

Special Report

Is the BBER Feathering Gunther's Nest?

An Investigative Series on the use of the CoB for Personal Gain

This Special Report continues our examination of the items presented in the Fall 2006 issue of *Joint Venture*. In this installment we examine the "Presentations & Awards" page included in *JV* (see below).

FACULTY & STAFF PRESENTATIONS & AWARDS

Near the top of the list of "Faculty & Staff Presentations & Awards" we found the following entry about William Gunther, Professor of Economics and Director of the CoB's Bureau of Business and Economic Research:

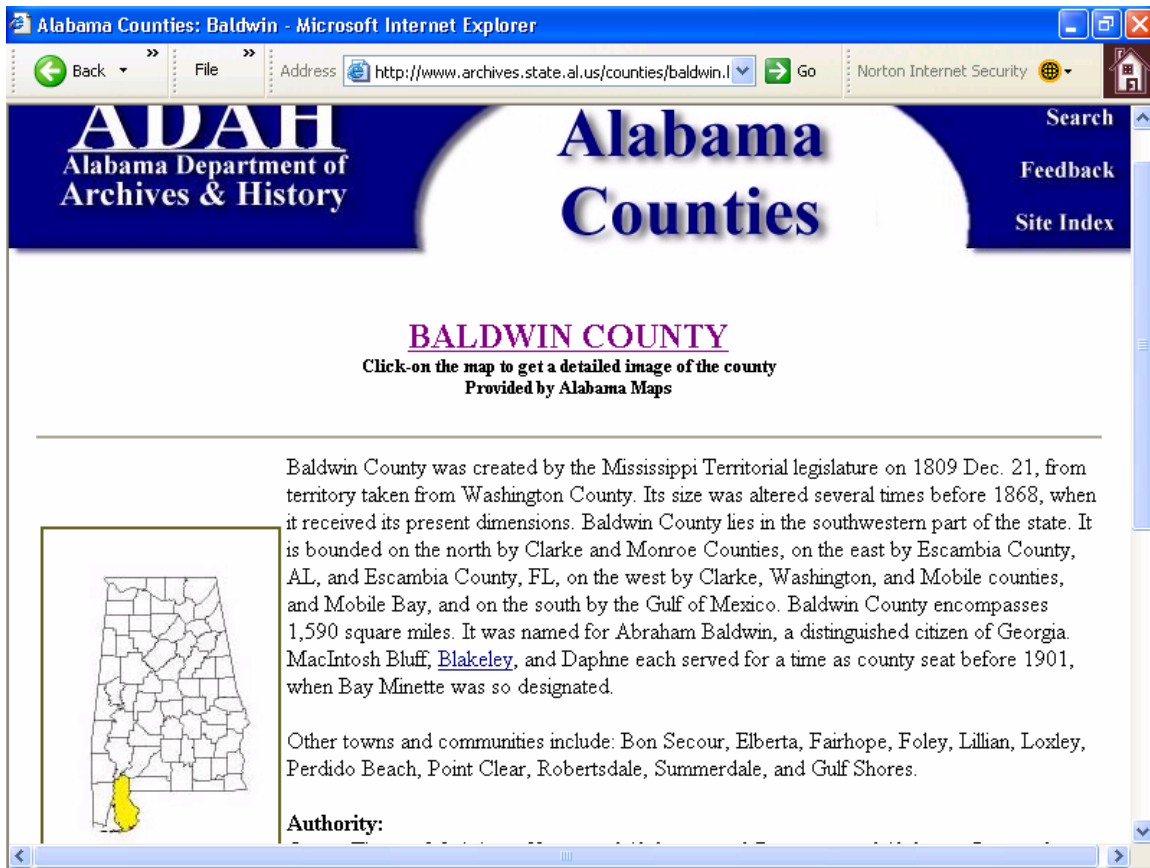
William Gunther, professor of economics, spoke in Alabama to the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance on "The U.S. Economy: Where We Are Headed," addressing how the topic might affect the growth of the local economies.

Usmpride.com readers will recall that Gunther receives a one-course release from the usual teaching load to serve as the Director of the BBER. The Spring 2005 issue of *Joint Venture* contained a profile of CoB Dean Harold Doty's (then) new BBER, indicating that Gunther's job as Director was to create a one-stop source for information about the South Mississippi economy. As such, the BBER would produce research studies and conduct seminars/conferences related to regional economic issues that affect South Mississippi's business enterprises.

A number of reports published here at usmpride.com have pointed out that the BBER has done little more than tack some economics data (that were taken from various federal government webpages) onto the economics department's bulletin board inside Joseph Greene Hall. The lack of output from the BBER is due, at least in part, to Gunther's decision to maintain a permanent residence (near Elberta, Alabama) that is about 4 hours driving time from Hattiesburg.

The entry above, regarding Gunther's presentation in Baldwin County in Alabama, reinforces the earlier reports published at usmpride.com. As the entry points out, Gunther recently presented "The U.S. Economy: Where we are Headed," to the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance in Alabama. As the insert states, Gunther's presentation dealt with how "... the topic might affect the local economies."

The insert below provides a map of Alabama's Baldwin County, along with some other geographic information about the southern Alabama locale:



As the insert and map above point out, Baldwin County lies in the southwestern part of Alabama. Baldwin County is home to Daphne, Bay Minette, Bon Secour, Fairhope, Foley, Perdido Beach, Point Clear, and Gulf Shores, to name just a few towns/cities. Baldwin County is one of the wealthiest pockets of Alabama, home to Alabama's famed "Gold Coast" region. Baldwin County is also home to Elberta, the community that lies near Gunther's permanent residence near the Gulf Coast.

So, is Gunther taking his \$150,000 (approx) salary+fringes from the CoB, funded through the generosity of Mississippi taxpayers, and providing professional services to the citizens of another state? It appears so. Gunther's presentation to the Baldwin County (AL) Economic Development Alliance presumably was designed to benefit businesses in the Baldwin County area of Alabama. What was the benefit to South Mississippi? We would assume nothing, unless South Mississippi businesses are able to secure a video tape of the presentation and can get some of the "expertise" that they are partially paying for through Gunther's \$120,000 salary.

Did Gunther receive a fee of any kind to speak to the Baldwin County Development Alliance? The situation involving Gunther/BBER appears to be fraught with problems, regardless of the answer to this question. The answer to this question would, however, help us understand how problematic the situation involving Gunther/BBER has been. It's time for CoB Dean Harold Doty to own up to some of the apparent irregularities involving this Bureau.