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Wilkins keynote speaker at Riley Institute dinner

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SCBIZ Daily Staff



COLUMBIA -- David Wilkins will be the keynote speaker when the Riley Institute at Furman University hosts its fourth annual Legislative Award Dinner in Columbia tonight.

Wilkins is the former Speaker of the South Carolina House who currently serves as U.S. Ambassador to Canada. He plans to return to live in Greenville after President-elect Barack Obama takes office Jan. 20.

The event, which is named in honor of Wilkins, will be held at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center. The evening begins with a 6 p.m. reception, and dinner and the award presentation will follow at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$125 per person, and can be reserved by calling 864-235-8330.

Gilda Cobb-Hunter, a member of the South Carolina State House of Representatives who represents Orangeburg County in District 66, will receive the Wilkins Award for Excellence in Legislative Leadership.

Former U.S. Secretary of Education and S.C. Governor Richard W. Riley will be in attendance to honor Cobb-Hunter.

The Wilkins Award for Excellence in Legislative Leadership award is given annually to a state legislator who "embodies the highest principles of leadership based on integrity, compassion, vision, civility and courage." The previous winners have been John Drummond, President Pro-Tem Emeritus of the Senate; Bobby Harrell, Speaker of the House; and Sen. Hugh K. Leatherman.

The Riley Institute at Furman created the David H. Wilkins Legislative Leadership Program in 2006. In addition to the awards dinner, the Wilkins Fellows program allows Furman students to work as interns in the state's legislative offices. In time, the program will establish an endowed professorship in South Carolina politics.

The Riley Institute at Furman, named for Furman graduate Richard Riley, offers a broad array of programs designed to engage students and citizens across South Carolina in the various arenas of politics, public policy, and public leadership.

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