

PRESS RELEASE

Baker Donelson's Michael Johnson Hosts German Consul General

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(Birmingham, AL / November 16, 2015) Baker Donelson's Michael H. Johnson, who serves as Honorary Consul of Germany for Alabama, recently hosted German Consul General Detlev Ruenger on his first official visit to Birmingham since assuming his post in August. Mr. Ruenger is based at the Consulate of Germany in Atlanta with jurisdiction over the Southeast region.

"The bilateral relationship between Germany and Alabama, and most certainly the Metro Birmingham region, is tremendously important," said Mr. Johnson, a shareholder in the Firm's Birmingham office and a member of Baker Donelson's Global Business Team. "We have high levels of investment in manufacturing, research and services in both directions, as well as strong cultural ties."

While in Birmingham on November 5, Mr. Ruenger learned about Birmingham's economic and industrial climate, German investments in the region and Alabama-based investments in Germany. His day began at the Birmingham Business Alliance (BBA), where he attended a presentation by BBA President and CEO Brian Hilson, followed by Steve Sewell, Vice President of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, who provided an overview of Alabama and the Birmingham metro area's industrial and structural landscape, as well as recent economic and political successes. Baker Donelson later hosted a luncheon for Mr. Ruenger where he met with the top executives from Medical Properties Trust (MPT), including CEO Ed Aldag, CFO Steve Hamner, COO Emmett McLean and Associate Legal Counsel Robb Moss. MPT, a publicly-traded company founded and headquartered in Birmingham, has investment holdings in Germany of more than \$1.5 billion.

Consul General Ruenger also glimpsed Birmingham on a windshield tour, followed by a visit to German manufacturing and specialty chemicals giant Evonik Industries. Mr. Kel Boisvert, Site Manager at Evonik, received Messrs. Ruenger and Johnson with an overview and presentations by the Evonik team, and concluded with a tour of the facilities, which include clean room manufacturing. Mr. Ruenger ended his visit at the Alabama Germany Partnership Board Meeting at *Das Haus*, where he was received as the guest of honor and offered remarks to the general membership on the 26th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

A native of Hannover, Germany, Mr. Ruenger received a law degree from the University of Hannover in 1981 and has spent more than 30 years in the German diplomatic corps representing Germany in international affairs, including serving as Germany's ambassador to Norway and Austria. In July 2015, he was appointed to the position of German Consul General in Atlanta, Georgia, where he resides with his family.