

A publication of the Business Council of Alabama

Leaders From Near and Far Meet in Montgomery

The Business Council of Alabama's winter board of directors meeting included the installation of 21 new board members, remarks by Canada Counsel General Louise Blais from Atlanta, U.S. Rep. Martha Roby of Montgomery, Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall, and Mobile Mayor Sandy Stimpson, a past BCA chairman.

The BCA holds board meetings at various times of the year conducting business, updating members on activities, and installing new board members.

BCA 2017 Chairman Jeff Coleman, president and CEO

of Coleman Worldwide Moving in Dothan, presided over the meeting held Feb. 21 at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center. He reviewed the 2016 year's successes in the Legislature and plans for the 2017 session which began Feb. 7.

Chairman Coleman lauded the BCA-supported right-to-work constitutional amendment approved by the Legislature in 2016 and ratified by Alabama voters in November. The right-to-work is a powerful job attraction and retention tool for economic developers. The amendment enshrines

COVER: Louise Blais, consul general of Canada in Atlanta, spoke to BCA board members.

BOTTOM LEFT: Attorney General Steve Marshall introduced himself to BCA board members.

BOTTOM MIDDLE: U.S. Rep. Martha Roby, R-Montgomery, addressed the BCA board of directors meeting about the House Judiciary Committee.

TOP RIGHT: New board members installed at the annual meeting were: Ricardo Acevedo, GE Aviation; Justin Barkley, Quality Correctional Health Care; Rick Clementz, Mercedes-Bens U.S. International; Tony Cochran, CK Business Solutions; Norman Crow, D.T. & Freight Co.; David Fernandes, Toyota Manufacturing of Alabama; Drew Franklin, SPOC Automation; Lee Garrison, USI Insurance Services & Risk Management; Gary Holeman, Robertson Banking Co.; Mark Hope, Trustmark Bank; Michelle Howell, 3M; Lance Hunter, Hodges Warehouse; Gayle Macolly, Eastman Chemical Co.; Chad Mathis, Alabama Bone & Joint Clinic; Clay McInnis, Alabama Bridge Contractors Association; Heather New, The Chamber – Gadsden/Etowah County; Zeke Smith, Alabama Power Co.; Mark Snead, Sterling Bank/Synovus; Mark Spencer, USAmeriBank; Thomas Treadwell, MOBIS Alabama, LLC; and, Bob Wood, Mitchell College of Business, University of South Alabama. (Not all new board members pictured.)

Alabama’s right-to-work status in the constitution, making it difficult to change.

“Right-to-work was huge for us,” Chairman Coleman said. “It took a lot of hard work.”

Last year was a significant legislative year for the business community but not everything was accomplished, including the complete infrastructure modernization package. The Legislature did pass the BCA-backed infrastructure investment safe-harbor bill, laying the groundwork for infrastructure investment that is the business community’s goal in the 2017 regular session.

“We accomplished a lot,” Chairman Coleman said. “Now we will build on our success and move on with our initiatives.”

The BCA board of directors in December approved Perspective ’17, the BCA’s agenda for the legislative session. Agenda topics are Education, Infrastructure, Small Business, Manufacturing, Judicial and Legal Reform, Environment and Energy, Health care, Tax and Fiscal Policy, and Labor and Employment.

“The new year promises opportunities in the legislative and regulatory arenas both in

Montgomery and Washington, D.C., where a new day and attitude is manifesting itself in growing economic confidence,” Chairman Coleman and BCA President and CEO William J. Canary said in their joint letter to Alabama business leaders.

Paramount for 2017 is continuing the goal of modernizing investment in Alabama’s infrastructure that plays such a key role in economic development through safe, efficient, and updated roads and bridges. Alabama’s transportation investment has not been updated for 25 years.

Watson Donald, director of external affairs for Southern Research in Birmingham and co-chair of the BCA Federal Affairs Committee, introduced the BCA’s 2017 Federal Action Agenda that was approved by the board of directors.

The agenda includes 21st Century Workforce, Economic Development, Energy, Health Care, Infrastructure, Legal Reform, Regulatory Relief and Reform, Tax Reform, and Trade.

The BCA’s federal partners are the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Both are exclusively represented in Alabama by the BCA.

The BCA’s state partners gave briefings: Jeremy Arthur, president and CEO of the





Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama that begins its 14th year in The Partnership with the BCA; Jay Love, finance chairman of the Business Education Alliance of Alabama; Jim Page, chairman of the Alliance for Alabama’s Infrastructure and president and CEO of the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce; Jeff Thompson, executive director of the Alabama Aerospace Industry Association; and, Pascal Auburtin, vice president of the Alabama Automotive Manufacturers Association.

“Alabama citizens agree that infrastructure is important for economic development,” Page said, noting that President Trump has made infrastructure a top priority. “Either you’re at the table or you’re on the menu.”

BCA Deputy Chief of Staff Drew Harrell was announced as the Alliance for Alabama’s Infrastructure’s executive director.

Attorney General Marshall was introduced and he said being named attorney general following the appointment of Luther Strange to the U.S. Senate is his “dream job.” Marshall is the former elected district attorney in Marshall County.

“I’m extremely grateful to serve,” Marshall said. “I ask for businesses’ help in sharing ideas. My goal is to be a good public servant.”

Consul General Blais, who spoke to the BCA’s Governmental Affairs Conference in

Point Clear last summer, talked of the trade connections between Alabama, the United States, and Canada. She said Canada is waiting to hear about the new administration’s trade policy.

“We will do whatever we can to build relationships,” she said.

Mayor Stimpson, the 2010 BCA chairman, spoke about Mobile and meeting challenges and opportunities. “I am very excited for areas of Alabama, not just Mobile, for jobs and growth,” Mayor Stimpson said.

Rep. Roby, R-Montgomery, who represents the 2nd Congressional District consisting of most of Montgomery and counties to the southeast, announced that she has been assigned to the House Judiciary Committee. She also serves on other committees, including the House appropriations committee.

Chairman Coleman challenged board members to advance Alabama’s business interests and be involved in making Alabama a profitable place to do business.

“It’s about people,” Chairman Coleman said. “We can do better. It’ll take a lot of political courage.”

Following the meeting, the annual Saluting Leaders of State Government reception was held for more than 250 BCA members, legislators, state officials, and association members. **TBADV**

THE BUSINESS ADVOCATE



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