The Business Advocate

Volume 5 | Issue 7

A publication of the
BUSINESS COUNCIL
OF ALABAMA

T H E  B U S I N E S S
ADVOCATE

BCA 2014 Governmental Affairs Conference Features Dynamic Speakers and Programs

BY DANA BEYERLE

POINT CLEAR – In addition to the dynamic high school graduation plan presentation, the Business Council of Alabama’s 2014 Governmental Affairs Conference featured Governor Robert Bentley, a network Capitol Hill reporter, a former Navy SEAL whose unit participated in the rescue of the Maersk Alabama captain, and a husband-and-wife team whose personal health crisis became an inspirational story.

Governor Bentley spoke on the education plan to seek a 90 percent high school graduation rate by 2020, which was presented by the Business Education Alliance’s Chairman and President, Dr. Joe Morton.

“What we just heard is very important,” Bentley said. “We’re all working together to reach that goal. It takes a plan, takes an execution of that plan, and it takes hard work. Educating people and giving them jobs lifts them out of poverty.”

Bentley complimented the business community’s growing involvement in education, since business hires graduates of the state’s school systems. “The business side can tell education what they need,” Bentley said.

The Governmental Affairs Conference also included a business meeting of the BCA Board of Directors presided over by BCA Chairman Fred McCallum, president of AT&T Alabama.

Its program included BCA President and CEO William J. Canary, Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama President and CEO Jeremy Arthur, and Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama Chairman Jim Page, chief executive of the Chamber of West Alabama in Tuscaloosa.

They announced the 10-year anniversary of The Partnership between the BCA and CCAA.

Canary said The Partnership includes 124 local chambers of commerce. “It’s a great return on investment,” Canary said.

“It’s been a mutually beneficial relationship,” Page said. “The Partnership has proven its weight in gold and the best days are ahead of us.”

Arthur said the “state of the CCAA and The Partnership is well.”

After a Saturday breakfast welcome by Chairman McCallum, NBC News Capitol Hill correspondent Kelly O’Donnell described the current state of politics in the nation’s capital.

Top: NBC News Capitol Hill correspondent Kelly O’Donnell addresses BCA members at the August 2014 Governmental Affairs Conference held at the Grand Hotel in Point Clear.

Bottom: Business Council of Alabama Chairman Fred McCallum, president of AT&T Alabama, introduces Business Education Alliance Chairman and President Dr. Joe Morton, who unveils an important study outlining a goal of annually graduating 90 percent of high school students by the year 2020.
Washington “is dysfunctional” due to a divided Congress, she said. And built-in controversies in legislation make it difficult to “come together.”

“This Congress is the least productive in modern history,” O’Dornell said. “Things are really slowing down.”

Former Navy SEAL and current motivational speaker Rob O’Neill used stunning video of SEALs in action to relate his leadership experience in training and military operations to business.

“Don’t look back for success, look forward for potential,” said O’Neill, whose SEAL unit was responsible for rescuing cargo ship Maersk Alabama Captain Richard Phillips from Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean in 2009.

Teamwork grows companies like it creates successful military operations, O’Neill said. “Never give up,” he said.

Sunday morning’s traditional interfaith service was truly an inspirational hour spent with the husband-and-wife team of Katherine and Jay Wolf, founders of Hope Heals Ministries.

Only 26 years old in 2008, Mrs. Wolf suffered a massive brain stem stroke that would have killed her had it not been for skillful medical treatment in Los Angeles where Wolf was attending law school. Mrs. Wolf’s continued rehabilitation, their outlook on life, and faith in God and Jesus Christ, was an inspirational close to a successful conference.
POINT CLEAR – The Business Education Alliance of Alabama at the Business Council of Alabama’s summer conference unveiled an ambitious plan whose goal is graduating at least 90 percent of each high school class by 2020.

BEA Chairman and President Dr. Joe Morton announced the goal of a 90 percent graduation rate at the BCA’s Governmental Affairs Conference held Aug. 1-3 at the Marriott Grand Hotel and Conference Center.

“We’ve got to have high-quality graduates who are trained and ready to fill the jobs that are available,” Dr. Morton told members of the BCA board of directors.

The goal was outlined in a report titled, “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 report was prepared for the BEA by the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama and included an economic model by Dr. Keivan Deravi, an economics professor at Auburn University Montgomery.

The study was supported by the AT&T Foundation and by BCA Chairman Fred McCallum, who is president of AT&T Alabama. “It is time for us to step forward, it is time for us to lead,” McCallum said.

Addressing the nearly 500 conference attendees, Dr. Morton said Alabama has 479,000 working-age adults who do not have a high school diploma. “The BEA’s board of directors has identified a 90 percent graduation rate by 2020 as an important goal,” Dr. Morton said.

And it’s doable, he said

“The goal was to identify key issues and I.D. a research project for our policy and business community to join … to truly form a business-education alliance,” Dr. Morton said.

Dr. Morton, the former Alabama school superintendent, said a 90 percent high school graduation rate is a key component of Plan 2020, which was adopted by the state school board in 2012. He said increasing the high school graduation rate from its current 80 percent rate to 90 percent by 2020 is the single most important ingredient to a more prosperous state.

It would have the economic impact of a mega-industrial project every year, Dr. Deravi said. He said high school graduates earn 38 percent more than non-graduates and experience lower Business Education Alliance of Alabama Chairman and President Dr. Joe Morton, left, and BEA Finance Chairman Jay Love, announce an ambitious and doable goal of attaining a 90 percent high school graduation rate for Alabama students by the year 2020.
unemployment.

Dr. Deravi said increasing the high school graduation rate each year until a 90 percent rate is obtained in 2020 will cause employment, earnings, spending, and tax revenue to grow at a compounded rate. Dr. Deravi said a 90 percent graduation rate would produce an economic output of $430 million more than it otherwise would have been.

“The BEA is uniquely situated to make it work,” said James W. Williams Jr., director of the Public Research Council of Alabama, which conducted the study. “This is a strategic opportunity to take the (education) fork in the road.”

“It is a huge project but dividends are literally out of this world,” Dr. Morton said.

The BEA, a non-profit education reform foundation, was created in 2013 by business men and women and educators who recognize the need for and require better-trained students graduating who are in Alabama schools.