

Lunch Plenary
March 22, 2011
12:00 - 1:30pm

Presenter Bios

Mayor Cory Booker

The Honorable Cory A. Booker, 41, became the Mayor of Newark, N.J. on July 1, 2006. As of July 1, 2008, Newark led the nation among large cities for reductions in shootings and murders, with decreases of more than 40 percent in both categories. Among other recent notable achievements under Mayor Booker's leadership include a \$40 million transformation of the City's parks and playgrounds through a ground-breaking public/private partnership. Mayor Booker has always been a champion and advocate for education reform for the children of Newark. This vision led to the largest unprecedented partnership with Facebook Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg. On September 24, 2010, Mayor Booker launched the Partnership for Education in Newark, a significant commitment to improve public education by improving academic achievement and rewarding academic success. Zuckerberg contributed \$100 million dollars to the effort. Mayor Booker's political career began in 1998, after serving as staff attorney for the Urban Justice Center in Newark. Next he served four years as Newark's Central Ward Councilman from 1998-2002. He has been recognized in numerous publications, including Time, Esquire, New Jersey Monthly, Black Enterprise and The New York Times Magazine. He is a member of numerous boards and advisory committees including Democrats for Education Reform, Columbia University Teachers' College Board of Trustees and the Black Alliance for Educational Options. He received his B.A. and M.A. from Stanford University, a B.A. in Modern History at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, and a law degree at Yale University.

Mayor Mick Cornett

Mick Cornett became Oklahoma City's 35th mayor in 2004. He is just the fourth mayor in the City's history to be elected to a third term. Mayor Cornett has been at the forefront of the Oklahoma City renaissance, setting forth a vision that the people of Oklahoma City have embraced time and again. Under Cornett's leadership, the City has seen the final completion of MAPS 1, the implementation of MAPS for Kids, and the passage and implementation of MAPS 3. During his tenure, Oklahoma City's economy has been one of the strongest in the nation. With the Mayor leading the way to secure an NBA team, Oklahoma City became a major league city. And by putting our city on a diet, Mayor Cornett has been a trailblazer in the anti-obesity effort. He is also a national leader on municipal issues, serving as President of the nation's Republican mayors. Mayor Cornett was an all state athlete at Putnam City High School and graduated from the University of Oklahoma. He spent twenty years in local television before being elected to the City Council in 2001. Currently an Executive Vice President of Ackerman McQueen, he was recently named "Advertising Man of the Year" by the OKC Ad Club. In 2010, Governing Magazine named him their "Public Official of the Year."

Mayor Gregory Ballard

On November 6, 2007 Gregory A. Ballard was elected as the 48th Mayor of Indianapolis. A native Hoosier, Mayor Ballard was raised on the east side of Indianapolis and is a proud graduate of Cathedral High School. After earning his undergraduate degree in Economics from Indiana University, Mayor Ballard entered the United States Marine Corps. During his time in the Marines, he served in the Persian Gulf War and upon his retirement, was awarded the Legion of Merit. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel after 23 years service. Mayor Ballard has been active in the community, serving as a tutor and an Advisory Board Member for the Lilly Boys and Girls Club, as a contributing editor to both the Indiana Minority Business Magazine and the Indiana Parenting Magazine, and as founder of the Indianapolis Writers Group. Mayor Ballard resides in Pike Township with Winnie, his wife of 28 years. Their son, Greg, Jr. and daughter, Erica, are both graduates from Indiana University. Mayor Ballard is proud that despite the many places they lived throughout their military childhoods, his family still considers Indianapolis their hometown.

Gwen Ifill

Gwen Ifill is moderator and managing editor of "Washington Week" and senior correspondent for "The PBS Newshour." She is also the best-selling author of "The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama," (Doubleday, 2009). Ifill has covered six Presidential campaigns and moderated two vice presidential debates -- in 2004 between Republican Dick Cheney and Democrat John Edwards and in 2008 between Democratic Senator Joe Biden and Republican Governor Sarah Palin. Each week on "Washington Week," Ifill leads a roundtable discussion with award-winning journalists who report and analyze major D.C. stories. Now in its 42nd year, "Washington Week" is the longest-running prime-time news and public affairs program on television. During the 2008 Presidential campaign season, "Washington Week" launched a 10-city series of road shows which earned it a 2008 Peabody Award. Before coming to PBS in 1999, Ifill was chief congressional and political correspondent for NBC News, White House

Presenter Bios *(continued)*

correspondent for The New York Times, and a local and national political reporter for The Washington Post. She also reported for the Baltimore Evening Sun and the Boston Herald American. Her work has been honored by the Radio and Television News Directors Association, Harvard's Joan Shorenstein Center, Ebony Magazine and Boston's Ford Hall Forum. Ifill has received more than 20 honorary doctorates and currently serves on the boards of the News Literacy Project, the Committee to Protect Journalists, and she is a fellow with the American Academy of Sciences. A native of New York City, Ifill graduated from Simmons College in Boston.

Chelsea Johnson

Chelsea Johnson is currently a senior attending El Camino High School in Oceanside, California. After sharing her story of extreme adversity in her family and her determination to overcome those odds, Johnson was selected as a Simon Scholar. She is now being raised by two loving grandparents. Refusing to be defeated by the hardships she has faced, Johnson has set her focus on learning important life skills and getting a quality education. She maintains a flawless 5.0 GPA in high school while participating in numerous community service projects, and learning to play both the viola and classical guitar. She attributes her success in academics and beyond to the Simon Scholar program coupled with her hard work and determination to achieve her goals. Johnson aspires to study medicine and is confident she is on the road to success with the support of the Simon Scholar program for the next 4 years in college and the future.

Morton Kondracke

A journalist for more than 45 years, Morton Kondracke has covered nearly every phase of American politics and foreign policy. Since 1991, Kondracke has been the Executive Editor of Roll Call, Capitol Hill's leading newspaper. He writes "Pennsylvania Avenue," a weekly column on national politics and foreign policy, syndicated through United Features Syndicate and carried on Realclearpolitics.com. Kondracke is a regular commentator on the Fox News Channel for Special Report with Bret Baier. He was co-host of The Beltway Boys from 1998-2009. Prior to that, Kondracke was an original 16-year member of The McLaughlin Group. For four years starting in 1984, he was a panelist on This Week with David Brinkley (ABC). He served as a writer, senior editor and executive editor of The New Republic (1981-97). Kondracke also served as the Washington Bureau Chief for Newsweek (1985-86); a columnist for the Wall Street Journal (1980-85) and United Features Syndicate (1983-85); and reporter, Springfield (Ill.) bureau chief and White House correspondent for the Chicago Sun-Times (1963-77). Starting in 1972, he was a commentator for National Public Radio for ten years, and then a talk show host for WRC-AM (1981-83). Kondracke was a panelist for the 1984 Reagan-Mondale Presidential Debate. Washington Post presented him with their "Crystal Ball Award" for predicting election outcomes in 1994 and 2006. Kondracke authored the New York Times and Washington Post best-seller, *Saving Milly: Love, Politics and Parkinson's Disease* (Public Affairs 2001). He serves as a board member for the Parkinson's Action Network, the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research and Communities in Schools for the Nation's Capital. He graduated from Dartmouth College and served as a Neiman Fellow at Harvard University (1973-74). Kondracke is on the Dartmouth Board of Trustees.

Governor Robert F. McDonnell

Governor Robert F. McDonnell was sworn in as the 71st Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia on January 16, 2010. As Virginia's Chief Executive, Governor McDonnell inherited an unprecedented \$4.2 billion budget deficit. He defeated a proposed \$2 billion increase in the state income tax, kept existing car tax relief in place and brought Democrats and Republicans together to close the shortfall through spending reductions, and without a single tax increase. At the same time McDonnell was successful in seeing 80 percent of his legislative proposals passed by Virginia's General Assembly, which consists of a Republican House and Democratic Senate. Included in the Governor's proposals were major education reforms to bring more charter schools to the Commonwealth and expand virtual learning programs, as well as a package of dramatic new incentives for job-creating businesses. McDonnell has focused on job creation, and since February, 71,500 new jobs have been added in Virginia, the third highest nationally. McDonnell served 21 years in the U.S. Army, both active duty and reserve, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1997. Upon graduating from law school in 1989 he served as a Virginia Beach prosecutor. McDonnell was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1991 and served 14 years representing Virginia Beach. He was elected as the 44th Attorney General of Virginia in 2005.

Presenter Bios *(continued)*

Governor Martin O'Malley

Martin O'Malley grew up in Bethesda and Rockville, Md., and attended Gonzaga College High School in Washington, D.C. O'Malley received his bachelor's degree from Catholic University and a law degree from the University of Maryland. In 1986, while in law school, he was named by then-Congresswoman Barbara Mikulski as state field director for her successful primary and general election campaigns for the U.S. Senate. From 1987 to 1988 he served as a legislative fellow for Senator Mikulski, where he focused on obtaining federal funding for projects in the State of Maryland. In 1988, O'Malley was appointed assistant state's attorney for the city of Baltimore. He served on the Baltimore City Council from 1991 to 1999, during which time he was chairman of the Legislative Investigations and Taxation and Finance Committees. In 1999, O'Malley was elected mayor of Baltimore and in 2004 was elected to a second term. During those seven years, Mayor O'Malley worked with the city's citizens and public servants to make it a cleaner city. In 2007, O'Malley was elected Governor of the State of Maryland and in 2009, Governing Magazine named him "Public Official of the Year." In 2010, he won reelection. Governor O'Malley's policies have helped build America's #1 ranked public school system, drive violent crime down to a 35 year low, and create jobs for Maryland families.

Laysha Ward

Laysha Ward is president, community relations and Target Foundation. Ward oversees the corporation's domestic and international grant making, community sponsorships, cause marketing initiatives, volunteerism and other civic activities. Ward began her career with Target in 1991 in store sales and management with Marshall Field's in Chicago, where she later served as community relations manager. In 1998, she was named director of community relations for the corporation in Minneapolis. She was promoted to vice president of community relations in 2003 and to her current position in 2008. Ward serves on the board of directors of the Corporation for National and Community Service, the nation's largest grant maker for volunteering and service; the Executive Leadership Council, a national membership organization for African American executives; and Denny's Corporation. She is also a member of the Aspen Institute's Commission on No Child Left Behind, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and The Links, an international woman's service organization. She received her bachelor's degree in journalism from Indiana University and a master's degree in social services administration from the University of Chicago.