Late Sen. Pinckney, Haley, Mayor Riley win Riley Awards

The late South Carolina Sen. Clementa Pinckney has been named the winner of the Riley Institute at Furman University's David H. Wilkins Award for Excellence in Legislative Leadership.

Pinckney served as pastor of Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston. He was among the nine people killed in the shootings that took place at the church in June. He served in the South Carolina legislature from the age of 23 and represented the Senate's 45th District at the time of his death.

Gov. Nikki Haley and Charleston Mayor Joe Riley join Pinckney as this year's recipients of the Wilkins Awards for Excellence.

The awards dinner will take place on Jan. 12 at Columbia's Metropolitan Convention Center on the first night of the 2015-2016 legislative session.

Haley and Riley, joint winners of the Wilkins Award for Excellence in Civic Leadership, will serve as speakers during the program, discussing how they each worked with other leaders in South Carolina in the wake of the massacre at Mother Emanuel church.

Sen. Pinckney's widow, Jennifer, will accept his award.

"The Riley Institute strongly believes these that these choices by the selection committee are particularly fitting during a year that has been so challenging for our state," said Don Gordon, executive director of the Riley Institute, in a statement. "Senator Pinckney's life was characterized by humility, intelligence and a commitment to those citizens left out of the economic mainstream in South Carolina. He worked with colleagues in the Senate and elsewhere for the common good in our state. To honor Gov. Haley and Mayor Riley, each of whom demonstrated critical leadership during a time of enormous grief and angst in South Carolina, is also an important decision by the committee. Their responses to the Emanuel 9 tragedy helped bring healing to our state."

The annual ceremony honors David Wilkins, who served as speaker of the state House of Representatives and as U.S. Ambassador to Canada. Wilkins will co-host the event with former U.S. Secretary of Education and former two-term Governor of South Carolina Dick Riley and Furman President Elizabeth Davis.

Haley is serving her second term as Governor. Riley was first elected mayor of Charleston in December 1975 and is retiring after serving an unprecedented 10 terms in office.

A reception for all registered attendees will begin at 6 p.m., and the dinner and awards presentation begins at 7:15 p.m.

Tickets are $125 each and can be purchased by calling 864-235-8330 or visiting the Riley Institute website. Sponsorships are available. For more information, contact the Riley Institute at 864-294-3546 or e-mail Jill.Fusion@furman.edu.

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