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Will Kennedys Be in Obama Cabinet? (Transcript Excerpt)

SOLEDAD O'BRIEN, CNN ANCHOR: They were some of the striking moments of the Obama campaign - Senator Ted Kennedy and his niece, Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg, both endorsing the now president-elect. So could the Kennedy family be rewarded with plum cabinet posts?

CNN's Brian Todd is following some developments. Is a Kennedy -- or maybe a better way to ask it -- are more than one Kennedy headed for the Obama administration, do you think?

BRIAN TODD, CNN CORRESPONDENT: It could be one or more of them headed that way, Soledad. The Kennedys could be on the rise again, thanks to a dramatic and politically bold move that two of them made in January.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

TODD (voice-over): When it could have gone either way, they gave him a critical boost.

SEN. TED KENNEDY (D), MASSACHUSETTS: It's time again for a new generation of leadership. It is time now for Barack Obama.

TODD: Now is it payback time for key members of the Kennedy clan for that endorsement back in January? We are told that among the possibilities for high profile appointments in the Obama administration, the late president's daughter, Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg, for U.S. ambassador to the U.N. or Great Britain. After endorsing Obama, she served on his vice presidential search team.

Ted Kennedy, battling cancer and entrenched as a senior senator, is likely not on tap for a cabinet post. But he, too, may wield enormous influence in the Obama White House as the likely point man in Congress for health care reform.

ROBERT DALLEK, PRESIDENTIAL HISTORIAN: You are never going to get back to what existed in 1961 to 1963, when John Kennedy was president, or even in 1968, when Robert Kennedy was running for the White House. But there is a continuing tie to the Kennedy family. It's as if they've become our royal family.

TODD: Add to the mix Robert Kennedy, Jr., seen as a possible nominee for EPA administrator. He told The Huffington Post, "I would be of service in any way the administration asked me to be." Not exactly his sentiment on the very day his cousin and uncle endorse Obama.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ROBERT F. KENNEDY, JR. ENVIRONMENTAL ATTORNEY: It's my opinion that Hillary will make the best candidate and the most effective president. (END VIDEO CLIP)

TODD: Observers say Robert Kennedy could be a polarizing choice. An environmental lawyer and activist, he's been involved in some high profile lawsuits against big business and could become a target of conservative partisans. And there are questions about his experience.

PROF. MARC LANDY, BOSTON COLLEGE: The person who has that job has to be exquisitely well versed not just with the full panoply of policy choices, but with how the bureaucracy runs and how one performs the job of a public manager. And he simply is ill-suited to it.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

TODD: Now Robert Kennedy was traveling and could not be reached for comment. One of his aides also would not comment on that remark. Also, no response from Caroline Kennedy or any member of the Obama transition team on these possibilities.

A top aide to Ted Kennedy told us the senator has consulted very often with Barack Obama, both before and since election day. The aide tried to downplay Ted Kennedy's role in the Obama health plan. But no doubt, Soledad, Ted Kennedy is going to be front and center of that effort.

O'BRIEN: And there must be some thinking of the symbolism behind Caroline Kennedy.

TODD: Right.

O'BRIEN: Any of those two posts that you were talking about for her.

TODD: She's thought of maybe to be the best bet for something like that post. And if you think about it, she's got the substance to fill the U.N. post. And look at the family history. Her grandfather served as U.S. ambassador to Great Britain right before World War II. Even if she slides right into that post, it could be a nice fit.

Now, her grandfather left under some fairly disgraceful circumstances. He was basically booted out. But that was two generations ago. Caroline Kennedy is seen as maybe a good fit for either of those jobs.

O'BRIEN: Brian Todd, thank you very much.

TODD: Thank you.

O'BRIEN: We appreciate the update.