



JOHN RECTOR . . . in Washington

John Rector: from Kern with savvy

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Life in the nation's capital can be hectic — especially to the outsider who finds everything is run by the eastern establishment.

But that doesn't seem to bother John Rector of Bakersfield, who landed work right in the middle of that big, bad machine known as the federal government.

As the chief legal counsel to a U.S. Senate subcommittee on juvenile delinquency and a top aide to Sen. Birch Bayh, D-Ind., Rector has found little time to be in awe of the historical surroundings.

"It's a big job and it's interesting — but the one problem people have is they stay here too long," he said in an interview with *The Californian*.

In his six years of service in Washington, the 33-year-old Rector said he's been most impressed by the influence of Easterners in the city.

"Having grown up in Bakersfield . . . well, there aren't a whole lot of us in a place like Washington," he said. "Most of the people, the lawyers in particular, are the so-called Northeast elite, so I'm sort of a rare bird. I just can't overstate the role that the northeast establishment plays in this city."

Rector broke into the federal work force by what he called a combination of luck and timing.

A graduate of Garces High School, he attended the University of California at Berkeley and Hasting Law School. Later, he was among several thousand persons who applied for jobs under a special program at the U.S. Department of Justice.

He remembered being "thrilled to death" when he learned he was one of 60 selected for the program.

"I always was interested in public people and public activities. There was a point where I had an offer for a cushy job in a law firm in San Francisco. It was that, or taking a risk or two. I had this feeling I was really missing out on something by not getting an eyeful of Washington," he said.

Rector's work with the Justice Department has involved criminal prosecutions, including the nationally publicized incident in which two black students were slain at Jackson State University in Mississippi.

His experience later proved helpful in becoming staff director and chief counsel for the Senate subcommittee on juvenile justice. That's when he went to work for Sen. Bayh.

"He's an easy guy to work for. I like him as an individual. Bayh grew up in a tiny town in Indiana and he's a big country music fan — he knows all about Bakersfield — so we had that in common to begin with. I got to know him on a personal basis and I like him, separate and distinct from the work I do," he said.

Rector also serves on President Carter's Crime and Criminal Justice Task Force. He disclosed that he's under consideration for a presidential appointment in the justice department, probably in the area of juvenile law.

As for his involvement in politics, Rector prefers working in the background rather than in the spotlight on the platform.

"I'll probably be involved in working political campaigns but I don't have any personal interest in elected office," he said.

His duties as an aide to Bayh included working for Senate approval of Griffin Bell as U.S. attorney general. Bayh, who supported Carter in many of the Democratic primaries, was "leading the charge" on behalf of Bell during the Senate confirmation hearings, Rector said.

Although Bayh himself was a contender in the primaries, Rector said his problem was he "ran out of money." He added that Bayh is very close to Carter, since he was one of three Democratic senators who supported Carter in the early going.

Rector said he feels the Carter administration "is going to be there for a while," partly because of President's efforts to involve outsiders in Washington.

"Without making a political comment, I'd say that's one of the significant things in the new administration. They're moving a lot of folks from the Southwest, Southeast and West who haven't ever been here. I think that's pretty positive," he said.

"I was disappointed to see all the western states go against Carter. I think he's got a lot more in common with people in Kern County and elsewhere than these folks in New York do."

Because drug abuse and juvenile problems were among his first areas of work, Rector recently was selected to represent the Senate of an Americas Republics Affairs Narcotics Conference in Guatemala City.

During the conference Rector said congressional legislation being considered includes bail reform, mandatory penalties for high-level drug pushing, use of Internal Revenue Service powers to tax assets of drug kingpins and treaty regulation of traffic pharmaceutical drugs.

Despite his Washington activities, Rector said he likes to call his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Michael Rector, 3100 Linden Avenue, as often as possible. He agreed it brings a touch of home to a very cold city.