Obama campaign taps Wear, 24, to lead religious outreach

by Mark Silk in the June 13, 2012 issue

President Obama's reelection campaign has tapped a 24-year-old executive assistant in the White House faith-based office to head up its outreach to religious communities.

Michael R. Wear, who has worked in the White House for the past three and a half years, will move to Chicago to become the campaign's Faith Vote director in late May, White House officials confirmed.

"It has been an honor working with Michael Wear to create positive faith-based and nonprofit partnerships to serve people in need," said Joshua DuBois, executive director of the Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Wear was DuBois's executive assistant.

A native of Buffalo, New York, Wear was an intern during Obama's 2008 campaign, specializing in outreach to religious groups. He helped arrange candidate Obama's appearance at a presidential forum at Rick Warren's Saddleback Church in California as well as a meeting between Obama and prominent Christian leaders in Chicago.

After organizing the prayer service at the Washington National Cathedral following the president's inauguration, he went to work for DuBois, who himself headed religious outreach for the campaign before assuming the directorship of the faith-based office. Wear graduated from George Washington University with a B.A. in political science in 2011.

At the White House, Wear has been involved in a wide range of religious issues, with particular responsibility for adoption and foster care. He also sought to build connections with young evangelicals, including those involved in the campaign to capture Ugandan guerrilla leader Joseph Kony.

"Michael has spent a number of years in the faith-based office, so he knows the territory," said Amy Sullivan, author of *The Party Faithful*, a book on religion and American politics. "But the Republicans would put somebody senior with years and years of experience and a big Rolodex in that position. And I guess that tells you something about how Democrats still view faith outreach and its importance." —RNS