

Crimson on Capitol Hill: 114th

At 13, Staropoli told his parents he wanted to join in the family hobby. “They said they’d let me race go-karts and help me do it, but only if I kept my grades up,” he says, noting that the work ethic and abilities to organize his time and develop strategies, mastered through racing, have also served him well in his academic career. He kept his end of the bargain, eventually becoming president of his class three years in a row and valedictorian. Starting in 2003, he and his parents drove back and forth across the state from their home near Fort Lauderdale to a go-kart center in Fort Myers. “We bought a used chassis from one of our friends and a used engine from another, carried it on an old landscaping trailer that we towed behind a 17-year-old GMC Sierra,” he reports. “It was about as bare-bones as it could be.”

With a family less dedicated to the sport, his very first go-kart race might also have been his last. In the opening laps, the 13-year-old passed several other karts and nearly passed another. But not quite. “We touched tires and my kart just flipped instantly,” he recalls. “I was sliding along on my helmet and the kart’s air cleaner. My mom was up in the stands and her knees literally buckled and she passed out.” The race was halted and track workers pulled the upside-down kart off the rookie. “I wasn’t hurt,” he adds. “They got me going again, but I had to restart last.”

He finished third and an amateur career was born. The following year he progressed to racing an aging, slightly modified Camaro in Hialeah Speedway’s entry-level stock-car class, where his debut was more auspicious: he started last and finished second.

During the next eight seasons, while in high school and college, Staropoli won more than his share of races. The family devoted thousands of hours to his racing; instead of going on vacations, they all trooped to the track. But the escalating cost was at times a strain. Go-kart races cost about \$100 each to enter; to compete with a “hobby-stock” Camaro runs \$200. The price jumps to \$2,000 per contest for the more specialized “late model” cars (the highest class in local stock-car competition), which Staropoli drove starting his senior year in high school. Prize money was plowed back into the car.

At Harvard, he raced during school breaks. But initial plans to become an en-

THE REPUBLICAN RESURGENCE of 2014 affected the University’s alumni contingent in the new Congress. Three new senators (one risen from the House) and three new representatives—including one woman—raised the Harvard GOP total to 12, a net gain of four. The Democrats lost two senators and a representative to retirement and two more House members to defeat, but gained four new representatives—including one woman—for a new total of 33, a net loss of one.

Besides the 45 degree-program graduates or matriculants, the 114th Congress includes other members with Harvard affiliations, among them senators Lamar Alexander, Republican of Tennessee, a former fellow of the Kennedy School’s Institute of Politics, and Elizabeth Warren, Democrat of Massachusetts, a former Radcliffe Institute fellow and Law School faculty member.

In the list below, asterisks mark newcomers since the election of 2012:

Senate Republicans: *Tom Cotton ’99, J.D. ’02 (Ark.); Michael D. Crapo, J.D. ’77 (Id.); Rafael Edward “Ted” Cruz, J.D. ’95 (Tex.); *Ben Sasse ’94 (Neb.); *Daniel S. Sullivan ’87 (Alas.); Pat Toomey ’84 (Pa.); David Vitter ’83 (La.)

Senate Democrats: Richard Blumenthal ’67 (Conn.); Al Franken ’73 (Minn.); Timothy M. Kaine, J.D. ’83 (Va.); John

F. (Jack) Reed, M.P.P. ’73, J.D. ’82 (R.I.); Charles E. Schumer ’71, J.D. ’74 (N.Y.); Mark R. Warner, J.D. ’80 (Va.)

House Republicans: *Curtis Clawson, M.B.A. ’90 (Fla.); Ron DeSantis, J.D. ’05 (Fla.); *Bruce Poliquin ’76 (Me.); Michael R. Pompeo, J.D. ’94 (Kans.); *Elise Stefanik ’06 (N.Y.)

House Democrats: *Brendan Boyle, M.P.P. ’05 (Pa.); Joaquin Castro, J.D. ’00 (Tex.); *Katherine Clark, M.P.A. ’97 (Mass); Gerry Connolly, M.P.A. ’79 (Va.); James H. Cooper, J.D. ’80 (Tenn.); Elizabeth Esty ’80 (Conn.); Bill Foster, Ph.D. ’83 (Ill.); *Ruben Gallego ’02/’04 (Ariz.); John Garamendi, M.B.A. ’70 (Calif.); Alan M. Grayson ’78, M.P.P.-J.D. ’83, G ’87 (Fla.); Brian Higgins, M.P.A. ’96 (N.Y.); Jim Himes ’88 (Conn.); Joseph P. Kennedy III, J.D. ’09 (Mass); Ron Kind ’85 (Wisc.); James R. Langevin, M.P.A. ’94 (R.I.); Sander M. Levin, LL.B. ’57 (Mich.); Stephen F. Lynch, M.P.A. ’99 (Mass.); *Seth Moulton ’01, M.B.A.-M.P.A. ’11 (Mass.); Raul Ruiz, M.D.-M.P.P. ’01, M.P.H. ’07 (Calif.); John P. Sarbanes, J.D. ’88 (Md.); Adam B. Schiff, J.D. ’85 (Calif.); Robert C. Scott ’69 (Va.); Terri Sewell, J.D. ’92 (Ala.); Bradley J. Sherman, J.D. ’79 (Calif.); Mark Takano ’83 (Calif.); Christopher Van Hollen Jr., M.P.P. ’85 (Md.); Juan C. Vargas, J.D. ’91 (Calif.)

gineer, and eventually work on the technical side in Formula 1 or NASCAR, gave way to a burgeoning fascination with how neurons work in the brain. “There’s the action potential of a *single* neuron,” he explains, “but that evolves into these big complex thoughts about how we look at the world.” He was also drawn to the field’s broad applications and by sophomore year was working in a Harvard Medical School lab run by neuroscientist Robert Stickgold. For his senior project, which examined whether learning occurs during sleep, Staropoli recruited 50 subjects to spend nights hooked up to monitors in the sleep lab.

The interest in medicine became per-

sonal when he was diagnosed with celiac disease in 2010. He took time away from his studies and racing to counsel young people with the disorder, wrote a column for the National Foundation for Celiac Awareness about how to manage a gluten-free diet in college, and conducted and presented a research project on “The Social Perception of Celiac Disease” during his senior year.

He describes college as “a long process, just grinding it out and making slow progress, while driving a race car is the opposite—learn quickly and then do it. But now, chasing a career as a professional racing driver, I see how much more there is to racing than just driving the car