

PRESS RELEASE

Howard Baker Honored by Bipartisan Policy Center

March 26, 2012

In a ceremony entitled "Century of Service" on March 21, 2012, in Washington, D.C., former Senator and Ambassador Howard H. Baker, Jr. was honored, along with former Senator Bob Dole, by the Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington, D.C., for his great ability to cross party lines for the greater good of the country.

"It is easy to be brave from a distance on the battlefield," said host and co-founder of the Bipartisan Policy Center Tom Daschle. "And in the heat of political battle the two men we honor tonight have demonstrated bravery at the front, consistently putting country ahead of self and often strengthening their party by putting country ahead of party." Mr. Daschle noted that, "Howard Baker was able to help everyone find common ground without anyone feeling they were sacrificing sacred ground, because he is a true conciliator."

Fellow honoree Senator Dole added, "Howard Baker was immensely respected in the Senate — as much as anyone I've ever known. All the more because he didn't attempt to 'command' it. As Republican leader and then majority leader, Howard helped lead the nation through civil rights, the war on poverty, Vietnam, Watergate, the Panama Canal treaty, several Middle East wars and the Cold War. Every era has its trials. But few people in public life have ever dealt with so many momentous events with such poise, purpose and success. . . . Howard understood that what makes the Senate work is an understanding of human nature, an appreciation of hearts as well as minds, frailties as well as strengths, of one's colleagues and one's self. That was – and is — his true political secret.

Senator Baker studied at the University of the South, then Tulane University. After serving in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1946, Senator Baker attended the University of Tennessee Law College. Upon graduation in 1949, he joined the Huntsville, Tennessee, law firm founded in 1888 by his grandfather, James Baker, and soon became known as one of the best trial lawyers in Tennessee. Among his most notable successes was an important victory in a case against the United Mine Workers after the union used violence to disrupt a company's contract with a rival union.

His public service career began in 1966, when he became the first Republican popularly elected to the U.S. Senate from Tennessee. During his nearly twenty years in the Senate, he served as vice-chair of the Senate Watergate Committee and was twice voted Majority Leader. His legislative achievements included assisting in drafting the Clean Air Act of 1970 and helping to pass fair housing and voting rights legislation. Senator Baker's ability to set aside partisanship and sway politicians earned him the nickname "the great conciliator." In 1984, his service was recognized when he was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the country's highest civilian award.

After leaving the Senate in 1985, Baker returned to his law practice, but in 1987, President Ronald Reagan asked him to serve as Chief of Staff, a position Senator Baker held from February 1987 to July 1988. He again returned to his grandfather's law firm, which experienced considerable growth, expanding to multiple offices in Tennessee as well as additional locations in Jackson, Mississippi, and Atlanta, Georgia. In 2001, Senator Baker was once again called to public service, this time by President George W. Bush, who appointed him the 26th U.S. Ambassador to Japan. Ambassador Baker served in that role from 2001 to 2005, and earlier this year received Japan's highest honor for foreign civilians from Emperor Akihito.

In 2005, Senator Baker again returned to the law firm that bears his name. Started 120 years ago by his grandfather in a small two-room building in Huntsville, Tennessee, today Baker, Donelson, Bearman, Caldwell, & Berkowitz, PC is one of the 100 largest law firms in the country, with more than 630 attorneys and public policy advisors in 18 offices in seven states and Washington, D.C.

Video and transcripts of the "Century of Service" event are available at the Bipartisan Policy Center website: www.bipartisanpolicy.org.