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## **P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

For Immediate Release

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**RE: Gregory C. (Greg) Wilkes Retirement as Chief Executive Officer of Heritage First Bancshares, Inc.**

**Rome, Georgia:** Capping an iconic 45-year career in banking, with the last 10 years served in key leadership roles at Rome, Georgia-based Heritage First Bancshares, Inc. (HFBI) and Heritage First Bank, it is announced that Greg Wilkes has retired effective February 28, 2019.

In making this announcement, HFBI Chairman of the Board of Directors, Kenneth F. Davis, M.D. stated: “Greg’s influence and experience are central components in the success of our banking company. He successfully led our company through the “Great Recession”, which proved to be among the most challenging periods in our bank and industry’s history. Our shareholders and banking team will continue to benefit from the legacy of his integrity and commitment for years to come.”

Wilkes’ banking career began with Atlanta, Georgia-based Citizens and Southern Bank, working in the bank’s Trust Department after graduating from the Georgia Institute of Technology. He later entered the Rome, Georgia market serving in a similar position with locally owned National City Bank, later leading that institution as its Chief Executive Officer. He also served as the Chief Executive Officer of Rome’s Home Federal Savings Bank. Afterward, he became the Chief Executive Officer of Lakeland, Florida’s Florida First Bank before returning to Rome to become the Chief Executive of Heritage First Bancshares, Inc. and Heritage First Bank with the additional duty of membership on the company’s Boards of Directors.

Davis further added: “As Greg begins his life’s next chapter, we honor him for his significant work and dedication to our company. Also, for establishing a winning culture that will carry our organization well into the future. Having provided leadership at the highest level of three banks in the Rome Market over his career, Greg’s mark on local banking is unmatched.”

Accompanying this announcement is the appointment of Ryan Earnest to the additional post of Chief Executive Officer of Heritage First Bancshares, Inc., effective March 7, 2019.

Earnest added: “Having had the opportunity to work under Greg’s steadfast mentoring and direction, I can state that I have been personally and professionally enriched by following the many purpose-driven examples that he has set by his actions. I represent the entire Heritage First family in thanking Greg for his service to our institution and for his leadership by example, all of which have made Heritage First Bank a high-performance workplace with a promising future.”

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