

About Mel

Melvin L. Watt ("Mel") was born in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina on August 26, 1945. He is a graduate of York Road High School in Charlotte. He was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1967 with a BS degree in Business Administration and was the president of the business honors fraternity as a result of having the highest academic average in the Business School. In 1970 he received a JD degree from Yale University Law School and was a published member of the Yale Law Journal. He has been awarded honorary degrees from North Carolina A&T State University, Johnson C. Smith University, Bennett College and Fisk University.

Mel practiced law from 1970-1992, specializing in minority business and economic development law in a general practice law firm best known for its civil rights reputation. He has been an owner of several small businesses.

Mel was the campaign manager of Harvey Gantt's campaigns for City Council, for Mayor of Charlotte and for the United States Senate. Mel served one term in the North Carolina Senate (1985-86) where he was called "the conscience of the Senate." He did not seek a second term in the state Senate and announced that he would not consider running for elective office again until his children completed high school.

Mel is married to Eulada Paysour Watt, an educator. They have two sons, Brian and Jason, both of whom are graduates of Yale University and have earned graduate degrees.

Mel is a member of the Mt. Olive Presbyterian Church and a life member of the NAACP. He served as president of the Mecklenburg County Bar and has been a member of many professional, community and civic boards and organizations.

In 1992, Mel was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from North Carolina's 12th Congressional District and became one of only two African American members elected to Congress from North Carolina in the 20th century.

Mel is a member of the House Judiciary Committee, on which he is the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Intellectual Property, Competition and the Internet and serves on the Subcommittee on Courts, Commercial and Administrative Law. Mel is also on the House Financial Services Committee, on which he serves on the Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit and the Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing and Community Opportunity. Mel was unanimously elected and served as the Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus (2005-2006).

Mel enjoys tennis, running, reading and music. Before retiring from the Democratic baseball team in 2008, Mel was the starting pitcher for the Democratic baseball team in the annual Congressional Baseball Game and was named most valuable player in 1995, 1996 and 2000.