Rep. Gary Simrill (R-York) and Nella Barkley, president of Crystal-Barkley Corporation, were honored Tuesday, Jan. 14, as recipients of the 2019 David H. Wilkins Leadership Awards. The awards recognize outstanding legislative and civic leadership in the state and are presented by the Riley Institute at Furman University.
Attendees were greeted with banners depicting previous Wilkins Award honorees.

About 350 people, including 75 legislators, attended the dinner and ceremony held at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center on the first day of the legislative session. Hosts for the program included the award’s namesake, Ambassador David Wilkins, Secretary Dick Riley and Furman President Elizabeth Davis.

The Furman Bell Tower Boys opened and closed the program with a cappella renditions of the national anthem, an Irish Blessing and other tunes.

Following a welcome from Davis, invocation and dinner, Paula Harper Bethea of the Wilkins steering committee offered remarks. A video, “Fifteen Years of Wilkins Award Winners on Leadership, Service and Bipartisanship,” was shown, then former two-term South Carolina Governor Riley spoke to the gathering.
Mickel Shaw, president of Micco LLC and an inaugural winner of the Wilkins Civic Leadership Award, presented the award to Barkley. Barkley has spent much of her life in leadership roles at organizations devoted to improving the lives of South Carolinians by elevating education, sustaining and improving the arts and creating opportunities for marginalized populations.

Before delivering closing remarks, Wilkins, former U.S. ambassador to Canada and speaker of the South Carolina House of Representatives, presented the legislative leadership award to Simrill, the House majority leader and vice-chair of the Ways and Means Committee. He
is described by his colleagues as hard-working, knowledgeable and personable – a leader who consistently embraces ideas that move the state forward without regard to party lines.

Learn more about the Wilkins Leadership Awards.