

1/23/2010

Covington teen has chance to witness politics in action

Burris selected to serve as page for Rep. Boehner

BY LAURA HARTLEY
For the Daily Call

COVINGTON - Though the population of Washington, D.C., is roughly 200 times bigger than Covington's, small town girl Kristina Burris is ready to experience the nation's capital once again. Last summer, Burris attended Georgetown University to take an AP Politics Class. This experience, she believes is one of the unique factors that set her apart from her competition when she was chosen to become the House Page for the Eighth District.

"I'll be one of 24 Republican pages," Burris said.

As a 16-year-old page, Burris will be working for John Boehner and the House of Representatives for the remainder of the school year.

This program for juniors is slightly "secretive" as Burris put it, because she said that "not very many people know about it." And the Page Program was new to Burris, too, when she found out about it.

"My principal, Mr. Hawk got a letter from John Boehner, about the juniors-only program, and my history teacher, Mr. Haver selected me. I went through about a three-month selection process, and then last month I found out that I was selected," Burris said.

Social studies teacher, Craig Haver, has been working at Covington Schools for the last nine years. "She (Kristina), as far as a history student for me has been outstanding, she goes above and beyond all requirements," Haver said.

History has always been a passion for Burris, even since she was younger. "I love history," she said, "politics, law; I've always been interested in government." This quality is also one that helped her be selected as Congressman Boehner's sponsoree for the Page Program. Burris had to send in paperwork and have a formal meeting with Boehner's staff. The top three applicants in the area were chosen, and Burris was the final decision.

"Since he (Boehner) has been so busy with the health care bill, I haven't been able to meet with him yet," Burris said, "but I'm really looking forward to meeting him."

In Washington, D.C., Burris will get to be part of the government. As the House Minority Leader's sponsoree, Burris' main priority will be to serve Congressman Boehner first.

However, she also will have the opportunity to assist other congressmen by completing necessary tasks and duties. "It could be anything from washing cars to buying their wives' presents," Burris joked.

Though Burris may participate in activities like that, she also will be expected to perform political tasks. "I need to know every one of the 435 House members' names," she said. Burris said she was excited to have the opportunity to be so close to those who help run the legislative part of our government.

"I'm looking forward to actually being in the House during the meetings or sessions," Burris said. "I want to see how it happens."

Though Burris is working for the Page Program, she aspires to work in the other legislative branch, as a senator. "Senators are more conservative and prestigious," she said. "I'll definitely major in political

1/23/2010

science in college," she said. But as for her minor, it will be music.

"I love music," Burris said. "I play trombone, and I'm in jazz band, marching band, concert band, all bands."

Her other extracurricular activities include Spanish Club, theatre, and Key Club.

Her experience in Key club with service will be especially helpful for the Page Program. Pages will serve their party by "delivering legislative correspondence within the congressional complex, monitoring phones in member cloakrooms; and occasionally preparing the House Floor for sessions," according to pageprogram.house.gov.

Burris is an aspiring National Honor Society member and current Honor Roll student. A 3.0 is necessary for the Page Program, and Burris has worked hard in her secondary education to exceed well beyond that.

"She's an excellent student," Haver said. "And as a Republican Page, she'll do outstanding. She has an intrinsic drive to get involved with politics."

Haver said that as a history teacher, he was proud to see one of his students be able to take this opportunity to go and work at the Capitol.

Burris has been well-supported on her journey to start the Page Program. Her parents are both looking forward for her to have this experience as well.

"My parents are excited. My father is especially excited and proud of me, because he's always had this love for politics," Burris said.

In the Page Program, Burris will be living with up three other female pages. Since Burris is an only child, this will be a change for her.

"I think I'll love it [the living situation] though, because I love interacting with people, and getting along with everyone," Burris said.

Yet, her Covington classmates and friends will miss her this semester. "They're going to miss me, but they know that this is something that I love to do, and they're excited about that," she said.

After Burris graduates from high school in 2011, she plans to attend an Ohio college or Georgetown to pursue political science. "I'm applying to Georgetown, too, because I loved the atmosphere there," Burris said.

After she finishes her undergraduate studies, she plans to attend law school. "I want to be a lawyer, maybe a prosecutor," she said. Once her education is complete, Burris plans on living in Washington, D.C. to make the most out of her career plans.

For a 16-year-old, she has a busy education plan ahead of her. Like her education plans, her schooling during the Page Program will take determination.

"I'll be taking five general classes," Burris said. "They begin at 6:45 a.m. and end at 11:30."

1/23/2010

After classes, the work begins.

"On days that the pages are highly needed, our classes could be as short as 12 minutes each," Burriss said.

Classes include general subjects such as math, English, social studies and science, as well as an elective of a foreign language or technology course. Although the subject areas are general, the classes will be taught as Honors courses. On occasional weekends, Burriss will also be involved with what's called a Washington Seminar. "In the Washington Seminars, we'll travel to museums and historic places for parts of our classes," she said. Not only will she be visiting historic places, but some of her classes will be held in them, as well.

"We'll start our classes out in the Library of Congress," she said, "which will be great."

Though Washington, D.C., as a whole is 200 times larger than Covington, her class size will be about the same. "There are 72 pages, 24 Republican and the rest are Democrats," Burriss said.

Since all the students are juniors, they'll all be in the same grade.

"My workload may be a little harder," Burriss said. However, with her experience at Georgetown University under her belt, Burriss believes she is prepared for the experience. As a page, Burriss will be preparing to perform up to six different tasks.

"Being able to do this as a junior says a lot about her character," Haver said. "It helps set and achieve goals."

"It's a great thing to set you up for college," Burriss said. "I'd definitely encourage everybody at any level to try to do something like this."

Burriss will be starting her work and education as a page this week. Pages on average receive about \$1,750 dollars for their work monthly. (pageprogram.house.gov)

