Hill staffers.

"You don't want to be a compliant minority," she said of the party's new status, "but you have to adjust your expectations."

In his statement, Boehner called Ms. Nowakowski "a tireless worker, faithful friend and rabid Detroit sports fan."

Survivors include her longtime companion, Michael Smith, her mother, a brother and a sister.

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