

Students Offered Unique Learning Through Blackstone & Burke Center

by Allen Mendenhall

(l-r) Phil Fikes, Talmadge Butts, Allen Mendenhall and Locke Adair pose inside Governor Kay Ivey's office at the Alabama State Capitol. Fikes, Butts and Adair are the Sir Edward Koch Fellows at Faulkner Law



The Blackstone & Burke Center for Law & Liberty promotes the principles of the common-law tradition and American constitutionalism by coordinating educational programs, research initiatives, and judicial conferences that examine the norms and nurture the institutions of ordered liberty. The center provides programming both on and off campus to students and legal professionals, thanks to grants from the Association for the Study of Free Institutions, Atlas Network, the Charles Koch Foundation, the Institute for Humane Studies, and the Acton Institute.

On September 11, the center hosted Bradley Birzer, the Russell Amos Kirk Chair in American Studies at Hillsdale College and board member of the Blackstone & Burke Center. During morning chapel, Jason Jewell, chairman of the department of humanities, interviewed Birzer before students and faculty in a packed gymnasium. Jewell and Birzer discussed the role of faith and freedom in the life of Russell Kirk.

Birzer sat in on a western cultural heritage course co-taught by Joshua Fullman and Andrew Jacobs in the Great Books Honors program. Birzer joined the students' discussion and offered his insights about careers in teaching and academia. In the afternoon, Birzer delivered a lecture titled "The Charity of Russell Kirk." Birzer highlighted Kirks Christian civility and generosity, his willingness to take in the homeless, the widowed, refugees and others, and to support his friends financially when they fell on hard times.

On September 17, the center co-hosted a Constitution Day reception with the Alabama Supreme Court in

the rotunda of the Alabama Supreme Courts judicial building. The program featured remarks by Chief Justice Lyn Stuart of the Alabama Supreme Court, followed by a question-and-answer panel. Panelists included Justice Will Sellers of the Alabama Supreme Court, Judge Bess M. Cresswell of the United States Bankruptcy Court in the Middle District of Alabama, and Judge J.R. Gains of the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit of Alabama. The jurists discussed their paths to the bench, why they believed the U.S. Constitution is the longest surviving constitution in the world, civics education in schools, and more.

This year the center welcomed two new Sir Edward Koch Fellows, bringing the total to four. Admission into the fellowship program is highly competitive. The Koch Fellows are law students with high grades and test scores who spend their three years in law school working on the center's projects and activities, cultivating networks with think tanks and judges, and meeting regularly with the center's director to read and discuss foundational works of jurisprudence outside the classroom. To kick off the school year, the Koch Fellows visited with the Alabama Supreme Court justices in their chambers, with Secretary of State John Merrill, and Governor Kay Ivey's legal office. ¶

Allen Mendenhall is associate dean at Faulkner Law and executive director of the Blackstone & Burke Center for Law & Liberty.