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A portrait of Mark Drew, a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a light blue dress shirt, and a pink patterned tie. The background is a blurred office setting.

A CONVERSATION WITH MARK DREW
PROTECTIVE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,
CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER & INCOMING BCA CHAIRMAN

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HELENA DUNCAN & MARK DREW AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

A CONVERSATION WITH MARK DREW PROTECTIVE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER & INCOMING BCA CHAIRMAN

Mark Drew, Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer of Protective and incoming Chairman of the Business Council of Alabama, recently sat down with BCA to discuss his career, leadership philosophy, and vision for the organization.

Drew reflected on the experiences and principles that have shaped his leadership, the responsibility of guiding Alabama's business community at a pivotal moment, and the priorities he brings to his new role.

Q: FOR THOSE UNFAMILIAR WITH PROTECTIVE, TELL US ABOUT THE WORK YOU ALL DO.

Protective has helped people achieve protection and security in their lives for

19 years. We provide life insurance, annuities, asset protection, and employee benefit solutions to nearly 28 million people across the country. Founded and headquartered in Birmingham, we now have more than 3,900 teammates working nationwide, including a strong virtual workforce and core sites in Cincinnati and St. Louis.

In 2015, we joined Dai-ichi Life Holdings, Inc. (Dai-ichi), a Japanese life insurance company. That partnership provides us with a long-term owner committed to our growth and our customers. Our relationship with Dai-ichi allows us to keep investing in sound products, dependable service, and the people who deliver both.

We put customers at the center and keep our promises when they matter most—paying claims, providing retirement income, and supporting everyday financial needs. Our commitment to community extends nationwide through the Protective Foundation and employee engagement, including here in Alabama. We also work with elected officials and business leaders to help

keep our state competitive as a place to work and invest.

Q: CAN YOU WALK US THROUGH YOUR TIME AT PROTECTIVE AND YOUR DECADES-LONG INVOLVEMENT IN ALABAMA'S BUSINESS COMMUNITY?

I joined Protective in 2016 as Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer and lead our legal department (including government affairs and compliance), work with regulators, advise our businesses, and support company growth.

Before Protective, I spent 28 years in private practice at Maynard Cooper & Gale (now Maynard Nexsen), including a decade as managing shareholder. My work ranged from counseling boards to handling mergers, acquisitions, and joint ventures, including international transactions. That experience shaped how I think about governance, capital, and execution, and it kept me close to Alabama's business community.

Here at Protective, and during my career at Maynard, we consider service to our state and local community as a part of our job and duty. I have served on many local and state nonprofit boards over the years, including the Business Council of Alabama, United Way of Central Alabama, Greater Alabama Council of Scouting, Birmingham Museum of Art, Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama, Innovation Depot, and the Association of Life Insurance Council. I hope my efforts have been beneficial to these critically important organizations and supportive of my belief that we can make Alabama a better place to live, work, invest, and build.



PROTECTIVE INSURANCE HEADQUARTERS

Q: FROM YOUR EXPERIENCE AS AN EXECUTIVE OF AN ALABAMA-BASED COMPANY WITH A NATIONAL FOOTPRINT, WHAT IS ALABAMA GETTING RIGHT FOR BUSINESS, AND WHERE DOES THE STATE STILL NEED TO IMPROVE TO STAY COMPETITIVE?

Alabama has made significant progress over the past four years, thanks to the partnership between the BCA, our industry peers, and our state leaders: Governor Ivey, Lt. Gov. Ainsworth, Speaker Ledbetter, and Pro Tem Gudger. A great example of this partnership was the Working for Alabama package that passed in 2024, which is designed to strengthen workforce development and seize economic opportunities by focusing on job training, childcare access, and housing.

There is still work to do. One area that needs attention is our civil justice system. Businesses depend on a fair and predictable civil justice system to thrive. If the system is inconsistent or overly punitive, it discourages growth and can push job creation and investment

elsewhere.

Other states in the Southeast—Florida and Georgia, for example—have passed meaningful reforms in recent years to improve competitiveness and reduce costs for businesses and citizens. Alabama should take a serious look at becoming the nation's fairest and most balanced civil justice system in the next four years. Doing so would not only help address affordability but also open the door to more capital investment and economic development opportunities.

Q: WHAT ARE YOUR TOP PRIORITIES AS BCA CHAIRMAN, AND WHAT DO YOU WANT ALABAMA EMPLOYERS TO SEE ACCOMPLISHED DURING YOUR TENURE?

As a proud father and grandfather who wants to see all family members working and living in Alabama, my priority has always been ensuring that Alabama's economy and business environment create abundant opportunities now and in the future. Attracting and retaining talent is critical to our long-term success, including both our ho-

megrown graduates and the many students from out of state who attend our two- and four-year institutions.

In my experience, when someone from outside Alabama has an attractive job opportunity, and we can get them to visit the state, we usually have a high success rate in recruiting them. The same is true for students.

We have a significant number of out-of-state students living here, so finding ways to introduce them to everything Alabama has to offer will go a long way.

A person's twenties are among the most impactful years of their life; it is the start of their career, the foundation of their friendships, and the time when people begin to put down roots. It's also when many entrepreneurs begin their journey, and once the journey starts, it can be difficult to uproot. That's why recruiting and retaining young talent is so important. We want them to grow personally and professionally here in

Alabama.

Organizations like Innovate Alabama are working to recruit and retain in-state talent, but we need to build on this model across all sectors of the economy. Additionally, we need policies that intentionally pave the way for a thriving economy and attract businesses, large and small, to Alabama.

I am confident our legislative leaders and state policymakers will continue working towards that goal in partnership with organizations like BCA.

Q: WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR FROM THE ALABAMA LEGISLATURE AND STATE POLICYMAKERS THIS SESSION TO SUPPORT GROWTH, STABILITY, AND LONG-TERM COMPETITIVENESS?

I am looking for leaders to keep the positive momentum going. The past few years have shown us what's possible when business and government work together to strengthen the workforce, improve competitiveness, and create an environment where businesses and families can thrive. Progress doesn't happen by standing still, and this session is an opportunity to take the next step. Let's expand business recruitment—both large and small—along with innovation, and workforce development through effective fiscal policies and leadership that invest in the future. Together, we can take steps that not only meet today's needs but also position Alabama for long-term growth and prosperity.



MARK DREW SPEAKING AT THE ALABAMA SMALL BUSINESS AWARDS

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**- MARK DREW, PROTECTIVE EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT,
CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER & INCOMING BCA CHAIRMAN**

Q: LOOKING AT PROGRESSPAC'S CAMPAIGN 2026, HOW DO YOU VIEW THE ROLE OF BCA IN THIS ELECTION CYCLE AND THE ELECTION'S SIGNIFICANCE TO ALABAMA'S LONG-TERM ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS FUTURE?

ProgressPAC's mission is to recruit and support candidates who are committed to a competitive business climate, policies that encourage investment and job creation, and strong advocacy for Ala-

bama's continued economic growth. With 2026 being an election year, ProgressPAC and its Campaign 2026 are more important than ever. For the first time since 2010, all major constitutional offices are open seats and, as always, all 140 legislative seats are up for election. This election will shape Alabama's direction for the next decade, and beyond. The business community must stay engaged to ensure a competitive environment for years to come.

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 (334) 834-6000 or visit us online at bcatoday.org.