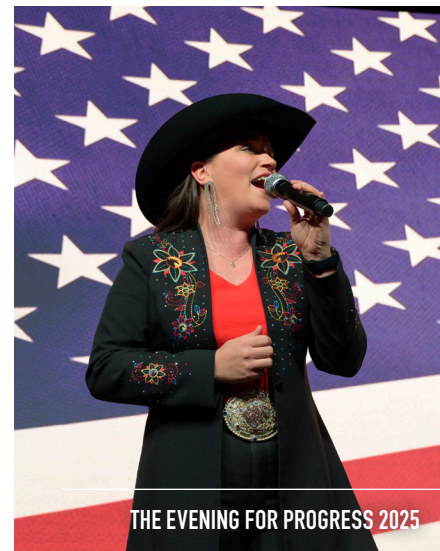


A photograph of Kevin O'Leary, a man with a balding head, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and dark tie. He is speaking into a lapel microphone and has his hands raised in a gesture. He is wearing a colorful watch on his left wrist and a ring on his left hand. The background is a blurred blue and white pattern.

**SHARK TANK'S KEVIN O'LEARY  
CALLS ON ALABAMA TO STAY  
PRO-BUSINESS, COMPETITIVE**



## SHARK TANK'S KEVIN O'LEARY CALLS ON ALABAMA TO STAY PRO-BUSINESS, COMPETITIVE

When Kevin O'Leary took the stage at the Business Council of Alabama's Evening for Progress in Birmingham, the audience got a masterclass in capitalism, policy, and what it takes for a state like Alabama to lead in an increasingly competitive international economy.

Known to millions as "Mr. Wonderful" from ABC's Shark Tank, O'Leary built his career on smart investing, tough questions, and sharp instincts about where the economy is heading. But on this night, his focus wasn't on TV pitches or boardroom deals; it was on Alabama: its business climate, its leadership, and its opportunity to win.

"You can invest anywhere," O'Leary said. "Go to the competitive states, reward good leadership, good policy, and punish bad policy. That's how it

works—with the power of the invested dollar."

O'Leary's message to Alabama's business and political community was clear: investors don't follow politicians—they follow policy. States that build stability, cut red tape, and foster entrepreneurship are the ones that attract capital, talent, and economic growth.

He reminded the crowd that elections aren't just about partisanship; they set the tone for investor confidence and business expansion.

"Elections have a direct impact on investor confidence," O'Leary said. "At the end of the day, what's made this economy the most successful on earth is the ability for companies, both public and private, to make money, both domestically and internationally."

That success, he argued, depends on good governance and a predictable regulatory environment. Investors, he said, don't bet on rhetoric; they bet on results.

"If an investor builds a car plant, they need policy to know that the billions they're putting to work will last for at least 15 years," he explained. "Leadership has to provide stability, vision, and policy that's pro-business to create jobs. Job creation is the whole deal. It solves for everything."

For Alabama, O'Leary said, that means staying the course by maintaining policies that reward innovation, reduce burdens, attract investment, and protect what he called the nation's most valuable export: the American Dream.

"Our number one export in America is not energy or technology, it's the American dream," he said. "That's why people risk everything to come here, to provide for their families. It doesn't matter who's in the White House—their number one mandate is to protect that franchise. Don't mess with that."

He described capitalism as the most successful system ever created, one that depends on balance and accountability.

"What makes America great is the ba-



BCA CHAIRMAN KEVIN SAVOY & KEVIN O'LEARY

lance between the two parties,” he said. “You want the checks and balances that make it work. Swinging back to the middle is what keeps the economy strong.”

O’Leary’s sharpest insight for Alabama, and for its investors, was about the competition among states. He described the U.S. as a marketplace of ideas where policy is the true differentiator between “winner states and loser states.”

“You can invest anywhere,” he said. “I tell investors, go to the competitive states, reward good leadership, good policy, and punish bad policy. That’s how it works—with the power of the invested dollar.”

That competition, he noted, is one of America’s most significant advantages, and he said the states that understand it and act on it will continue to succeed.

“If you don’t like the policy in one place, you can move to another,” O’Leary said. “That’s how the system self-corrects,

and the states that get policy right win.”

With its workforce investments, infrastructure expansion, and commitment to keeping taxes low, the state has become a destination for manufacturers, entrepreneurs, and companies seeking growth.

Alabama, he said, has positioned itself well.

tes the jobs that provide the taxes that fund the services. So you always want policies that encourage people in their 20s to take the risk to start a business.”

It’s that kind of risk-taking that fuels everything from job creation and philanthropy to the broader economic prosperity that defines the American dream.

***“AT THE END OF THE DAY, WHAT’S MADE THIS ECONOMY THE MOST SUCCESSFUL ON EARTH IS THE ABILITY FOR COMPANIES, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, TO MAKE MONEY, BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.”***

***— KEVIN O’LEARY***

But O’Leary challenged Alabama to think generationally. The entrepreneurs of tomorrow, he said, are the ones who will determine the strength of Alabama’s economy in decades to come.

“The guy in the garage or the woman starting a business in any state is the core of success,” he said. “The private sector crea-

If you want to know the real key to a state’s economic advantage, O’Leary said, it’s simple: “Slash regulation.”

“Most of it’s been piling on for years. Every regulation should have a three-year life cycle before it has to be re-evaluated or replaced. That’s how you keep the system competitive.”



PROGRESSPAC CHAIRMAN GARY SMITH



THE EVENING FOR PROGRESS 2025

He noted that Alabama’s ability to maintain a light regulatory touch while attracting global manufacturers is part of what makes it so competitive.

For Alabama’s business leaders, O’Leary’s message reinforced what the Business Council of Alabama and its political arm, ProgressPAC, have long championed: pro-business policy, responsible leadership, a long-term vision for growth, and less government regulation.

That message resonated throughout the room and was reinforced by ProgressPAC’s celebration of surpassing its \$4 million fundraising goal ahead of the 2026 election cycle.

ProgressPAC Chairman Gary Smith, President and CEO of PowerSouth Energy Cooperative, announced the record-breaking fundraising at the event. “We’re not just participating in the

process, we’re leading it,” Smith said. “We’re showing up, investing, and shaping outcomes.”

ProgressPAC will use those funds to recruit, support, and elect leaders who understand business, respect innovation, and fight to create the kind of policy environment that allows Alabama

companies to thrive.

Because when business is successful, Alabama is successful.

“Everything should be pro-business—it’s that simple,” O’Leary said. “And when a state gets that right, investors notice.”



THE EVENING FOR PROGRESS 2025

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