

BUSINESS ADVOCATE

Having a seat at the table of public policy and connecting to other businesses can dramatically improve your organization. Learn how the Business Council of Alabama can help to facilitate your business needs.

VOLUME 13 ISSUE 8

*A publication of the
Business Council
of Alabama*



CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

BCA IS THE VOICE FOR ALABAMA BUSINESS. LEARN MORE AT BCATODAY.ORG

BUSINESSES OF ALL SIZES FIND PERSONALIZED VALUE IN THEIR BCA MEMBERSHIPS

There's never been a better time than now to join the Business Council of Alabama – or for current members to get more involved.

The unmatched benefits of a BCA membership were on full display in recent weeks at the organization's annual Governmental Affairs Conference in beautiful Point Clear, Alabama. Record-breaking attendance underscored a central tenet of BCA: the business community is stronger together.

Helena Duncan, BCA's senior vice president of operations and investor relations, explained that there are seven key benefits of a BCA membership, with advocacy and networking being the two primary benefits for which members traditionally join.

BCA's governmental affairs team is renowned in Montgomery, and thanks to BCA being the exclusive affiliate in Alabama of both the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and National Association of Manufacturers, brings an unrivaled combination of state and federal level advocacy capabilities. The benefits of this advocacy can be especially useful and cost effective for small and medium sized businesses, which typically do not have the weight of in-house or contract governmental affairs professionals and consultants that many larger businesses do.

"We are always trying to find



ways to protect businesses and allow members to be able to focus fully on their business," said Duncan.

All BCA members are also sent weekly legislative reports during each state legislative session, gain access to briefings provided by Al-

year-round, even when the legislature is not in session.

At times, the advocacy component of membership goes hand-in-hand with networking, as well.

That union was displayed perfectly at BCA's annual conference. Members in attendance

"WE ARE STRONGER IN NUMBERS, AND WE'RE STRONGEST WHEN WE'RE HEARING FROM THE SMALL BUSINESSES AND MEDIUM SIZED BUSINESSES SO THAT WHEN WE ATTACK AN ISSUE, WE ATTACK THOSE ISSUES WITH EVERYBODY IN MIND."

abama's top political leaders, and receive a yearly subscription to BCA's partner magazine Business Alabama. The BCA governmental affairs team is locked in and proactively engaged in advocacy efforts

were able to not only network with some of the top business executives and governmental officials from across the state, but the conference provided an issues-focused agenda worth the price of admission by itself.

Governor Kay Ivey delivered an exclusive



update on the state of economic development in Alabama; four members of Alabama's congressional delegation gave a candid federal affairs update; the majority and minority leaders for both the Alabama Senate and House came together for a vibrant state legislative update; former Senate President Pro Tem Del Marsh and outgoing Speaker Mac McCutcheon participated in a revealing farewell Q&A session; and experts from the public and private sectors led breakout panels on the state of infrastructure and innovation in Alabama.

Attendees also had the opportunity to network directly with Alabama's top elected officials and leading political candidates, from Ivey, Lt. Governor Will Ainsworth, and Attorney General Steve Marshall to U.S. Senator Tommy Tuberville and Republican Senate nominee Katie Britt.

Indeed, when it comes to networking opportunities, BCA is the "one-stop shop" in Alabama. Whether you are the founder of a tech startup looking to network with potential investors or partners, the head of a small business looking to network with the heads of larger businesses or suppliers, the CFO of a medium-sized business looking for peer networks to help navigate uncertain economic times, or the CEO of Alabama's largest employers looking to network with public policymakers, BCA is a big tent bringing Alabama businesses together.



"We can make all of these things happen, even if it's just connecting groups of CEOs together, small groups or large groups," Duncan underscored. "We want them to think of us first. We want them to think of us for everything that's outside of their realm of work. And let us try to put it together. If it's workforce development, if it's training, whatever they come across that is not in their line of work – we want them to think, 'let me call BCA first.'"

While these are benefits that BCA has long-offered, the organization recently began exerting more focused, intentional efforts to write its own narrative and broadcast its offerings. This will be a core emphasis for BCA to build upon moving into the future.

This awareness-building push is important for existing BCA members, too.

BCA is truly a member-driven organization, so the more involved members are, the stronger the organization is. One crucial benefit of BCA membership is the ability to participate in BCA's policy committees, which set the agenda of the organization and have an important role in the public policy making process in Montgomery through BCA's advocacy efforts. BCA's policy committees include: Governmental Affairs; Small Business; Innovation & Entrepreneurship; Judicial & Legal Reform; Environment & Energy; Health; Labor & Employment; Tax

& Fiscal Policy; Federal Affairs; and Education & Workforce Development.

"We are stronger in numbers, and we're strongest when we're hearing from the small businesses and medium sized businesses so that when we attack an issue, we attack those issues with everybody in mind," Duncan advised, noting that 85-90% of BCA members are considered small businesses. "We have to have feedback from our members, and that's very important. We never lose sight that our members are at the core of everything that we do. When we talk about pro-jobs, pro-business, we're thinking about them."

"Everything we do is to try to make sure every business, regardless of the size, regardless of what the industry is – that we are helping drive decisions in this state with them in mind to create a positive impact on what they're doing."

Another area in which BCA encourages its members to be involved in the advocacy process is ProgressPAC, the organization's political action committee that



endorses and donates to candidates on the state level. This is a locally-driven process, as BCA members are able to serve on one of eight regional action committees that make endorsement recommendations in their respective locales. The ProgressPAC board is comprised of BCA members from every corner of Alabama, representing businesses of all sizes and sectors, and votes to make endorsements regarding statewide candidates.

This member-controlled process paid dividends this past primary season, when ProgressPAC-endorsed candidates won over 92% of their races. This effort plays into advocacy efforts, as electing pro-jobs candidates helps translate into ensuring pro-jobs public policy is enacted.

The secret sauce to BCA's success, and its influence, comes down to its members being engaged. Duncan outlined that BCA thrives because its members give generously of their time, talent, expertise, and resources.

"We can't do it without them," she emphasized. "That's the bottom line. We couldn't do

anything without the people that support us, that support our events, that support us day-to-day, by making phone calls if we need it, or just supporting our grassroots efforts. There is nothing that we can honestly say that we do that does not come at the cost of people outside of our staff."

Looking into the future, Duncan encourages more BCA members to share their company's news with the organization, so that BCA can highlight the successes of its member businesses in the BCA newsletters and on its social media platforms. Additionally, BCA is always seeking current members looking to get more involved within the organization.

"Our mission helps build a

stronger future for our entire state, and that is only possible thanks to our incredible members," Duncan added. "The more BCA grows in numbers and member involvement, the more we can accomplish together."

Any business interested in BCA membership, from a one-person LLC to the state's largest employers, can reach out to BCA's team to understand how their unique needs and priorities match with a range of BCA membership benefits and packages.

Whether you want to join the preeminent business advocacy organization in Alabama, have access to unsurpassed networking opportunities, help mold a pressing policy agenda, or enjoy one of the organization's other chief benefits, BCA membership is a valuable tool that can help your business grow and prosper long into the future.

Visit BCAToday.org to learn more. **BA**

The Business Advocate is published by the Business Council of Alabama, a non-partisan, statewide business association representing the interests and concerns of nearly 1 million working Alabamians through its member companies and its partnership with the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama. For more information on the Business Council of Alabama please contact us at (800) 665-9647 or visit us online at bcatoday.org.