

George M. Israel, III
President of Ferst Foundation

George M. Israel, III, was named President of the Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy (FFCL) in July 2011. FFCL has a mission of seeing all of Georgia's 750,000 preschool age children enter school prepared to learn by providing each registered child a book and Leap into Books newsletter every month from the time they are registered until their fifth birthday.

He served as president and CEO of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce from 2002 to 2010 where membership levels topped 4,000 and the Georgia Chamber saw near perfect lobbying efforts on behalf of business at the State Capital and led the Georgia Chamber through a transformative reorganization known as the "Georgia Initiative".

Prior to joining the Georgia Chamber, Israel served as a chief executive both in government and business. At just 31 years old, he was elected Mayor of Macon, Georgia's sixth largest city, held the position from 1979 until 1987. During that time, he earned a reputation for being fiscally conservative, fair minded, and of the highest integrity – qualities that led him to a series of leadership positions in real estate and healthcare after leaving office.

George Israel began his career as a field underwriter in the life, health and accident insurance industry. In 1987, he became president and chief executive officer of The Potomac Corporation, a European venture capital firm. During the early 1990's, he was chief executive officer of Fickling & Walker, a Macon real estate development company. In 1994, he became president and chief executive officer of Secure Health Plans of Georgia.

Israel has served on the Board of Directors for a number of organizations including the Georgia Allies, the Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education and the Georgia Cities Foundation. He is a Board Advisor for the Georgia Department of Economic Development and serves as a member of the Georgia Military Affairs Coordinating Committee. He is an active member of the United States Chamber of Commerce.

Israel was selected by Georgia Governor Zell Miller to Chair the State of Georgia Commission on Privatization from 1994 to 1998. He also has served as Chairman of the 21st Century Partnership in Middle Georgia for the Base Alignment and Closure (BRAC) committee (1993 – 95), Chair of the Macon Chamber of Commerce (1993), Chair of the Macon Economic Development Commission (1988-92), Co-Chair of the Macon-Bibb County Unification Commission, President of the Georgia Municipal Association (1983), and Co-Chair of the Georgia Urban Task Force (1980).

Israel rose to prominence in the national Republican party after being elected President of the Republican Mayors and Local Officials in 1981. He was appointed by President Reagan to serve on the Executive Committee of the Republican National Committee in 1982 and to chair the President's reelection campaign in Georgia in 1984.

Israel is a graduate of Middle Georgia College in Cochran and attended the University of Georgia. He and his wife, Pam, live in Macon and have two grown children and one grandchild.