

Carroll A. Campbell, Jr. – Real leadership, real results



HOLLIS "CHIP" FELKEL

Recently I wrote about the multi-faceted role an effective member of Congress should play to provide the 4th Congressional District the leadership it deserves. The response was tremendous and always followed by one question: Who is or was such a leader? My answer: Carroll A. Campbell, Jr., the former governor and 4th District congressman. I know this from

first hand experience having worked with Campbell in various political and government positions prior to my own entrance into the private sector.

So, it was certainly no surprise to stand last week with so many other Upstate leaders as BMW officials announced that the new Information Research Technology Center would bear the former governor's name. Nearly a decade has passed since he held public office. Today he faces his toughest battles, but Carroll Campbell remains highly respected and continues to be recognized for his important role in the state's economic success.

In his new book, *A National Party No More*, Georgia's former governor and current US Senator Zell Miller, talks about his gubernatorial role in selling overseas interest on economic development for the region. He says, "Other southern governors did as well. South Carolina's Carroll Campbell was the best of all."

So what made Carroll Campbell unique? Reality based leadership. Campbell understood and respected the realities of the arena in which he served. He appreciated the competing perspectives as he simultaneously worked with the political community, elected officials and with business.

Campbell succeeded because through his own experiences, he acquired the credibility and institutional knowledge to sit down at the table and get things done. No need for introductions. Never one to squander his own political capital, Campbell was prudent in the positions he took and actions he endorsed. He played to win. He was fully


ready, willing and quite able to play political hardball, a fact not lost on his political allies or adversaries.

Campbell's early experiences as a party activist and campaign strategist meant he could truly appreciate the concerns of the political community. He clearly understood and enjoyed the nuts and bolts of campaign politics, as well as the perspectives of fiscal and social activists. This gave him an unmatched ability to reach out to county chairmen, precinct workers and volunteers.

As a member of South Carolina General Assembly and US Congress, Campbell developed key relationships across the state, across party lines and across the country. As a successful businessman, Campbell knew the nuances of the boardroom. He knew many of the corporate decision makers, and he understood their views on government and the political process. Campbell's ability to forge working coalitions between these groups is what made him so successful.

Few have been able to move so comfortably from precinct meeting to caucus meeting to stockholder meeting. Our own current congressman Jim DeMint, whose own successes have proven that term limits are no excuse for ineffectiveness, would I'm sure acknowledge Campbell's prowess in accomplishing this feat.

Carroll Campbell had a game plan, but it was less about "vision" and more about getting things done, more about action than ideology, delivery than presentation. Most importantly, it was about a clear focus on improving the lives of the people he represented, no matter what office he held at the time. It's no wonder that outstanding companies like BMW or institutions such as Clemson University are so willing to have their names next to his.

So here is my own personal salute to one of South Carolina's finest. Someone who was kind enough to give me an opportunity to be a part of something special and someone to whom so many of us owe a debt of gratitude for making our home an even better place. Congratulations Governor Campbell! Having your name on the new research facility is just another example of the leadership and legacy you have provided. It has been a privilege and an honor to have been a part of your team. 

Hollis "Chip" Felkel is the founder/principal of The Felkel Group/StrategySouth; a Greenville-based firm providing strategic relations for business and politics. He can be reached at 864/233-6480 or cfelkel@felkelgroup.com.