Former energy secretary highlights 45th Tulane Business Forum

October 4, 2024



Dan Brouillette (MBA '24), president and CEO of the Edison Electric Institute and former U.S. Secretary of Energy, delivered a Tulane Business Forum keynote presentation on delivering the future of energy.

Dan Brouillette (MBA '24), president and CEO of the Edison Electric Institute and former U.S. Secretary of Energy, delivered the luncheon keynote address at the 45th annual Tulane Business Forum.

The forum, an annual presentation of the Tulane Association of Business Alumni (TABA), took place on Friday, Sept. 27, 2024 at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center in New Orleans.

Speaking to a packed luncheon audience, Brouillette emphasized the transformational moment facing the electric power industry and the need for

innovative partnerships to meet the nation's growing needs.

"Electricity demand is growing exponentially all throughout the country, but especially here in the Southeast, where we're seeing growth rates that we haven't seen in two, perhaps even three decades," Brouillette said.

Brouillette cited artificial intelligence, data centers and the return of manufacturing to the U.S. as key drivers of this unprecedented demand growth. Data center activity alone is growing almost 25% annually, he noted.

Brouillette praised utility companies like forum underwriter Entergy for their investments in infrastructure and disaster response capabilities. He also highlighted the company's recent collaborations with tech companies, such as its $10 billion project with Amazon Web Services in Mississippi.

The former energy secretary stressed the continued importance of natural gas in the nation's energy portfolio, predicting it will remain crucial for the next two to four decades. He also emphasized the need for developing new technologies like small modular nuclear reactors.

"It's going to take all of us, and it's going to take all forms of energy," Brouillette said.

Brouillette called for a balanced approach to energy policy that considers affordability and reliability alongside environmental concerns. "No longer can America decide energy policy through the exclusive lens of climate change," he said.

He urged reform of the permitting process for energy projects, noting that lengthy approval times and legal uncertainties hinder investment and development.

Drawing on his experiences as energy secretary, Brouillette recounted tense negotiations with Saudi Arabia and Russia during the 2020 oil price crash. He used the anecdote to underscore the strategic importance of U.S. energy production.

"Beginning in 2019, we became a net energy exporter, and it's due to the work that you do here in Louisiana," he told the audience.

Brouillette, a graduate of the Freeman School's Executive MBA program, serves on the advisory board of the Tulane Energy Institute and as an expert-in-residence with the Freeman School's Career Management Center, and he praised Tulane for its role

in shaping future energy leaders.

"I feel very confident that all of us, especially [those of us] from down the bayou, we're equipping the leaders of tomorrow," said Brouillette, a native of Assumption Parish.

He concluded by heartily encouraging students to consider careers in the energy sector, calling it "the most exciting time" he's seen in the industry's history.

The Tulane Business Forum brings together business leaders, scholars and students to discuss current trends and challenges in the business world.