

Back in the Saddle

BY MIKE MAGNER

Little by little, former Rep. **Shelley Berkley**, D-Nev., is bouncing back from her narrow loss last fall in a rugged race against Republican Sen. **Dean Heller**.

Berkley, 62, who left behind a seven-term career in the House to take on the incumbent appointed to replace retired Sen. John Ensign, R-Nev., lost by just 12,000 votes out of nearly a million cast Nov. 6.

"I'm easing back into civilian life," a relaxed Berkley said by phone on Tuesday afternoon from a shopping mall in Las Vegas. "I was in public office for 30 years—14 in Congress—and so I was heartbroken after the election. No regrets, but I was heartbroken."

One step on the road to recovery came last week when Berkley accepted an invitation to join the board of the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, a Washington-based group formed in 1976 to promote a strong U.S. defense and support for allies in the Middle East, including Israel.

"Berkley was one of Israel's strongest and outspoken supporters on Capitol Hill," JINSA said in its March 14 announcement, citing her votes for Iran sanctions and U.S. funding for Israel's Iron Dome missile-defense system.

Berkley also said she has rejoined the board of the Nevada regional office of the Anti-Defamation League and has become very supportive of hospice programs since her dying mother was placed in their care.

She is currently weighing her options for



Last hurrah: Berkley on Election Night.

private-sector positions and expects to decide on one later this spring. "I'm blessed or cursed with an abundance of energy," she said. "I expect I'll be working full-time again."

There is one thing Berkley is sure she won't be doing. "I never wanted to be a lobbyist," she said. "I don't want to capitalize on my public service."

Born in New York City where her parents had emigrated from Eastern Europe before World War II, Berkley grew up in Las Vegas after her father moved there for a job at the Sands Hotel and Casino. She started early in politics, winning elections in high school, at B'nai B'rith, and at the University of Nevada-

Las Vegas. After earning a law degree at the University of San Diego, Berkley led the Nevada Hotel and Motel Association, became government and legal-affairs vice president at the Sands, and was in-house counsel to Southwest Gas.

She won a term in the Nevada Assembly in 1982, served for eight years on the Nevada University and Community College System Board of Regents, then won her first term in the House in 1998.

"I believe in public service," she said. "This is my way of giving back. If this country hadn't let my family in, I don't believe they would have survived the Holocaust." ■

PEOPLE ROUNDUP

Women's Ambassador

Cathy Russell, chief of staff to Jill Biden, the wife of Vice President Joe Biden, has been tapped by President Obama to become the ambassador-at-large for global women's issues at the State Department.

The White House announced this week that the president has nominated Russell to the post vacated last month by Melanne Verveer, who was named executive director of Georgetown University's Institute for Women, Peace, and Security.

Before joining Jill Biden's staff, Russell was senior adviser on international women's issues on the staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee when Joe Biden chaired the panel. She was also a member of Women for Women International's Communications

Advisory Council from 2006 to 2008.

Previously, Russell was senior counsel to Sen. **Patrick Leahy**, D-Vt., on the Senate Judiciary Committee, staff director for Democrats on the Judiciary Committee, and an associate deputy attorney general at the Justice Department.

Voice of Transportation

Jim Billimoria is the new communications director for Republicans on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Chairman **Bill Shuster**, R-Pa., announced.

Billimoria previously worked for the House Ways and Means Committee, where he handled communications for Chairman **Dave Camp**, R-Mich., and former Rep. **Jim McCrery**, R-La., when he was ranking

member. He has also worked for Rep. **Tom Price**, R-Ga., and former Rep. **Deborah Pryce**, R-Ohio.

Other News

■ **Leslie Phillips**, former communications director for Democrats on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, is now senior vice president for marketing and communications at FairWinds Partners, a consulting firm on information technology.

■ The California Association of Physician Groups has opened a Washington office and hired **Mara McDermott**, formerly with Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, as director of federal affairs.

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