

# The Interview: Bradley Byrne

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BALDWIN COUNTY, Ala. (WALA) - It was a tight race for the GOP nomination for the Alabama Governor's office in 2010.

## RUN FOR GOVERNOR

Bradley Byrne led the ticket in the primary and with outgoing Governor Bob Riley's endorsement many thought he was headed to Montgomery. But the former chancellor of the state's two year college system lost the runoff to Robert Bentley.

Byrne recently shared how political ads driven by technology and money influenced voters.

"I was talking to a friend of mine the other day. We talked about that the Book of Ecclesiastes to everything there's a season, and there's a season for me to be doing what I'm doing right now, and I need to love where I am right now," shares Byrne.

What Bradley Byrne is doing right now is practicing law. As an attorney for more than 25-years, he is representing businesses doing economic development.

Byrne also helps people form new businesses and assists those having problems. The former Republican candidate for Governor, Chancellor of Alabama's two year college's and State Senator, said he loves what he's doing now which also allows for more family time.

"I spent so many years frankly being away from my family that it's been a blessing for me to be able to spend time with my family," says Byrne.

In July of 2010, Byrne appeared to be headed to November's General Election and the Governor's Office.

"We won the primary, led the ticket in the primary. Well, we know what happened; \$3 million were spent against me by the teacher's union. That's all come out now, and everybody knows about that. We let a thirty second ad that's irrational, and sometimes just an outright lie, sort of takeover. You can lie in a political ad, and there's really nothing that anybody can do about that. It was disheartening. It was very disheartening because I have spent so much time as an advocate for public education, and it was disheartening to see that some good people in education believed that. It was like I was the enemy of teachers, which is, couldn't be further from the truth. There's a game being played there, and it was certainly being played against me this avalanche of false ads that were released against us during the runoff and the big effort to get democrats to vote in the runoff. We lost," he said.

## THE GAME OF POLITICS

Byrne said politics is a rough game.

"It's a part of politics. Look at the presidential election of 1800 between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, two of the founding fathers running for office. (It was a) terribly dirty campaign, so this is not new to American politics. But what I think is new, is the use of technology, because of what they can do both on television and what they can do on a computer now. It just takes it and revs it up to a new level," Byrne said.

Byrne said money drives the technology, and he believes the money will affect future elections if voters don't know who's paying for the political ads.

"Let's not pretend we're going to keep money out of politics, but let's get it out in the open," said Byrne.

"When you go through something like that (the runoff election,) you say, 'Alright, That's over. Move on to the next thing.' I don't think a whole lot about it because it's in the past, you don't dwell on the past," said Byrne.

## REFLECTING ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Byrne may not dwell on the past, but he does reflect on past accomplishments like one while in the chancellor's office.

"I particularly loved being in that position to clean up the two year college system. Bishop State College is so important to Mobile, to see where Bishop State was where it almost closed. People don't know we almost had to close Bishop State. To see it thriving now, that makes me feel really good when you can do something and or be a part of something like that," he said.

Now, Byrne is keeping an eye on Montgomery and how the Robert Bentley administration is faring.

"The biggest problem we're facing right now is our economy which is terrible. We're also not dealing with our budget problems at the state level very well. We've made some missteps in my judgment. I know it's hurting us in education. There's no question about that, even the good schools like the Fairhope schools, so we know we've got problems there. I see progress, but I see lots of problems that we're not dealing with as we should. And we really need to do that to do that to move forward as a state," said Byrne.

Byrne adds that economic development has to be a focal point to create jobs for the state's 40,000 unemployed workers. His Reform Alabama Foundation is a part of effort to improve education and find a way to increase teachers pay. Byrne said he's not one that has to be in political office, but he may run again in the future if he is called to do it.