

*From the Los Angeles Times*

## Caroline Kennedy launches Senate campaign

The daughter of John F. Kennedy, who wants to replace Hillary Rodham Clinton, is calling New York's governor and other key Democrats to press her desire to extend the family dynasty.

By Mark Z. Barabak and Michael Finnegan

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Caroline Kennedy launched a full-bore campaign Monday to replace Hillary Rodham Clinton in the U.S. Senate, calling New York's governor and other key Democrats to press her desire to extend the family dynasty.

Kennedy reached Gov. David A. Paterson Monday afternoon as he toured weather-battered portions of upstate New York. "She'd like at some point to sit down and tell me what she thinks her qualifications are," said Paterson, who will choose Clinton's successor.

Kennedy, 51, has hired a team of seasoned political professionals, including operatives close to organized labor and New York's senior U.S. senator, Democrat Charles E. Schumer.

"She has started on a full footing here," said George Arzt, a strategist who works for another Democratic Senate hopeful from Manhattan's East Side, U.S. Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney.

If Kennedy gets the Senate seat, Arzt noted, she would be following New York's "tendency to go for the glitz and the glamour rather than people who had the track record and . . . have come up through the ranks." Some were new to the state, including Clinton, who was first elected senator in 2000 and Kennedy's uncle, the late Robert F. Kennedy, who won his Senate seat in 1964.

But Mitchell Moss, a New York University urban policy professor, said Caroline Kennedy "has a platinum name and enormous appeal to New Yorkers."

"She brings energy and charisma . . .," Moss said. "She brings immediate access to President Obama" and would carry the stature to overcome many of the challenges that a rookie senator would face.

Kennedy, who spent nearly three years as a little girl in the White House, has shied away from public attention most of her life. But she assumed a much higher political profile over the past year, endorsing Barack Obama at a key stage of the presidential race and helping oversee the selection of his vice presidential running mate. She did so in part, she said, because Obama inspired her three children the way earlier generations were inspired by her father, President John F. Kennedy, who was assassinated in 1963.

A resident of Manhattan's Upper East Side, Kennedy has never held elected office. But the Ivy League-educated lawyer has devoted years to charitable works and other activities associated with her family and public service. If chosen, she would take her place on Capitol Hill alongside another uncle, Massachusetts Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, and a cousin, Democratic Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy of Rhode Island. Another cousin, Joseph P. Kennedy II, served 12 years in the House representing Massachusetts.

The word that Caroline Kennedy was campaigning for the appointment transformed efforts to succeed Clinton from a quiet, albeit intense, competition into a much splashier affair, filled with visions of Camelot-on-the-Hudson and competition between two powerful clans: the Kennedys and the Cuomos.

New York Atty. Gen. Andrew Cuomo, who was wed for 13 years to one of Kennedy's cousins before a messy divorce, is also interested in the Senate seat.

Kennedy's name was among those surfacing in early speculation. But most of the attention was focused on elected officials, including Cuomo and several members of New York's large Democratic congressional delegation. That changed when Kennedy placed a call early this month to Paterson, who described an "informational conversation" in which it was clear she was intrigued by the job but not certain to seek appointment.

By last weekend, Kennedy had made up her mind. She began placing calls to top figures in New York politics to share her views and hear what they considered pressing issues for the state and nation. Among those she called, according to a person close to Kennedy, were Time Warner Chairman Richard D. Parsons; New York Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver; New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn; and U.S. Rep. Louise M. Slaughter, an upstate Democrat.

In making his pick, a key consideration for Paterson is self-preservation. A former lieutenant governor, Paterson assumed New York's top job in March when Eliot Spitzer resigned in a prostitution scandal. Paterson is expected to seek reelection in 2010 on the same ticket as Clinton's successor.

Paterson has heard from about 20 prospects who would like to succeed Clinton, assuming she is confirmed, as expected, as secretary of State in the Obama administration. The governor, who has sole discretion in making the pick, has said he would announce a selection after Clinton steps down, which is not likely until late January at the earliest.

Some New Yorkers questioned Kennedy's qualifications.

"You don't want a partner who is a novice," said Hank Sheinkopf, a Democratic strategist who was dubious of Kennedy's supposed electoral "magic."

"The people on Long Island don't care about magic," Sheinkopf said. "They care about delivering jobs and money. Buffalo doesn't care about tea parties with Manhattan's social elite, and how much money you can raise for charities."

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