

Guest Speaker

Rick C. Wade



A native of Lancaster, South Carolina, Rick C. Wade is a founding partner of the Axelrod-Wade Group, a global business development firm, as well as Senior Vice President and Head of China Operations for Green Tech Automotive. A member of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), he also serves as a Senior Advisor to the Obama for America presidential campaign and the 2012 Democratic National Convention. During the historic 2008 presidential election, Wade was integrally involved with strategies in the early primary states of Iowa and South Carolina, and he successfully directed the Obama campaign's national effort to mobilize unprecedented numbers of African American voters across the country.

As former Senior Advisor and Deputy Chief of Staff to United States Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke, Wade had a hand in all major policy, personnel and program matters at the Commerce Department. He also worked closely with stakeholders including the White House, other federal agencies, members of Congress, state and local elected officials, businesses, trade associations as well as non-governmental organizations. Wade was a forceful advocate for the department's priorities at many domestic and international forums, including the U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade, Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation, African Growth and Opportunity Act Forum, Conference on the Caribbean and Central America, and the Department of State Policy Coordinating Committee on Brazil. He was also the Special Envoy to the Caribbean; oversaw private sector initiatives in Haiti; and led trade missions to various parts of the world.

Additionally, while at the Commerce Department, Wade worked diligently to ensure President

Obama's business and economic programs, including the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, were implemented effectively and efficiently. A former White House mentor, he served on the White House Task Forces on Small Business Contracting, Auto-Recovery, Puerto Rico, Military Families and Historically Black Colleges & Universities. He also served on Vice President Biden's Task Force on Middle Class America and the Interagency Business Council.

Rick C. Wade is a former executive at Hoffman-La Roche pharmaceutical company; Fowler Communications Inc; and Palmetto GBA, a subsidiary of Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina. He was also a member of the Cabinet of South Carolina Governor Jim Hodges, serving as state director of the Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services. He began his career in the South Carolina State Capitol where he worked as an analyst for the House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee. He then worked as Executive Assistant to the President of the University of South Carolina and Chief of Staff to South Carolina Lieutenant Governor Nick Theodore. Wade was the 2002 Democratic nominee for Secretary of State.

He received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of South Carolina and a Master of Public Administration from Harvard University, where he was also a Kennedy Fellow. He has received Honorary Doctorates from Benedict College and South Carolina State University and has studied at both the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia and Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. He has received numerous awards for exemplary public service and leadership, including recent recognition by Upscale magazine and AT & T's South Carolina African American History Calendar.