



Former BB&T CEO John Allison contender for U.S. Treasury secretary, report says

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John Allison, the former CEO of Winston-Salem-based BB&T Corp., is a late contender for secretary of the U.S. Treasury, Bloomberg is reporting.

The news organization cites two unnamed sources it says are familiar with President-elect Donald Trump's selection process. It notes other contenders as Steven Munchin, formerly of Goldman Sachs, David McCormick of Bridgewater Associates LP, and possibly Texas Rep. Jeb Hensarling and Jonathan Gray of Blackstone Group LP.

Allison, who led BB&T from 1989 to 2008 and remains an executive in residence at Wake Forest School of Business, was in October of last year appointed as an independent director of investment bank Moelis & Co. (NYSE: MC). A spokesperson for Moelis was unable to comment or make Allison available for immediate comment.

After leaving BB&T, Allison served as CEO of the libertarian think tank Cato Institute from October 2012 to April of 2015 and remains on the organization's board. Efforts to reach him through the Cato Institute and Wake Forest University also were unsuccessful, but Peter Goettler, president and CEO of the Cato Institute, did make this statement:

"John Allison has both the experience and the economic knowledge to be an excellent Treasury Secretary," Goettler said. "Through his work with small businesses at BB&T, he has seen up close the negative effect of regulatory overreach on growth and innovation."

During his time as CEO, BB&T grew to be the nation's 10th largest financial services company, growing from \$4.5 billion to \$152 billion in assets.

His bio notes that he' has been recognized as one of the world's 100 most successful CEOs by Harvard Business Review and that he's earned numerous awards, including induction into the N.C. Business Hall of Fame and receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award from American Banker. He serves on the board of visitors at numerous business schools, including Wake and UNC-Chapel Hill, where he graduated from, and Duke, where he earned his master's in management. He also is a graduate of the Stonier Graduate School of Banking.

Even while at BB&T, Allison was an advocate for the establishment of centers to study capitalism at U.S. universities using funding from BB&T's charitable arm.

In a 2012 essay, Allison wrote that funding such programs is in the long-term interest of the bank's shareholders and that students would benefit from being "taught to think independently, critically and with the right philosophical premises."

"Why do free-market principles, which by any objective analysis have won the intellectual argument, continue to be dismissed by most intellectuals?" Allison wrote. "We concluded that the free market economic arguments were routinely defeated by moral arguments, and those were primarily focused on the distribution of wealth.

"Furthermore, BB&T has used the fundamental ethics expressed in Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism in very successfully growing our business, and we wanted Rand's ideas to be heard in the academic community."

At the time of that essay, the bank had sponsored nearly 70 programs on the "moral foundations of capitalism" at most major universities in BB&T's markets. That list includes Clemson University, Wake Forest University, UNC-Greensboro and others.

In addition, Allison is also the author of two books — "The Financial Crisis and the Free Market Cure" and "The Leadership Crisis and the Free Market Cure."

For more on Allison's business philosophy, see this in-depth article from Triad Business Journal as Allison was joining the Cato Institute.