



THE BUSINESS ADVOCATE



Former President George W. Bush talks about the principles that guided his presidency at BCA's Chairman's Dinner.

Nation's 43rd President Headlines Annual BCA Chairman's Dinner

By Lenore Reese Vickrey

More than 900 persons gathered in September to support the work of ProgressPAC, the political action committee of the Business Council of Alabama, at the annual BCA Chairman's Dinner in Birmingham. The big draw: a chance to hear personally from the 43rd President of the United States, George W. Bush.

Bush was the keynote speaker for the event and entertained the crowd at the Sheraton Birmingham, answering questions about his transition to "normal" life after his eight years in the

White House and drawing laughter when he joked about life at home in Texas. "I was sitting on the couch in Crawford and Laura walks in and says, 'How are you feeling?' I said, 'Free at last!'" "Yeah, you're free alright," Mrs. Bush replied. "Free to do the dishes."

"I said, 'But you're talking to the former president,' and she said, 'It's your new domestic policy agenda.'"

Bush kept his stated promise not to publicly criticize the current president, but instead discussed some of the principles that guided his own presidency, many of

which are also outlined in his book, *Decision Points*. "First, freedom is a gift from the almighty to every man, woman and child," he said. "It's not America's gift, it's not Congress's gift. It is a universal right not to be compromised, which explains a lot of my foreign policy." This principle guided many of the decisions he made, believing that the ultimate way to deal with those who would attack America is to bring them to justice and to spread freedom as the alternative.

"Democracy and freedom are transformative," he said, eliciting applause



Former President George W. Bush speaks before a packed house at the Sheraton Birmingham, site of BCA's annual Chairman's Dinner, in September.

from the audience.

His second principle was financial: the belief that “You can spend your money better than the government.” While the government obviously has obligations to support the military, Bush said it should be the states’ obligation to educate.

Thirdly, he spoke about the value of life: “All life is precious,” a belief that became the basis for his decision on stem cell research, to which he devotes a chapter in his book.

The fourth principle, “to whom much is given, much is required,” underpinned

his decision to spend federal money to save lives in AIDS-ravaged Africa. “I believe saving lives lifts our moral conscience and makes us a better people,” Bush said. His global AIDS initiative has saved 7 million lives, an accomplishment with moral and national security consequences. “The enemy can only recruit when you have hopeless people.”

Bush thanked those who prayed for him during his presidency. While at age 30 he was uninterested in the effects of prayer, “...Having been prayed for, I can assure you that prayer affected me a lot.

It did comfort me and strengthen me. For those of you who offered those prayers, it’s a beautiful gift and Laura and I thank you.”

During a question and answer session led by BCA Chairman Will Brooke, Bush talked about the moment in the Florida classroom when he learned America had been attacked, when the second plane hit the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. “I’d seen the first plane and I thought it was pilot error. I never thought it was deliberate,” he said. But when his aide Andy Card whispered in his ear about the second plane, his reaction was “How dare they?”

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Chairman Challenges BCA to Honor the Privilege of Leadership

The Business Council of Alabama is in the strongest position ever as it looks toward the future, 2011 BCA Chairman Will Brooke told the annual Chairman’s Dinner audience.

“This year saw the passage of ethics reform, tenure reform, public pension reform, tort reform, state budget reform and numerous pieces of pro-business legislation,” Brooke said. “And we are just getting started.

“BCA has already begun to form its legislative agenda for 2012, and for the first time in

its history is able to include proactive and productive discussions with our legislative and executive leadership to prioritize our efforts for positive, pro-growth initiatives in the upcoming session. You can rest assured the voice of business – all business – is being heard in Montgomery.”

Brooke thanked the state’s top leaders in attendance who were attentive and responsive to BCA’s positions, including Gov. Robert Bentley, House Speaker Mike Hubbard and





BCA President and CEO William Canary welcomes guests.



BCA Chairman Will Brooke asks the former president questions following his address to the crowd. "It's no sacrifice to serve a nation you love," he said. "It's an honor."



BCA officers and select members chat with the former President in a private roundtable meeting before the evening's festivities.



BCA Senior Vice President Anita Archie recognizes elected officials.

Senate President ProTem Del Marsh.

While business achieved many legislative victories during the last session, Brooke warned those present not to be derailed by ambivalence and arrogance. While it might seem easy to "move all our attention and resources to the next challenge and trust government to run itself," he said, "those who would seek to subvert government to their personal service still linger at the door." Instead, Brooke called on the audience to "send your best people to participate in BCA or even run for public office, people who care about building a great Alabama."

He also asked that they continue to contribute to ProgressPAC so it can be ready to support quality pro-business candidates.

If we become arrogant, harboring "the unguarded belief that we won, we know what's right and we always get our way," Brooke said "It will destroy our political gains if we let it. So we must check our own motives first. Make sure you are putting the right above the self. Then insist that BCA and your elected representatives do the same.... If we get too arrogant, we will start to believe our own junk, we will go too far, we will lose and we will deserve to. If we are to have the privilege of leading, I believe we are called to lead honestly and well."

Most importantly, Brooke said, "we are here to resolve to do our best to honor the privilege of leadership that we have won through our efforts."



When the third plane hit the Pentagon, “It was a declaration of war.”

Visiting the memorial sites on the 10-year anniversary was very emotional, Bush said, “especially at the site of Flight 93. I read a speech that commemorated one of the greatest acts of courage in the history of our country. The crowd was close, and I was a cryer and more emotional than at the World Trade Center site.”

He said the memorials that have been built are serving a greater purpose. “There’s already a generation of Americans who think about September 11 the way I think about Pearl Harbor,” he said. “It’s an historical fact, not emotional. So these memorials are necessary to remind us. September 11 basically changed the

equation. We thought the oceans would protect us. We’ve got to pay attention to what happens overseas.”

Asked what was his most memorable visit to Alabama during his presidency, Bush said it was to Enterprise High School, after a tornado killed eight people on March 1, 2007. He was glad First Lady Laura Bush was able to give the commencement speech a year later after the school had been rebuilt. “That just goes to show the spirit of the people,” he said.

Bush said he believes history will judge his presidency fairly, as it has Harry Truman’s.

He said he was never nervous during his presidency except when he went to Yankee Stadium for Game Three of the 2001 World Series to throw out the open-

ing pitch. He went back to New York as part of a healing process just weeks after the Sept. 11 attacks, and the crowd was quite enthusiastic. He’d been warned by Yankees short stop Derek Jeter not to bounce the ball “or they’ll boo you.”

“The place went nuts. I had a bulletproof vest on, and the ball felt like a shot put,” he remembered, but he threw a strike. But the experience was “nerve-racking,” he said.

On a personal level, he said one of the biggest thrills was throwing out the opening pitch at the World Series last year with his father, former president George H. W. Bush, affectionately known as “41.” “It was one of the coolest moments of my life!”

Former Governor Bob Riley Receives 2011 BCA Chairman’s Award



The Business Council of Alabama presented its 2011 Chairman’s Award for Leadership and Distinguished Service to former Alabama Governor Bob Riley. The award was presented to Riley at the annual Chairman’s Dinner by BCA board chairman William W. Brooke of Birmingham.

Riley served two terms as governor of Alabama from 2003 until 2011 and served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1997 until 2003. Under his leadership, Alabama experienced the creation of nearly 150,000 new jobs, record low unemployment,

and an unprecedented increase in funding to educate our schoolchildren.

In presenting the award to Riley, BCA chairman William Brooke said, “You worked hard for this state, you made a huge difference in our state and you deserve this award.”

During his years as governor, Alabama’s economic development was ranked number one in the nation, and number one in the southeast for five out of seven years due to his successful recruitment of new business and industry.

His unwavering commitment to education was demonstrated in the expansion of many proven education reforms.

At his urging, the legislature passed a strong ethics reform package in December 2010 that brought some of the nation’s highest standards of transparency and accountability to state government.

“The reason we are having the success we are having is because of organizations like BCA,” said Riley while accepting his award. “You made a difference and today Alabama is the most business-friendly state in the union and our growth has just started.”

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