

FULFILLING GOVERNOR ALBERT BREWER'S VISION: THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH COUNCIL OF ALABAMA (PARCA)

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Abstract: *This article examines the professional career of Governor Albert P. Brewer and the development of his vision for a public affairs research group, that exists to give objective facts about state and local governments. The research question of this article is if Albert Brewer's goal was fulfilled. The careful planning and the quality reputation of the published research of Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA) has fulfilled the goal that Brewer had in mind. A methodology in arriving at this conclusion can be found in investigating the published output and broad, favorable reception of that output. This article examines the major events in the career of Governor Albert Brewer. He was a state legislator, speaker of the house, lieutenant governor and governor of Alabama. Brewer had many accomplishments, including the creation of the Alabama Development Office (ADO), the Alabama Commission of Higher Education (ACHE), substantial increased funding for public schools, and an effort to produce a new state constitution. A goal of Brewer was to create the PARCA, as a source of objective data and other facts that all people could use. PARCA is a non-profit and non-partisan group. The goals of Brewer for PARCA have been met and the organization continues to flourish. Brewer is one of the most decent professionals to ever occupy the Alabama governor's office. Brewer was governor and decided to pursue another term with the 1970 election. In his political campaigns he projected the goal of being inclusive as opposed to the strong desire of George Wallace to cause division between African American citizens and some other citizens. That is, Wallace pursued a campaign tactic of creating a racist environment, to get votes. That election is considered by historians to be one of the most racially charged elections. The result was that Brewer and Wallace were in a run-off, and Wallace won by less than 34,000 votes. Later, in 1972 Wallace survived an assassination attempt. Some people think that event changed him, as he did stop pursuing a racist ideology for the rest of his political career. In contrast, Brewer consistently pursued a more inclusive message in appealing to citizens to work together for progress. PARCA, a group championed by Brewer furthers that goal. To help policy makers, PARCA provides objective data, which people of all political views can refer to. Brewer's goals of an organization that provides accurate information has been achieved.*

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Introduction

Albert P. Brewer is perceived as one of the most honest and productive elected people in the history of Alabama. He served as a state representative from Morgan County, House speaker, lieutenant governor and governor. In addition to practicing law, he later became a government and law professor at Samford University. His own education consisted of a B.A. and J.D. from the University of Alabama. This article gives the reader some of the key facts of Brewer's career. It also explains his aspirations for a non-partisan research group where obtaining accurate data and other non-partisan facts are the research goal and most of that material is published. Importantly, there was the creation and operation of the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA) at Samford University, starting in 1988.

Albert Brewer (1928-2017) had held the offices of State Representative from Morgan County, House Speaker, Lieutenant Governor and Governor (Harvey, 2017). He was elected to the state legislature from Morgan County. In his third term as a legislator, he became house speaker. Later he was elected as lieutenant governor. Among his many achievements as governor, Brewer established the Alabama Development Office (ADO), greatly increased public school state funding, centralized and increased the efficiency of state vehicle use and other achievements, created the first Ethics Commission, pursued Constitutional Revision and created of the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. Commission. In his post-political years, he was an executive director of PARCA, chairman of the board of PARCA, political science professor and law professor, at Cumberland Law School, all on the Samford university campus. Brewer sought to encourage a broad spectrum of opinions and support, by selecting board members with diverse interests, sometimes in contrast to each other. Brewer was the first executive director of PARCA and later continued as chairman of the board, until retiring in 2013 (Durrett, 2006, p.50; Nunnally, 2017; Spencer, 2017).

Literature Review on Brewer's Political Career

Almost everyone who followed Alabama politics in the 1960s and 1970s agreed that Brewer was amongst the topmost chief state executives in the history of Alabama. Brewer cared greatly about the details of government and worked hard to recruit the best appointees. Brewer was well known to possess decency, integrity, and praised for his administrative ability (Carter, 2000, p. 386-387; Flowers, 2015, pp. 70-71; Williams, 2019). In the 1970 gubernatorial election, Albert Brewer ran for his own term against George Wallace. "As expected, Brewer overwhelmingly carried black voting precincts around the state and did well in upper-middle-class and upper-income districts" (Carter, 2000, p. 395). In his political campaigns he projected the goal of being inclusive as opposed to the strong desire of George Wallace to cause division between African American citizens and other citizens. That is Wallace pursued a campaign tactic of creating a racist environment, in an effort to get votes. Since George Wallace was legally prohibited from running for a successive term after his first term ended in 1966, Lurleen Wallace, the wife of George Wallace ran in his place. In 1966 Lurleen won. When Lurleen passed on, then Lieutenant Albert Brewer became governor (Flynt, 1994 p. 576). Upon the death of Governor Lurleen Wallace, Brewer became governor.

Brewer won the Democratic primary against George Wallace and other candidates. However, George Wallace won in the run-off, which was tantamount to being set to win the general election, since the Alabama Republican party was so weak at that time in history. (Permaloff et al, 1995, pp. 293 – 299; Carter, 2000, pp. 391-395) . A very sad part of the run-off was that Wallace appealed to the racist nature of some of the White voters. One of his advisers, John Kohn apologized six months after the campaign for employing racism as a key part of Wallace's campaign. As for Wallace, he never did apologize for using stark racism in the 1970 run-off (Dorman, 1976 p. 171; Carter, 2000, p. 396; Harvey, 2002, p. 5; Cotter and Stoval, 2009, p. 9). That particular election is considered by historians to be one of the most racially charged elections. The result was that Wallace won by less than 34,000 votes. Later on, in 1972 Wallace survived an assassination attempt. Some people think that event changed him, as he did stop pursuing a racist ideology for the rest of his political career (Carter, 2000, pp. 390-414; Rohler, 2004, pp. 8-9; Cotter et al, 2009, pp. 9-10).

An interesting facet of the 1970 run-off election was the fact that President Richard Nixon had \$400,000 given to the Brewer campaign. The goal was to deliver a loss to Wallace and thus lessen the threat of a Wallace candidacy

in the 1972 presidential election (Carter, 2000, pp. 381-393; Flowers 2015, pp. 73-83.). Believing that Alabama needs a leader focused on Alabama and not running for national office, Brewer championed the idea that "Alabama needs a full-time governor." This was to differentiate himself from the overly ambitious Wallace, who let subordinates run the state government, while he was obsessed with national politics. Wallace saw the governor's office as a potential steppingstone in his presidential campaigns (Carter, 2000, p. 386; Stewart, 2016, p. 175). Brewer was "buoyed by support from newspapers, business and labor leaders, and college students from across the state – he began bringing his audiences to their feet with the slogan 'Full time for Alabama,' and the decidedly unsexy rhetoric of aggressive competence, honest government, and an 'open door for all Alabama citizens'" (Carter, 2000, page 386).

Not until he successfully ran for governor, in 1974 and later in 1982, did Wallace stop using rhetoric to appeal to prejudice towards African Americans and that change was noted by African Americans. He received substantial African American support in the general election of 1982 (Edwards et al., 2009, p. 80). This in sharp contrast to the consistent, progressive view of New South Governor Albert Brewer. He always respected all people, regardless of their race. Being fair to people of all races and people possessing any demographic characteristics, is part of PARCA's creed.

Brewer can be seen as a reform governor, a New South governor (Stewart, 2016, pp. 181-182). One area of reform he pursued was the creation of a motor pool for state owned vehicles. A significant amount of state-owned automobiles were no longer necessary and the total amount of state owned automobiles was reduced in number. (Permaloff, 1995, p. 270). This curtailed the abuses of using state owned vehicles for private use. Education was perhaps the most important reform that Brewer pursued and he is seen as one of the most pro-education governors (Harvey, 2002, p. 17). Brewer saw the merit in creating eventual solutions through the legislative process, for many challenges for Alabama government (Brewer, 1989, p. 97). His creation of the Alabama Development Office and Alabama Commission on Higher Education were some of the other significant reforms that Brewer pursued.

One of the more famous goals of Albert Brewer was his work and efforts to get a new constitution written and adopted for the state of Alabama. The 1901 Alabama Constitution is the current one in use. It is cumbersome, too lengthy and this makes it hard to deal with economic and political challenges (Brewer, 2001, pp 6-7). The 1901 Constitution included rules designed to disenfranchise African Americans and Whites who were poor. This was done by means of including restrictions on voting. These restrictions included requirements concerning bring a property owner and having attained a certain level of education (Brewer, 2001, pp. 8-10). A distrust in government caused the lack of home rule in local government (Brewer, 2001, pp. 10-15). There have been efforts to create a new constitution but to no avail, as of yet. Three governors besides Brewer are most commonly associated with these efforts. The three include Governor O'Neil in 1915, Governor Kilby in 1923 and Governor "Big" Jim Folsom in the 1950s (Brewer, 2001, p. 15). PARCA has looked at the issue of a new constitution for state government, though no new constitution has been adopted.

To emphasize, Brewer may have done more for education than any other governor (Harvey 2002, p. 4). The federal court required integration of public schools, and this was accepted by Brewer but was in a "difficult position" in balancing the desires of Alabama parents with the federal court orders and he pursued that which was feasible (Harvey, 2002, pp. 41-42; p. 170). Brewer did his best to avert violence regarding civil rights (Jones, 1966, p. 407). Brewer understood the link between education and economic development. This was his main argument for increased financial support for public education. Only if quality in education can be increased could merit pay raises be available, as Brewer had that as a tandem goal (Harvey, 2002, pp. 45-64). He understood that the education level of some of the teachers needed to be improved and that the work of the teachers should be evaluated. The adequacy of equipment for classrooms became increasingly acknowledged as important. A universal nine month school year was adopted for all schools. Obviously to accomplish much of this, required increased tax revenue. One way to do that was for property to be accurately appraised. Then state and local governments could apply fair rates to ad valorem taxes (Harvey, 2002, pp. 45-64; Harvey, 2020). Any positive government programs may have good effects for all people, regardless of their race (Feldman, 2014, pp. 325-

341). Brewer recognized this reality. PARCA has consistently examined the local, state and federal sources of revenue and learning achievement for education in Alabama.

As stated, Albert Brewer founded the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (Harvey, 2020). He also was a professor of government and law at Samford University. He practiced law as well. Brewer retired from Samford University in 2007 and passed on in 2017.

Goals of PARCA

Brewer stated that lobbyists had given much of the information about proposed legislation including during the time of the 1950s and 1960s and to varying degrees, beyond that time. The Alabama Legislative Fiscal Office was started in 1975. It is also non-partisan and supplies some analysis for the state legislature. However, PARCA has produced much more in-depth analysis on certain issues of state and local government. Legislative fiscal offices nationwide perform the task of writing fiscal estimates of the impact of proposed legislation, creating budgets, program evaluation and doing research projects are part of what legislative fiscal offices do. In Alabama, PARCA has enough resources to do in depth research reports on comparative state and local governments in Alabama (Chadha et al 2000; Nunally, 2017; Alabama Legislative Fiscal Office, 2019). Brewer and all PARCA personnel are very much in agreement that PARCA would be absolutely non-partisan. Throughout its history, from 1988 onward, PARCA has kept that pledge (PARCA, 2022a). Brewer has made clear that PARCA is a “non-profit, non-partisan organization.” Furthermore states that PARCA “does not have an agenda” and PARCA tries to be “objective” and without “any particular perspective” (Durrett, 2006, p. 50).

A. The Advent of the Government Research Associations:

During the Progressive Era (1890 to 1920) of United States history, some people viewed government to solve society’s problems. While others maintained that government itself was the problem. Areas of concern included corruption, political bosses, patronage and urban political machines (Lee, 2008, pp. 18-21). Woodrow Wilson (1887) in his seminal article, “The Study of Administration,” helped the reform movement through calling for non-elected experts and bureaucrats who could put the people, above racial and ethnic distinctions, within the population. Though elected officials need to approve the main policies, the experts can run day-to-day operations and make minor adjustments of how the government should function. Plus, they can suggest changes of policies to elected officials (Wilson, 1887, pp. 209-222).

The Governmental Research Association (GRA) was established in 1914 and the GRA is a national organization of individuals and organizations of professionals, who are pursuing governmental research (GRA 2022). The GRA has been an important driving force that resulted in PARCA being formed, which is a member of the Government Research Association (GRA). Within the GRA are non-profit organizations (usually non-profit) that engage in “the study, analysis, and reporting of state, local, or state and local governmental policies” (GRA, 2022). Furthermore, there are GRA members who work either in academic settings or are employed by state and local governments in settings that allow them to do “non-partisan research of public policy issues” (GRA, 2022). An important trait is having “a non-partisan approach to the public policy research and dissemination of the findings and recommendations.” (GRA, 2022). Staying on the theme of these organizations, citizens in some major American cities joined to create *municipal research bureaus* (Lee, 2008, pp. 18-21). Truthfully, “the most prominent of such organizations was the New York Bureau of Municipal Research (NYBMR)” (Lee, 2008, pp. 18-21). Aside of municipal research bureaus, there were lesser-known organizations, had the appellation of bureaus of efficiency. Sometimes the difference between the two types of organizations is unclear (Lee, 2008, pp. 18-21). The Progressive Era’s newfound organizations sought to evaluate civil servants’ terms of “personal efficiency,” related to hard work, will power and thrift (Lee, 2008, pp. 18-21). These organizations are funded privately by large, average and small donations. They are non-profit and non-governmental (Lee, 2008).

B. PARCA fulfills the Requirements for the GRA

These traits describe PARCA. The information that PARCA publishes is composed of objective data collection, concerning revenues, expenditures and factual information about different governmental units. Leaders who are political or apolitical can have confidence in knowing the PARCA staff is always apolitical and non-partisan in its work. All of PARCA staff does not get involved in any way in political campaigns, not ever.

Scope of Research Output of PARCA

PARCA has been publishing and disseminating its findings since 1988. PARCA is “a non-partisan, good government research center” in Alabama (PARCAb). Areas of research of research include the broad categories of State and Local Government, Education and Workforce development, as well as Quality of Life. Brewer emphasize that the organization exists to provide objective, non-partisan information (Durrett, 2006, pp. 50-51; PARCA, 2020b). The goal is for different political leaders of any type will be able to make well informed decisions (PARCA 2022 a). Predictably PARCA publishes analysis of state, county, municipal, and every other kind of governmental budget there is, as well as the impact of these governmental units. Within lists provided by PARCA (2022a) combined with a list PARCA (2022b) there are some of the topics PARCA has researched over the years. The aggregate of those two lists here is by no means exhaustive but is meant to provide samples. These samples should give an idea of the breadth of research done by PARCA. Some of the topics researched and published on are: Alabama school data; Comparing Alabama to other states in regard to insurance coverage; State of academic progress in reading by Alabama third graders; Alabama’s extraordinarily living constitution; Alabama high school graduates and their readiness for college; Population in Alabama cities; Alabama workforce readiness; Alabama municipalities and Metropolitan Statistical areas; Aspects of Alabama population; Comparing Alabama taxes to those of other states; Alabama General Fund, Alabama Special Educational Trust fund, other government budget funds; College-going rates; Measurements of academic achievement, including remedial education and many other topics.

The fact that an immense number of possible analysis studies of state and local government is pursued, shows that PARCA does not specialize in any agenda of public policy issues. This in keeping with Governor Albert Brewer’s vision for goals of being a solely fact-based type of research institution. The news media, including major newspaper and TV stations, other forms of media, and other researchers, recognize PARCA’s well-earned reputation of being neutral collectors and publishers of facts.

Conclusion

Governor Albert P. Brewer was a first advocate and main proponent of the creation of the Public Affairs Council of Alabama (PARCA). Since its inception has been located at Samford University, which is the largest private university in the state. The scope of the research of this organization concerns local and state governments, as well as the interaction with the federal government. Samford is in the largest metropolitan area of Alabama, known as the Birmingham-Hoover MSA. Having done well for over thirty years, recognized as non-partisan and accurate in its data presentations, PARCA has a bright future and is a testament to the honesty and fact-based research integrity that Governor Albert Brewer had envisioned¹.

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¹ This article’s author was fortunate to be a coauthor on six publications of PARCA. These can be seen on ResearchGate, under Paul F. Gentle. He is grateful to the other coauthor researchers at PARCA at that time and Governor Albert P. Brewer. These people all taught the author a lot.

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