

Tuesday, January 20, 2015

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[Schieffer calls for more civic engagement](#)

Andy Brack · 01/14/2015 9:25 am ·



Longtime CBS News correspondent [Bob Schieffer](#) lamented the downward spiral of the nation's political system during a Tuesday night keynote address at the Riley Institute's Wilkins Awards Dinner.

"We are going backwards," he told an audience of about 500 luminaries that included former Gov. Dick Riley, U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham and former Ambassador and House Speaker David Wilkins for whom the leadership awards are named.

Schieffer, who also hosts Sunday's *Face the Nation* on CBS, said the political system "is in the worst shape that it has been since I've been in Washington."

The biggest problem: The huge amount of money in politics, which exceeded \$2 billion in 2014, he said. Examples: \$100 million in the race for U.S. Senate in North Carolina and a similar amount in the Florida governor's race.

Schieffer, a correspondent with CBS News since 1969, observed that everything that was done in the early 1970s that led to several election-related convictions is now legal, with the exception of the breaking and entering done by the Watergate burglars which brought down President Richard Nixon.

Schieffer called for a change in the national attitude about politics and for people to return to the process, instead of politicians hiring expensive consultants to do what volunteers used to do. While he didn't call for outright limits to campaign spending, he did urge leaders to find common ground for solutions to reinvigorate engagement.

"The Shining City on the Hill has become the town where nothing works."

At the Wilkins Awards Dinner, new House Speaker Jay Lucas was recognized with the 2014 Wilkins Award for Excellence in Legislative Leadership. Former Spartanburg Mayor Bill Barnet, CEO of Barnet Development Corporation, won the 2014 Wilkins Award for Excellence in Civic Leadership.

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