



SPEAKER BIOS

Dale Petroskey, President and CEO, Dallas Regional Chamber



Dale A. Petroskey is President and CEO at the Dallas Regional Chamber (DRC), which has been recognized as National Chamber of the Year. Petroskey, who assumed the position on April 1, 2014, works with the Board, staff, and more than 700 member companies to increase economic prosperity and enhance the quality of life for all throughout the region. The DRC focuses on economic development initiatives, improving education at all levels, setting public policy direction designed to maintain a pro-business, pro-growth climate in North Texas, and the opportunity gaps which exist in the region.

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Mr. Petroskey brings to the DRC a strong background in public policy, strategic communications, and nonprofit management, having held leadership positions in all three sectors – public, private, and nonprofit – for more than 35 years.

After graduating from Michigan State University, he worked 18 years in Washington, D.C., where he served as Chief of Staff to Congressman Bill Goodling (PA), Assistant White House Press Secretary to President Ronald Reagan, and Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the U.S. Department of Transportation under then-Secretary Elizabeth Dole.

At The White House, Mr. Petroskey served as a spokesman for President Reagan and led the staff responsible for the preparation of every official White House document released to the media. In addition, he traveled extensively and accompanied the President to his historic first meetings with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, in Geneva, Switzerland in November 1985, and in Reykjavik, Iceland in October 1986. He also accompanied the President and Mrs. Reagan to Camp David on 10 different weekends.



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From 1988-1999, Mr. Petroskey served as a senior executive at the National Geographic Society, the world's largest educational membership organization. He was named the first-ever Vice President of Public Affairs in 1988 and was promoted to Senior Vice President of Mission Programs in 1996. In that role, he was the senior executive responsible for the committee that funded scientific research and exploration projects for well-known scientists and explorers such as Jane Goodall, Bob Ballard, and Sylvia Earle. He also oversaw a 50-state geography education program, which still includes the National Geography Bee, which was hosted for years by Alex Trebek, as well as exhibits, the public lectures program, and fundraising.

From 1999-2008, Mr. Petroskey was President of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York, where he was the primary link to all living Hall of Famers and their families, and led the day-to-day operations of one of the nation's best-known and most respected museums – a premier symbol of American achievement. While there, he was instrumental in launching the museum's first-ever national traveling exhibition, Baseball As America, which was seen by more than 2 million visitors in 15 respected museums throughout the U.S., including the Dallas Museum of Nature and Science at Fair Park. The first induction ceremony Mr. Petroskey oversaw in 1999 welcomed George Brett, Nolan Ryan, Robin Yount, and Orlando Cepeda to the Hall of Fame in front of a crowd of 50,000 – the largest to that point. That number was eclipsed in 2007, the final induction of Mr. Petroskey's tenure, when Cal Ripken Jr. and Tony Gwynn drew more than 75,000. Membership grew from 4,000 to 32,000 during his tenure, and he also helped create the Hall of Fame's Development Office, which now provides an important source of revenue.

One of his greatest sources of satisfaction and pride was working closely with the Board to initiate and implement a one-time-only, five-year study and process for considering and electing Negro League players, managers, and executives. That process resulted in the election of 17 Negro Leaguers in 2006, nearly doubling the number in the Hall of Fame.

Mr. Petroskey is a member of numerous Boards, including The Alfalfa Club of Washington D.C.; SMU's Lyle School of Engineering; EducateDallas; KERA, the Dallas-Ft. Worth public radio and TV station; the Dallas Mavericks Advisory Council; and the Texas Rangers Baseball Foundation.

Mr. Petroskey and his wife, Ann, both graduates of Michigan State University, have three married children and three adorable grandchildren.



SPEAKER BIOS

Ben Stratmann, Government Affairs, Longbow Partners, LLP



Ben Stratmann has 15 years of combined legislative experience inside the Texas Capitol and professional exposure to Texas politics and public policy. Known for his ability to bring parties together on challenging and politically sensitive issues, Ben has a proven record of shepherding major policies through the legislative process. His areas of expertise include the alcoholic beverage industry, economic development, executive branch affairs, retail electricity, natural resources and water, higher education, public safety, state appropriations and contracting, and transportation.

Before joining Longbow Partners, Ben served as Chief of Staff to state Sen. Brian Birdwell for seven years over the span of three regular and five special sessions. During that time, Ben led a staff of 12-15 individuals spread over two district offices, two committee offices, and a central Capitol office.

Prior to that promotion, he was a Policy Analyst and Communications Director for Birdwell during the 2011 legislative session, later managing his 2012 re-election campaign.

From 2006-10, Ben worked in the offices of Gov. Rick Perry, U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples, and for more than two years, as Special Assistant to Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst.



SPEAKER BIOS

James Springfield, President, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas



James Springfield brings to BCBSTX a depth of senior leadership experience at many prominent health care organizations. He spent 13 years with the Memorial Hermann Healthcare System in Houston. Additionally, James served as the President and CEO of the Valley Baptist Health System in South Texas. He has owned and operated a successful health care advisory firm serving clients from all facets of the health care industry. James has also served as the senior vice president of provider market growth and business development at Optum, a division of United Health.

Throughout his career, James has served on numerous professional and community boards and committees, including positions with the American Hospital Association, Texas Hospital Association and Baylor University. Springfield has also served on the board of the Touchdown Club of Houston and as a committee member with the Houston Rodeo

Livestock Show and Rodeo. He is a fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

James holds degrees from Baylor University and University of Houston - Clear Lake.



SPEAKER BIOS

Mike Morath, Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency



Appointed by Gov. Greg Abbott, Mike Morath took office as Commissioner of Education in January 2016 and was unanimously confirmed by the Texas Senate (85th Legislature) in March 2017. As Commissioner, he heads the Texas Education Agency, which oversees pre-kindergarten through high school education for more than 5.5 million students enrolled in both traditional independent school districts and public charter schools.

Prior to becoming the state's Education Commissioner, Morath served on the Dallas Independent School District board of trustees for more than four years. During that time, he focused on academic improvements. And by his final year on the board, DISD had seen improvement in various areas including rise in kindergarten readiness, math proficiency and graduation rates.

A strong advocate of public education, Commissioner Morath graduated from Garland High School in the Garland Independent School District. And thanks to the great public school education he received in Texas, he went on to earn a Bachelor of Business Administration degree, summa cum laude, from George Washington University in two-and-a-half years.

While starting his first company, Commissioner Morath was asked to teach an advanced computer science class at his high school alma mater after the previous teacher resigned suddenly. He taught through the school year until a permanent teacher was hired and remains amazed at how difficult it is to teach.