



Birmingham REALTORS® Dip Toes in Political Waters, Backing 15 Candidates -- 14 Win! – November 2013

Until this past election cycle, the Birmingham Association of REALTORS® (BAR) had never conducted an independent expenditure campaign or made use of any of the campaign funds and services available through the REALTOR® Party. The past year has been one of hard-core political-fitness training for BAR, however, and the results have been nothing short of amazing. This autumn, the association backed 15 REALTOR®-friendly candidates, and 14 won.

The force behind all this political action is Cliff Long, who became Chief Executive Officer of Birmingham's 3,200-member association in 2012, fresh from his tenure as the highly effective CEO and Government Affairs Director for the Emerald Coast Association of REALTORS®. Arriving in Birmingham, he hit the ground running, re-establishing a BAR Government Affairs Committee with a policy development arm, and another committee focused on grassroots "work the pavement" efforts, which he insists are every bit as important.

In April 2013, BAR invited every single elected official in the five counties it represents to a series of receptions, an initial step in its "REALTOR®-friendliness" political screening.

In May 2013, BAR hosted one of the first of the NAR's Candidate Training Academies, featuring two former Alabama governors as speakers, and attracting about 70 participants. Long also trained his REALTOR® committee members in in-depth candidate screening methods, in order to determine electability and the best investment of RPAC dollars. Once they identified the 15 candidates they would be backing for City Council and School Board seats in this year's general election, BAR applied to NAR's Campaign Services Division for funding and services to help them run the most effective independent expenditure campaigns. Leading up to the general election, these involved robo-calls and direct-mail pieces for each of the candidates except the mayor, who is so popular and whose campaign was so well funded that it was clear that BAR's support would be better off in more competitive races. Ironically, there was such a buzz around the "new" REALTOR® screenings that Birmingham's Mayor insisted upon being screened by the REALTORS® and subsequently was. Having helped 10 candidates secure clear victories in the general election, BAR also supported five of its candidates in run-off elections with additional robo-calls and direct mail efforts.

"Seven of the general election races were for the School Board," notes Long, "and it was the first time that the REALTORS® had involved themselves in School Board politics. When I arrived here in Birmingham, as a father, I was highly



aware that the Birmingham City Schools had been rated as failing and had recently lost their accreditation. I made sure that my Government Affairs Committee understood how this affected not just the children, but the property values here." The committee identified REALTOR[®]-friendly School Board candidates who understood the correlation between property values and the quality of the schools, and with BAR's backing, three incumbents were unseated from the failing board, and four new members gained seats.

Despite the remarkable record of 10 outright wins, and four run-off successes, Long has made it clear to his leadership that they must keep looking forward. "This is big," he says. "We are actively shoring up one of the largest cities in the south." BAR is now averaging a major Government Affairs event per month, maintaining the momentum it has gained from the elections. In October, it welcomed Congressman Spencer Bachus, a native of Birmingham and a senior member of Alabama's U.S. House delegation, to a REALTOR[®] Town Hall meeting.

To learn more about how Birmingham REALTORS[®] have been mobilizing their newfound Government Affairs clout, contact Cliff Long, the Birmingham Association of REALTORS[®]' Chief Executive Officer, at cliff@birminghamrealtors.com or 205.802.6071.



Birmingham Candidate Training Academy Flyer:

YOU ARE INVITED:
REALTOR® Candidate
Training Academy
Thursday, May 23

FEATURING



Former Alabama Governor
JIM FOLSOM, JR.
Breakfast Speaker

BAR BAMLS



WANT YOUR
PARTICIPATION

FEATURING



Former Alabama Governor
BOB RILEY
Luncheon Speaker

Birmingham Association of REALTORS®
8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Free Breakfast and Lunch included

All REALTORS® planning to seek public office are invited

Start with breakfast at 8 a.m. Guest Speaker is Former Alabama Governor **Jim Folsom, Jr.**
Receive training from NAR Experts **Chris Sinclair** and **Alastair Macaulay** from 9 a.m. until Noon.
Lunch at Noon. Guest Speaker is Former Alabama Governor **Bob Riley**
Receive training from NAR Experts **Chris Sinclair** and **Alastair Macaulay** from 1 p.m. until 5 p.m.

UPON COMPLETION PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- ▶ Assess whether you possess the basic traits necessary to run for office
- ▶ Tell others concisely (in 30 seconds) why you are running for office
- ▶ Understand how to develop a campaign plan, do market research and contact constituents
- ▶ Learn fundraising methods that have proven to be the most effective
- ▶ Analyze electronic campaign options that are available and determine which fit you best
- ▶ Develop a get out the vote approach that will be most productive for your campaign

DEADLINE to Register is Tuesday, May 21 at 5:00 p.m.
Contact: dave@birminghamrealtors.com or call 205-802-6079

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