



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Conversation Between Former Govs. Mike Huckabee, Mike Beebe to be Highlight of Arkansas Center for Health Improvement's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event**

LITTLE ROCK — Former Arkansas Govs. Mike Huckabee and Mike Beebe will engage in a discussion on health and health care next month in a program celebrating the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

"Celebrating 20 Years of the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement: A Healthcare Discussion with Former Governors Mike Huckabee and Mike Beebe," hosted by ACHI in partnership with the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, will be Dec. 3 at 6 p.m. in the Wally Allen Ballroom at the Statehouse Convention Center, 101 W. Markham St., Little Rock.

Gov. Asa Hutchinson is scheduled to welcome the former governors, so the evening will include a rare gathering of Arkansas's three most recent governors on one stage.

The program will be free and open to the public. Reserve your seats by emailing [publicprograms@clintonschool.uasys.edu](mailto:publicprograms@clintonschool.uasys.edu) or by calling (501) 683-5239.

The evening's activities also will include the presentation of the Dr. Tom Bruce Arkansas Health Impact Award to two people who have had a positive impact on the health of Arkansans through their service and leadership, Dr. Kent Westbrook and Ben E. Owens Sr.

ACHI President and CEO Dr. Joe Thompson will moderate the discussion between Huckabee and Beebe.

"I was honored to serve as state surgeon general under both Republican Mike Huckabee and Democrat Mike Beebe," Thompson said. "I look forward to hearing their thoughts on how health care in Arkansas was transformed under their leadership, how ACHI played a role in those transformations, and what may be ahead for us."

Huckabee served as governor of Arkansas from 1996 to 2007, becoming one of the longest-serving governors in the state's history. He ran for president in 2008 and 2016, finishing second in the Republican primary in 2008. He is the host of the television show "Huckabee" on TBN each weekend and is a Fox News contributor, New York Times best-selling author of 12 books and a frequent speaker for corporate, civic, and nonprofit groups all over the world. Health policy initiatives that came to fruition under Huckabee's leadership include the ARKids First program, the Tobacco Settlement Proceeds Act of 2000, the Arkansas Health Data Initiative, ARHeath Networks, the Clean Indoor Air Act of 2006 and a nationally heralded and duplicated health initiative that focused on prevention.

Beebe served as governor of Arkansas from 2007 to 2015. Before that, he spent 20 years as a state senator and then four years as attorney general. He is on the Governors' Council of the national Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington, D.C., and is a member of the boards of directors of Tyson Food, Inc., and Centennial Bank. He serves as of counsel at Roberts Law Firm, P.A., Arkansas Business Litigation Lawyers. Health policy initiatives established under his leadership include graduated driver's licensing, a tobacco tax increase to fund a statewide trauma system and other health initiatives, creation of the Arkansas Office of Health Information Technology, statewide fluoridation of drinking water, and the Arkansas Health Care Payment Improvement Initiative. Beebe also navigated political challenges to establish Arkansas's innovative, bipartisan approach to Medicaid expansion.

The Dr. Tom Bruce Arkansas Health Impact Award honors individuals who embody the late Dr. Tom Bruce's lifetime of service by demonstrating courageous leadership and a sustained record as a catalyst for improving the health of all Arkansans, and who exemplify the core values of ACHI: trust, commitment, innovation and initiative.

Westbrook has been at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences since 1961. In 1984 he co-founded and became the first director of the Arkansas Cancer Research Center, now the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute. After stepping down as director in 1998, he served in numerous roles including interim chairman of the Department of Surgery from 1999 to 2002, interim vice chancellor for development in 2011, and interim chairman of the Department of Dermatology from 2014 to 2015. He currently is distinguished professor of surgery in the College of Medicine and serves in an advisory role at the Cancer Institute.

Owens spent more than half a century in the field of health care, with 37 years at the helm of St. Bernards in Jonesboro. He began as hospital administrator in 1972 and retired as president and CEO of St. Bernards Healthcare in 2010, having led the growth of what was a 252-bed hospital to its present status as a 438-bed acute care medical center that is the premiere health care facility in Northeast Arkansas. St. Bernards now serves as the referral center for 23 counties in Northeast Arkansas and Southeast Missouri, is the only Level III trauma center in the region and has the only neonatal intensive care unit in the eastern part of Arkansas.

Over the past 20 years, the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement's mission has been to serve as a catalyst to provoke or accelerate significant action or change to improve the health of Arkansans. A nonpartisan, independent health policy center, ACHI has been at the forefront of many of the advances Arkansas has made and remains poised to protect gains and advance new policies that will further its mission.

Can't make it to the program? [CLICK HERE](#) to watch the live stream on Monday, December 3.

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