The Business Council of Alabama’s 2017 Governmental Affairs Conference held Aug. 11-13 was the most successful in BCA history. It featured a new education report, presentations by Alabama members of Congress, release of the BCA’s annual book, inspirational speeches by Governor Kay Ivey and Attorney General Steve Marshall and an entertaining keynote address by a Washington, D.C., political observer.

The annual BCA conference at the Marriott Grand Hotel and Spa at Point Clear was attended by more than 500 BCA members, elected officials, and honored guests.

Awards were announced and the Business Education Alliance of Alabama released its fourth white paper - "Student Achievement Matters: The Future of Students Assessment is Now."
BCA Chairman Jeff Coleman, president and CEO of Coleman Worldwide Moving in Dothan, presided over the Aug. 11 board of directors meeting. BCA First Vice Chairman and ProgressPAC Chairman Perry Hand, CEO and chairman of Volkert Inc. in Mobile, reminded board members of the BCA Chairman’s Dinner on Sept. 20 at the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel.

The dinner speaker is retired U.S. Army General David Petraeus, “One of the most outstanding military leaders of our time,” Hand said. Hand also outlined the importance of ProgressPAC for the 2018 election cycle and urged its support.

BCA President and CEO William J. Canary released the BCA’s 2017 book, Time and Again, a 288-page historical record of the BCA’s substantial work during the third year of the 2014-18 legislative quadrennium.

“Time and again, when we are united, no challenge is too great for us to meet.”

Canary highlighted the important relationship between the BCA and its national partners, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, and the enduring grassroots link with the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama.


“It’s great to work with the Chamber and the Business Council of Alabama,” Aderholt said. “With the Chamber and the BCA on the same page, it helps us in Washington.”

“Thank you, BCA, for promoting the issues important to Alabama,” Roby said.

Coleman presented BCA 2014 Chairman Fred McCallum, president of AT&T Alabama, with the BCA Distinguished Leadership Award. “Fred has been a tireless advocate for our organization,” Coleman said.

Joe Morton, Ph.D., chairman and president of the Business Education Alliance of Alabama, presented the BEA’s fourth “white paper” report, “Student Achievement Matters: The Future of Student Assessment is Now.”
“If we don’t know they’re making progress, we won’t know if we are doing our jobs,” Dr. Morton said.

The white paper builds on three previously released BEA reports: the 2014 BEA research report, Obstacles Into Opportunities: A 90% High School Graduation Rate in Alabama by 2020 Provides the Educated Workforce That is Key to Expanding Our Economy, the 2015 BEA report, Teachers Matter: Rethinking How Public Education Recruits, Rewards, and Retains Great Educators, and the 2016 report, Exceeding Expectations: Keys to Alabama’s Student Success.”

Spicer’s Music in Auburn, the BCA and Chamber of Commerce Association’s Emerging Small Business of the Year for 2016, was recognized.

Governor Ivey was lauded for her backing of infrastructure efforts almost immediately after she became governor on April 10.

“It’s the right thing to do, it’s economic development, and it is progress,” Governor Ivey said. “My support will continue.”

“In her first week in office she stepped forward and has not backed down,” Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama president and CEO and Alliance for Alabama’s Infrastructure Chairman Jim Page said.

House Speaker Mac McCutcheon, R-Huntsville, and Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh, R-Anniston, discussed increased investment

McCutcheon said he had hoped that during the 2017 regular legislative session, the 105-member House had at least “53 leaders” to support the first infrastructure investment increase in 25 years. But it didn’t happen.

“The challenge is for business leaders to challenge candidates running for election to support infrastructure and fix the problems,” McCutcheon said.

“We have a comprehensive education plan and a comprehensive infrastructure
plan,” Marsh said. “If we address these two is-

Governor Ivey also urged support of her
education initiative, “Strong Start, Strong
Finish,” that focuses on three stages of edu-
cation, from early childhood education, to
computer science in middle school and high
school, to workforce preparedness. “When
our people can start strong, they can finish
strong,” Governor Ivey said.

Attorney General Marshall challenged
conference attendees as mentors to make
Alabama better. “It’s time for us to get some
righteous anger,” he said.

Canary presented Canadian Consul in At-
tlanta Louise Blais with the BCA Top Diplomat
Award for her tireless support of Alabama’s
important trade status with Canada.

Leslie Searcy, executive director of the
Alabama Opportunity Scholarship Fund,
previewed an excellent video of the organi-
ization’s efforts to promote quality education
for children through tax credits that support
Alabama schools.

Art Tipton, president and CEO of BCA
member Southern Research in Birmingham,
told of the company’s discovery of seven im-
portant cancer fighting drugs and the sci-
entific observation role Southern Research
planned for the Aug. 21 solar eclipse using its
high-performance monitoring aircraft.

“Yes, we will cure cancer,” Tipton said.

Washington, D.C., pundit and blogger
Rich Galen entertained and informed at-
tendees at Saturday’s general meeting and
Francois Fineberg, founder and director,
LEGACY School of Discipleship, closed the
conference at the traditional Sunday inter-
faith service.