

From the classroom The Brewton Standard to the state house

Baker enjoys serving in Legislature

BY SAVANNAH HARRISON

SPECIAL TO THE STANDARD

Alabama state Rep. Alan Baker, R-Brewton, of House District 66 spent the weekend of Feb. 25 at a lakeside cabin in Castleberry with his wife. It served as one of his last relaxing weekends before the legislative session began March 1.

Baker, who is a native of Brewton and an alumnus of T.R. Miller High School, spent years as an educator despite starting as a political science major at Auburn University.

Baker said he intended to pursue a legal career due to the admiration he felt toward his late uncle, Cecil Strawbridge, who served as a Circuit Court judge for many years.

However, in a conversation one day, a college friend of Baker's advised that he consider earning a teaching degree as well.

"Once I did my practice teaching, it just felt like a good pair of shoes you'd worn for a long time," Baker said.

He graduated in 1978 with a major in history and a minor in political science.

Baker worked first as a teacher in the Phenix City and Escambia County school systems, before returning to his high school alma mater, where he taught and coached for 21 years.

When asked about the general advice he would give to young people — both as a former educator and as a politician — Baker said they should remember to work hard, play hard and respect all of God's creations.



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— Alan Baker

"I think it's important to have all of that and not just part of it," Baker said.

For recreation, he said he enjoys jogging, playing music at his church and almost any outdoor activities. At 54, he refers to himself as "a little bit of a fitness buff."

Baker also said he enjoys spending time with his wife, Kaki, who was his high school sweetheart.

Aside from being a legislator, he is involved with the Escambia Habitat for Humanity, the East Escambia Red Cross, the Brewton YMCA and the Children's Advocacy Center.

He said that a great influence in his pursuit of a career in politics came from teaching students about historical figures who were "willing to be bold and stand up for things that are right."

After nearly three decades as an educator, Baker succeeded former Rep. Skippy White in 2006.

Baker serves on several committees for the House of Representatives, including Economic Development and Tourism, Ethics, Local Legislation and Baldwin County Legislation.

The Economic Development and Tourism Committee and the Ethics Committee are both new.

On the subject of economic development, Baker spoke of expanding existing businesses and attracting new ones.

"The biggest issue facing our state would be the economy," Baker said. "We've got to make our focus on jobs."

While he admitted there are no quick fixes to righting Alabama's struggling economy, he said that legislation that would allow additional tax breaks for businesses providing health care to employees would be introduced early in the session.

Baker said he is not seeking to run for office outside the House of Representatives.

"I would say that I don't have any agenda to pursue any other avenues of service at this point in time," Baker said. "I do keep myself open, but my main agenda ... is to serve the people."

Troy University journalism student Savannah Harrison of Brewton wrote this story as part of a project partly funded by the Alabama Press Association Journalism Foundation.