‘Epiphany’ Got Abroms Involved in Business Politics

Business Council of Alabama 2015 Chairman Marty Abroms didn’t much like politics and believed voting was the epitome of civic duty. That changed in about 2000 when a client needed to know how the company should budget for taxes since the U.S. Supreme Court had declared Alabama’s franchise tax unconstitutional and replacement alternative taxes were being contemplated.

Abroms, president and managing shareholder of Abroms & Associates P.C. in Florence, got involved in the political end of state issues after an eye-opening experience in Montgomery. Abroms had traveled to the capital with the newly formed Business Associations’ Tax Coalition of more than 30 business groups, including the BCA, to try to influence the outcome of the replacement tax.

He said special interest groups were only interested in protecting their base and were not at all concerned about the financial impact on others. Some of the proposals would have increased business franchise taxes by 400 percent.

“I did find that some wanted to be sure that any tax laws enacted promoted business and did not stifle them and others really thought business people are always wealthy and did not pay enough taxes,” Abroms said.

“The straw that broke the camel’s back for me was a meeting I had with the key tax representative of the Alabama Education Association in which, after some discussions on
the tax burden some of the proposals would place on business, I was told that, ‘It’s not the job of AEA to care about good tax policy. Our job is to promote better salary and benefits for our members and to be sure that there is sufficient funding to pay for them.’

“That was an epiphany to me,” he said. “And I had to ask myself if the most powerful political organization at that time really did not care about good pro-business policies, who in the world was looking out for our Alabama businesses?”

He looked into it and the BCA’s name rose to the top. “I signed up immediately and have been a member ever since that time. And I knew I had to get to work to recruit other like-minded business owners and advisors.”

Abroms was a force in the BCA’s 2014 election efforts that resulted in a continued pro-business Legislature. As chair of the BCA’s ProgressPAC board of directors last year, Abroms was deeply involved in how best to use ProgressPAC’s resources.

“The only way that we can expect to see positive change in our state’s business climate is to help promote the right legislative agenda and support those candidates that will run our government the way we know it needs to be run,” said Abroms.

“Of the 118 candidates, ProgressPAC successfully backed 114 and Marty Abroms was a major reason for that success,” said BCA President and CEO William J. Canary. “His dedication, outreach, coalition building, and constant encouragements kept our focus on the goal.”

Abroms graduated from the University of North Alabama in 1981. His impressive honors and awards include recognition for the highest grade point average, Mr. University of North Alabama, Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society, UNA Hall of Fame Award, the UNA student Government Association Scholarship Leadership Award, UNA Alumni of the Year, and UNA President’s Cabinet Chairman.

Abroms began his career as a senior tax specialist for KPMG and in 1984 joined one of Alabama’s premier businesses, the Shoals-based Anderson Cos. that included Books-A-Million Inc., Hibbett Sporting Goods Inc., Anderson News Corp., and other related corporations.

Abroms honed his accounting and tax skills at the Anderson Cos. until 1995 and although he owns his own business now, he continues a close relationship with the Anderson Cos. He created Abroms & Associates PC in 1995 and provides strategic planning for many clients, helping profitability, minimizing taxes, and identifying inefficiencies and business risks.

Abroms’ business philosophy is simple: “If you take care of your clients first, they will take care of you.” Abroms believes clients choose Abroms & Associates for five reasons, and the first three are confidentiality. No. 4 is integrity and No. 5 is technical and business skills.

Gov. Robert Bentley appointed Abroms to the UNA board of trustees in 2012 and in 2014 he was elected president pro tem of the board.

Abroms said he learned from examples set by former BCA chairs Charles Nailen, Robert “Bubba” Lee, Sandy Stimpson, Carol Gordy, and Will Brooke. He credits 2008 BCA Chair David Muhlendorf with recruiting him to the BCA board.

“These were all business people that put in a lot of volunteer time,” Abroms said. “If they felt the need to do it, who was I to say no?”

Abroms will turn his chairman’s gavel over to the BCA’s 2016 chairman at the annual meeting in December but he plans to stay involved.

“Join BCA as I did, get involved in a committee in an area you have knowledge of or care a lot about, and then decide if you want to seek a position on the BCA Board,” he said. “The opportunities and need are there for you to make a difference. One person can make a difference in an election or a law or a regulation. This I promise.”

LEFT: Abroms has served on the Shoals Chamber of Commerce board of directors, received the Shoals Chamber of Commerce’s chairmanship’s Service Award, and is a member of state and national CPA groups. As a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants’s Corporation Tax Committee, he formulated technical and policy recommendations to Congress, the U.S. Treasury, and the Internal Revenue Service.