

Howard Lee

Mr. Lee was born on a sharecropper's farm outside Lithonia, Georgia on July 28, 1934. He graduated from college in 1959 and was the first member of his family to do so. After college, he was drafted into the Army, where he served as an ambulance driver and assistant company clerk until 1961. After service, he moved to Savannah, Georgia and became a juvenile probation officer. He also married his wife there in 1962. The couple moved to Chapel Hill, NC in 1964, where he began graduate study at UNC-Chapel Hill and later earned his Masters in Social Work. In 1969, he became the first African-American mayor elected in Chapel Hill, a majority-white city, and served three terms in this capacity. He ran for Congress in 1972 and for lieutenant governor in 1976. He lost both of these races, but he was appointed as secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Community Development in 1977. He later served twice in the state senate and became the first African American Chairman on the North Carolina State Board of Education on May 1, 2003. He was also appointed to the North Carolina Utilities Commission, where he served from 2005-2009. In 2009, he was appointed by the Governor to be the Executive Director of the North Carolina Education Cabinet. Also, that year, his wife and he were nominated as "Town Treasures" by the Chapel Hill Historical Society. Since retiring, he founded the Howard N. Lee Institute, which seeks to erase the achievement gap and improve academic performance for minority males. It is his due to his many achievements and dedication to the advancement of education that he is considered to be one of the great citizens of our state.

References: <https://ncpedia.org/biography/lee-howard>
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howard_Nathaniel_Lee