COLUMBIA, SC - January 24, 2012 - The Riley Institute at Furman University honored South Carolina Representative James Smith and BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina board chair Ed Sellers as the recipients of the 2011 David Wilkins Awards for Excellence in Legislative and Civic Leadership. The event took place Tuesday, Jan. 24, 2012 at the seventh annual David H. Wilkins awards dinner, at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center in Columbia.

David Petraeus, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, gave the keynote address and was introduced by Senator Lindsey Graham.

Petraeus was sworn in as the 20th Director of the CIA on Sept. 6, 2011. Prior to that, he was a four-star general serving over 37 years in the U.S. Army. He most recently served as the Commanding General of American and International Forces in Afghanistan, and was Commanding General, Multi-National Force-Iraq in 2007-08, where he oversaw all coalition forces in Iraq.

Petraeus spoke about the privilege of leading what he referred to as America's "new, greatest generation."

"I can't speak highly enough about the wonderful young men and women who responded with courage, valor, initiative, creativity and resolve in a cause that benefited all humanity," stated Petraeus. "Terrorism cannot, and will not stand."
To see the complete photo gallery, [click here.](#)

**Above photos:** Representative James Smith, Governor Dick Riley and Ambassador David Wilkins; David Petraeus, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Senator Lindsey Graham and Governor Nikki Haley.

To see the complete photo gallery, [click here.](#)

James Smith was the winner of the Wilkins Award for Excellence in Legislative Leadership, which recognizes a state legislator who embodies the highest principles of leadership.

A Democrat representing Richland County District 72, Smith was elected to the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1996, where he has served as Assistant Minority Leader, Chief Minority Whip and House Minority Leader. He spent a year in Afghanistan serving as an Army National Guard captain, and has received the Combat Infantryman's Badge, The Bronze Star and The Purple Heart. He graduated from the University of South Carolina in 1990 and earned his J.D. degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law.

Sellers was the recipient of the David H. Wilkins Excellence in Civic Leadership Award, which honors a community leader whose work has improved the lives of South Carolinians. Sellers is chair of the board of BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina, and served as its chief executive officer for 18 years before retiring from that position in 2010. He serves as a director of Palmetto Conservation Foundation, American Red Cross, and ETV Endowment of South Carolina, as well as chairman of the board of the South Carolina State Chamber of Commerce and Columbia College. He is a graduate of Vanderbilt University and earned a MBA from Harvard Business School. Previous winners of the Wilkins Award for Excellence in Legislative Leadership are Wes Hayes (2010), Dan Cooper (2009), Gilda Cobb-Hunter (2008), Hugh K. Leatherman (2007), Bobby Harrell (2006) and John Drummond (2005).

*The Riley Institute is named for Furman graduate and former South Carolina governor and U.S. Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley. It offers a broad array of programs designed to engage students and citizens across South Carolina in the various arenas of politics, public policy and public leadership. The institute created the David H. Wilkins Legislative Leadership Program in honor of the South Carolina politician who served as Speaker of the South Carolina House of Representatives and U.S. ambassador to Canada.*