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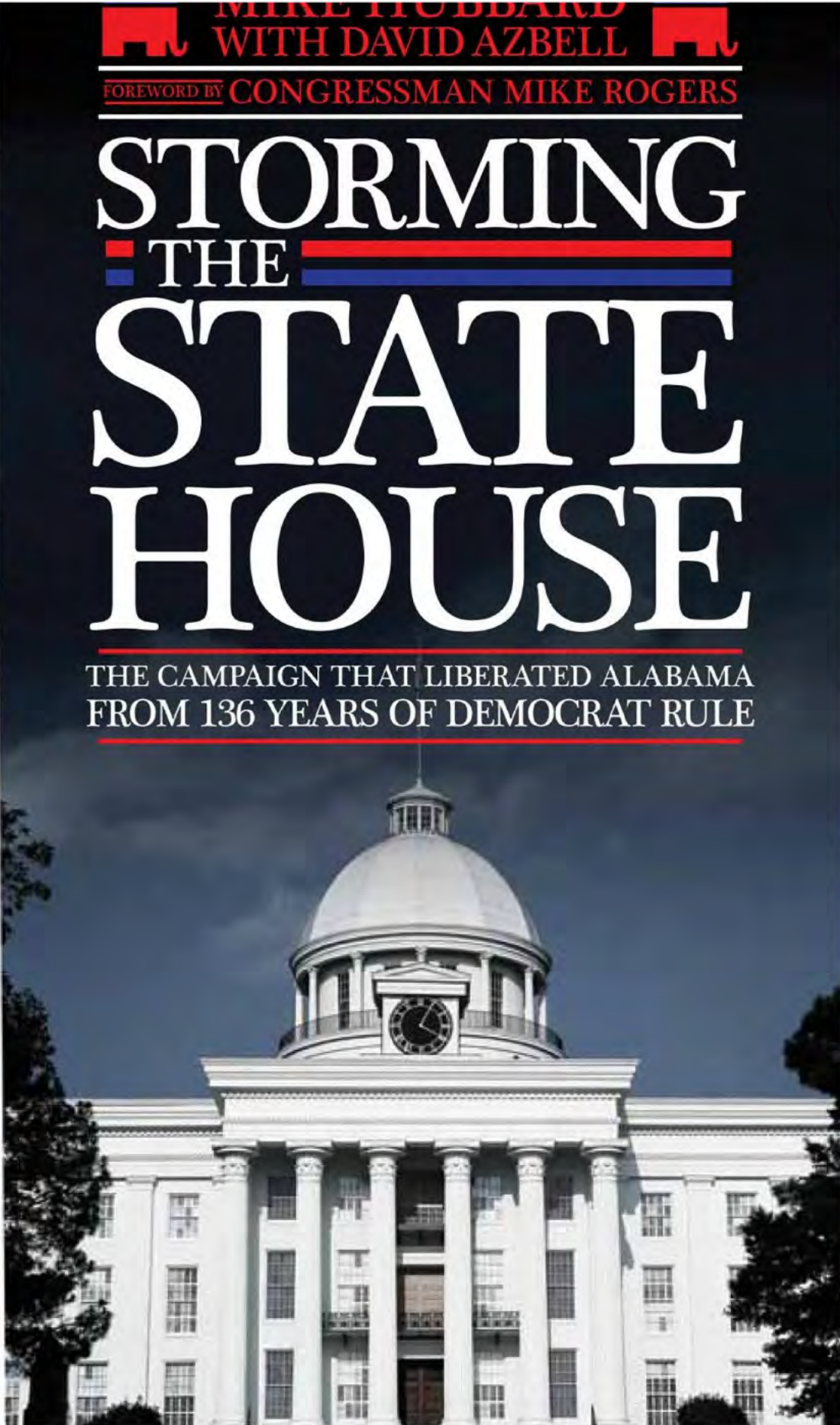


MIKE HUBBARD
WITH DAVID AZBELL

FOREWORD BY CONGRESSMAN MIKE ROGERS

STORMING THE STATE HOUSE

THE CAMPAIGN THAT LIBERATED ALABAMA
FROM 136 YEARS OF DEMOCRAT RULE



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*The Campaign that Liberated Alabama
from 136 Years of Democrat Rule*

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AND WITH A FOREWORD
BY U.S. REPRESENTATIVE MIKE ROGERS

NEWSOUTH BOOKS
Montgomery

When the capital press corps asked for my reaction to the Democrats' Covenant, I told them it was "the worst case of political plagiarism in the history of Alabama" and noted, bill-by-bill, the Democrats' hypocrisy. Time, incidentally, would prove me right. Four years later, despite controlling every House and Senate committee, both agenda-setting Rules committees and a having a majority in both houses, only three of the 16 items in the "Covenant" had become law.

NOW THAT WE HAD both money and message covered, we needed to find our targets and the candidates to take them on, so I commissioned an in-depth study of voting patterns in various districts represented by white Democratic legislators across the state. We looked at past results in presidential elections, gubernatorial contests, and other statewide offices and pinpointed the areas that cast the most Republican ballots yet continued to send Democratic lawmakers to Montgomery.

All of the numbers we crunched and all of the data we collected pointed us conclusively to one, most vulnerable target—State Representative Joe Carothers of Houston County.

Elected to the House in 1974, Carothers had held that office for 32 years prior to the 2006 election, yet his influence and power within the body had never matched his longevity of service. Though he chaired the occasional committee, he seemed happy to simply enjoy the camaraderie of the House and leave the heavy lifting of leadership to other Democrats within his caucus.

As a retired public school teacher, Carothers was fiercely loyal to Paul Hubbert and the AEA, but his heavily agricultural district and the fact that he owned a small farm led him to oppose property tax proposals that came before the House, a fact that also earned him support from ALFA and the Alabama Forestry Association. Because he would toss an occasional vote to other business groups when given a wink and a nod by Hubbert, he enjoyed widespread support from various associations whose interests he often opposed. This dichotomy between his perception as a friendly conservative and his often anti-business voting record, which existed both in Montgomery and in his southeast Alabama district, is what helped him

consultant working on the Carothers campaign was bragging that they would hold on to the seat because internal polling showed a segment of voters did not believe that Carothers often voted with the liberal Democrats no matter what evidence you presented to them. The conflict between Joe's perception and his actual voting record was hurting us. Immediately, Azbell and Swatek pulled out the latest polling crosstabs, the series of charts that allow political consultants to pinpoint how a certain group of voters view issues, and discovered something very critical.

While it was true that enough voters needed to put us over the top did not believe Carothers was a liberal, the numbers showed we did not have to convince them of that fact. The poll indicated we simply had to point out that Carothers was a pro-union Democrat, not necessarily a liberal one, in a heavily Republican district and would work with other Democrats to defeat Republican proposals if returned to Montgomery. Rather than complicating the race with the conservative versus liberal label, we could simply boil it down to Democrat versus Republican.

The group quickly went to work writing a script for a new television ad that was produced at the Auburn Network. The crux of the ad asked voters, "Which team are you on?" Since the World Series was taking place at the time, they gave it a baseball theme. It asked viewers to decide whether they were rooting for the Republican "baseball team" managed by Bob Riley, who was intensely popular in the Wiregrass at the time, and its star player, Benjamin Lewis, or their Democratic opponents led by Lucy Baxley and tired old veteran Joe Carothers. Once I received the script, I realized that, given the huge volume of political ads airing on television at the time, the concept was just different and unusual enough to stick with viewers and break through the white noise.

Unfortunately, with so little time until the election and under the gun to get the ad on the air, I could not locate any stock vintage baseball footage needed to produce the script. But, since I made my living producing football shows and videos, we had some old football game films from the 1940s already transferred to video. I traded the baseball theme for college football, a passion among Alabamians in the fall, cut the spot, and sent it to the stations in Dothan for airing.

the only person on the inaugural stand or in the audience who wore one.

McCain would later be forced to abandon his foothold in Alabama when his national campaign committee ran out of money and experienced a precipitous decline. Most political prognosticators wrote off his chances of gaining the nomination, but a big McCain win in New Hampshire, followed by a victory in South Carolina, renewed his momentum. Though Huckabee would ultimately win the most primary delegate votes in Alabama, McCain would capture the GOP nomination. I did not know at the time that I would soon be caught in the middle of a contentious dispute between the McCain and Huckabee supporters.

THE REPUBLICAN STATE EXECUTIVE Committee meeting took place in Montgomery on February 10, 2007, the day before my forty-sixth birthday. As the only declared candidate for chairman, I felt pretty confident in my chances. Emory Folmar, the legendary former mayor of Montgomery and long-time Republican who helped build the party brick by brick, nominated me for the post. Twinkle Cavanaugh, the outgoing chair who had made calls and written letters on my behalf, seconded the motion. Before I knew it, the committee had unanimously elected me as the new leader of the ALGOP.

In my remarks that followed the election, I unveiled an idea that had been germinating since we had completed our embryonic pilot program to elect Republican legislators just a few months before. Rather than waiting until the 2010 election cycle to begin raising money for legislative races, I had determined that we should start immediately—a full four years before the first ballot would be cast—and earmark the money for those efforts. We could begin recruiting the pollsters, mail houses, opposition researchers, strategy consultants, and other vendors needed for the effort.

We could also begin to track the politically damaging legislative votes of Democrats as they cast them. In my mind, our campaign to take over the legislature would commence before the smoke had cleared from the last election.

“As Republicans, we have made great strides in Alabama,” I said to the crowd following my election as the party’s new chairman. “We hold a