



Leadership North Carolina Class XXVII

Government Session
November 5-7, 2019
Raleigh

Speaker Directory

Ms. Benita Witherspoon

Warden
North Carolina Correctional Institution for Women
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Benita Witherspoon is the new warden of the North Carolina Correctional Institution for Women in Raleigh. Witherspoon, who was previously in charge of Forsyth Correctional Center in Winston-Salem, oversees the multi-custody facility.

In 1990, Witherspoon was named a Program Assistant II at the former Cabarrus Correctional Center and later transferred to the same position at the former Charlotte Correctional Center. In 1992, she was named a case analyst at the South Piedmont Diagnostic Center, where she was promoted to Program Director I in 1993. Witherspoon became a unit manager at Albemarle Correctional Institution in 1997 and later a Correctional Captain at Lanesboro Correctional Institution. She was promoted to Assistant Superintendent at Forsyth Correctional Center in 2005, and in 2006 was promoted to Division Operations Manager.

Witherspoon has an associate degree from Davidson Community College, a bachelor's degree in business administration from Catawba College, a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from UNC-Charlotte, and master's degrees in education from Western Carolina University and criminal justice from East Carolina University.

The Honorable Roy Cooper

Governor
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Roy Cooper is a trusted leader and family man who is honored to serve as North Carolina's Governor.

Roy Cooper has spent nearly three decades in public service protecting families, keeping communities safe, and working to create jobs and improve schools. The son of a school teacher, he knows that education creates opportunity and he has worked throughout his career to strengthen our schools and create a sound foundation for our state's children.

In the NC House and Senate, Roy Cooper fought to increase teacher pay and reduce class sizes. He wrote North Carolina's first children's health insurance initiative. During his service in the legislature, Roy Cooper worked with members of both parties to get balanced budgets that raised teacher pay to the national average, grew the economy, and cut taxes for middle class families.

In 2000, the people of North Carolina elected Roy Cooper as Attorney General, where he continued to fight for families during his four terms. He cracked down on child predators, worked to increase penalties for drug dealers, and oversaw a sharp decrease in crime. He partnered with law enforcement and school administrators to make schools safer and helped protect victims of domestic violence and stalking. He also made protecting consumers a priority, fighting to keep utility rates low, put predatory lenders out of business, and help families fend off telemarketers.

Roy Cooper entered public service to fight for communities like the one where he grew up. Born and raised in Nash County, he attended public schools and worked summers on the family farm before attending UNC-Chapel Hill on a Morehead Scholarship. His mother, Beverly Cooper, worked as a school teacher, and his father, Roy Cooper Jr., farmed and practiced law.

After earning a law degree from UNC, Roy Cooper returned home to Nash County to practice law and, with his wife Kristin, raise three daughters – Hilary, Natalie, and Claire. He taught Sunday School, served as an elder and deacon in his church, and tutored students in local schools.

Roy Cooper believes in the potential of our great state and its people. He knows that we can build a state and an economy that work for everyone. By investing in our public schools and giving students the tools they need to succeed, creating good jobs and raising incomes for the middle class, and strengthening our communities, North Carolinians can live and work in places they are proud to call home.

The Honorable Susi Hamilton

Secretary

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Susi H. Hamilton has served North Carolina and her hometown of Wilmington for nearly 25 years. She began her career in what was then the Department of Cultural Resources Historic Preservation Office, and she is thrilled to return to the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources as Secretary under Governor Roy Cooper.

As a state legislator, Secretary Hamilton served her constituents in Brunswick and New Hanover Counties from 2011 until January 2017. With a background in economic development, regional planning, historic preservation and the arts, she is passionate about stewardship in the state.

As DNCR secretary, Hamilton oversees the state's resources for arts, history, libraries, and nature. The department includes state historic sites; museums of art, history and science; state parks and recreation areas; zoo, aquariums and symphony; the State Library and Archives; the N.C. Arts Council; State Preservation Office; Office of State Archaeology; and Office of Land and Water Stewardship. Together, these programs represent the cultural, natural, and historic foundation of North Carolina, reaching the state's citizens in all 100 counties. Secretary Hamilton is committed to working with the department's resources to help grow communities, preserve a sense of place, and improve quality of life to make a positive impact on economic development in North Carolina.

Hamilton holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration from UNC-Wilmington and a Bachelor of Arts in History from UNC-Chapel Hill. She has given her time and expertise to several boards and commissions, including the Historic Wilmington Foundation, Cucalorus Film Festival, Carousel Center for Abused Children, Wilmington Rotary Club, Girl's Inc., Association of Public Administration Wilmington Chapter, Brooklyn Arts Center, and the North Carolina Downtown Development Association.

Secretary Hamilton lives in downtown Wilmington with her husband, Steve, and daughter, Parker.

Ms. Kara Millonzi

Albert and Gladys Hall Coates Distinguished Term Professor of Public Law and Government
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Kara Millonzi joined the School of Government in 2006. She specializes in local government finance law, general county law, and incorporation. She administers the Coates' Canons Local Government Law Blog, and she has authored well over 100 posts on issues related to local government law and finance. Millonzi also administers NC Finance Connect, an online community portal, centered around the topic of local government finance. In addition to the blog posts, she has authored numerous books, chapters, and other publications, a complete list of which is available [here](#). Kara co-launched Lead for North Carolina, a two-year local government fellowship program targeted to adding needed capacity to more distressed North Carolina local governments and creating a pipeline of future public service leaders. The first Lead for North Carolina cohort launched in August 2019.

Before joining the School, Millonzi practiced law with Testa, Hurwitz & Thibault, LLP in Boston and clerked for the Honorable Louis F. Oberdorfer, United States District Court for the District of Columbia. She is a member of the North Carolina State Bar and the Bar of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Millonzi earned a BA in economics, summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, from the University at Buffalo and an MA in economics from the University of Maryland at College Park. She earned a JD, with highest honors, Order of the Coif, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she served as editor in chief of the *North Carolina Law Review*.

Mr. John N. Davis

Editor
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John Davis is a non-partisan political analyst. His 44-year political career includes work at all levels ... from presidential and congressional to state executive and legislative races. From Maine to Montana, from Maryland to New Mexico, Davis has consulted business groups in half of the states in the country in the creation of political research and action organizations. He has conducted over 1,000 political briefings.

From 1986 – 2008, Davis served as President of NCFREE, a Raleigh-based organization that provided political research to business leaders throughout the state. As founding editor of NCFREE's Almanac of North Carolina Politics, Davis became recognized as one of the state's leading authorities on evaluating candidates and predicting the outcome of races.

Since 2008, Davis has continued to provide political investment research and analysis for individuals and organizations. He is the author of the John Davis Political Report, now in its 12th year of publication, and is a frequent speaker for corporations and professional associations.

A native of Graceville, Florida, Davis is a graduate of William Carey University in Hattiesburg, MS. He and his wife, Kathy, live in Raleigh. They have five grown children.

Mr. Henry M. Lancaster II

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Henry is the principal and manager of Lancaster, Craig & Associates, a lobbying, association management, and community relations firm in downtown Raleigh. He is a graduate of the Northeastern University School of Law in Boston, MA, and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

Henry's North Carolina legislative and policy experience include his having served in former Governor Jim Hunt's administration in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. He served as department legislative liaison, Assistant Secretary for Natural Resources, and Deputy Secretary. After leaving state government, Henry worked at the North Carolina League of Municipalities as their Director of Intergovernmental Relations.

LCA opened its doors in February of 2001. The firm's client base includes local governments, trade associations, non-profits, public universities, and private business concerns. He has served as a board member of the North Carolina Professional Lobbyists Association and Audubon NC. Henry is a former Chair for the North Carolina Arboretum Board of Directors and a former member of the Institute for the Environment/UNC Board of Visitors. He currently sits on the Board of Trustees of his alma mater, Lincoln University.

Mr. Dana E. Simpson

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Dana Simpson co-chairs the Government Relations practice at Smith Anderson and regularly represents clients before the North Carolina General Assembly and with State agencies.

Dana advises clients regarding legislative and regulatory advocacy, public relations, issues management, economic development initiatives, ethics, and campaign finance law compliance. Dana has been consistently rated one of the "Most Influential" lobbyists in the General Assembly by the nonpartisan North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research, including being rated the number one "Most Influential" for the 2011-2012 Legislative Session. Dana also provides corporate and regulatory counsel to businesses and professional associations.

Dana grew up in Asheboro and received both his undergraduate and law degrees from UNC-Chapel Hill. Before law school, Dana served as Special Assistant for Communications and Policy to the Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives. Dana has experience representing clients on rule-making and administrative law matters, having served as a member of the North Carolina Rules Review Commission from 2003-2006.

Ms. Laura Leslie

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Laura Leslie has served as Capitol Bureau Chief for WRAL-TV since 2011, where she covers state politics. Prior to that role, she was Capital Bureau Chief for North Carolina Public Radio from 2004 – 2011. She earned a BA from Stetson University in 1990 and graduated from Indiana University—Bloomington with an MA in English in 1995.

Mr. Ray Starling

General Counsel
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As general counsel of the NC Chamber and president of the NC Chamber Legal Institute, Ray sets strategy for litigation of the NC Chamber, the NC Chamber Legal Institute, and its affiliated entities. He also serves as the lead for public policy development functions of the NC Chamber, assessing and advising on current and emerging laws, rulings, and regulations affecting the NC Chamber and business in North Carolina. Ray manages the public policy staff and works with NC Chamber leadership to devise and implement appropriate strategies to advance the interests of North Carolina business in the N.C. General Assembly and regulatory bodies.

Prior to joining the NC Chamber team, Ray served as chief of staff to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, where he coordinated execution of the Secretary's policy agenda for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a \$140 billion agency with more than 100,000 employees. Ray focused on regulatory and deregulatory initiatives and acted as a point of contact for stakeholders throughout agriculture and rural communities.

Ray has a deep understanding of North Carolina's economy and proven experience building relationships that transcend politics. He previously served as the principal agriculture advisor to the President of the United States at the White House, served as chief of staff and chief counsel for U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis, after serving as general counsel when Tillis was Speaker of the House in the North Carolina legislature, and worked as general counsel for the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, interfacing daily with Commissioner Steve Troxler.

In private practice for several years, Ray has taught numerous agricultural and food law courses. He has a bachelor's degree in agricultural education from North Carolina State University and a law degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He grew up on a Century Family Farm in southeastern North Carolina and credits that experience as having more to do with his career path than any other influence or opportunity. His parents continue to farm, as does his eldest brother. Starling was a National FFA Officer and is a former 4-H member.

Ms. Deborah Ross

Counsel

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Deborah focuses her practice on meeting the economic development, energy, utilities, and infrastructure needs of businesses and government. She advises clients on the legal, regulatory and public policy landscape and works to achieve positive results. Deborah represents clients before government agencies and permitting officials as well as in appeals to state and federal courts.

Deborah brings a wealth of insight into both the public and private sectors from her prior experience as general counsel to the Research Triangle's regional transit authority; from a decade spent in private practice focusing on infrastructure, energy, and utilities; and from her leadership of a statewide nonprofit organization and her longstanding service to the state of North Carolina as an elected representative. She also taught for more than a decade as a Senior Lecturing Fellow at Duke University School of Law and worked as an ethics consultant for the Kenan Institute for Ethics at Duke.

Mr. James White

Principal Clerk

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James White began his career with the North Carolina House of Representatives in 2009. His journey to Principal Clerk of the House started as a House Intern and from that point progressed to increasingly complex roles within the administrative layers of the legislature—serving as House Legislative Assistant, House Committee Clerk, and then in 2012 accepting a position working within the House Principal Clerk's office as an Administrative/Voting Clerk. He is one of the youngest Principal Clerks in the nation and stays active within the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries. An Oregon native, James has spent the majority of his life living in North Carolina. He lives in Cary with his wife Julie and son Lucas, where the three enjoy the area's culinary adventures and active outdoor lifestyle.

Mr. Kevin Howell

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Kevin D. Howell is the vice chancellor for external affairs, partnerships, and economic development at North Carolina State University. Howell previously served as vice president for external affairs at the University of North Carolina System Office from 2016 until 2018, where he served as a senior advisor to the UNC System president on issues affecting the seventeen institutions. In addition, he oversaw units spanning state and federal government relations, economic and community engagement, military affairs, and advancement.

Earlier in his career, he served as assistant to the chancellor for external affairs at NC State from 2006 to 2016. In that role, he provided counsel on major state policy development issues impacting NC State's long-term vision, strategy, programs, and institutional structure, managed the university's legislative relations, and served as the legislative liaison to state and local government agencies and elected officials. Howell served as director for governmental affairs at the North Carolina Bar Association and as legislative liaison for two former governors. Howell was student body president at NC State, where he earned his bachelor's degree in political science. He earned his J.D. from UNC-Chapel Hill.

Kevin currently serves on the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce Board as Treasurer as well as on the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce Leadership Roundtable, N.C. State Centennial Authority, N.C. Symphony Board, Raleigh Convention and Performing Arts Centers Authority, Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau Blue Ribbon Task Force, Research Triangle Foundation Board of Directors, N.C. Professional Lobbyists Association Board of Directors, General Hugh Shelton Leadership Center Board, and UNC Law School Foundation Board.

Mr. Schumata Brown

LNC Class XXVI Alumnus

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Schumata Brown is currently town manager for Maysville NC. In this role, he organizes, manages, directs, and implements the goals and objectives of the Town Board of Commissioners. His responsibilities also include the day-to-day administration of a full range of municipal law enforcement; public works utilities, fiscal and other systems; staffing the organization; and providing budgetary direction and guidance.

Schumata previously served seven years as Mayor Pro-tem for Maysville before transitioning to the manager's role. Before becoming the Town Manager in 2016, Schumata worked at Hatteras Yachts for 20 years in New Bern, NC.

Schumata is a graduate of the NC Rural Economic Development Institute (REDI XIV) and a UNC School of Government Fellow graduate. He received an honorable discharge from the Army National Guard after six years of service. Schumata is a recent graduate of Leadership North Carolina Class XXVI (best class ever) and received the Stanley Frank Class Award.

Schumata is a native of Maysville and resides there with his wife, Lateashe. They are the proud parents of three sons.

The Honorable Gale Adcock

LNC Class XX Alumna

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Gale Adcock is Chief Health Officer at SAS Institute, a global leader in predictive analytics, a position she has held since 1994. She has been a nurse practitioner for 32 years.

Under Adcock's leadership the onsite SAS Health Care Center delivers free primary care to 14,000+ SAS employees and family members, saves the company approximately \$8 M annually in avoided insurance claims, and saves employees more than \$1 M in avoided co-pays and coinsurance.

Adcock is co-author of "Do-It-Yourself Employee Health Care" in *MIT Sloane Management Review* and studies on the effectiveness of the SAS health care model published in the *American Journal of Managed Care* and in *Inquiry*. Adcock was a featured speaker at the 2018 Employer Health Care Cost & Quality Congress in Washington, DC.

After serving seven years on the Cary Town Council (three years as mayor pro-tem), Adcock was elected to the NC House in 2014 and is now serving her third term. She is a member of the Commerce, Finance, Health, Regulatory Reform, and Rules committees. She co-chairs the Wake county legislative delegation, co-chairs the joint House/Senate municipal caucus, and is a steering committee member of the newly formed Early Childhood caucus.

She is a graduate of Leadership North Carolina Class XX and recipient of the LNC Stanley Frank Class Award.

Mr. Steve Biggs

LNC Class XXVI Alumnus

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Steve Biggs is the Executive Director of Economic Development for Bertie County, NC. He has held this position since July of 2001. Steve has served on the Edenton Town Council for the past twenty-four years. He is a graduate of Perquimans County High School and attended College of the Albemarle.

He is also a 2011 graduate of NC Rural Economic Development Institute and 2019 graduate of Leadership North Carolina. Steve received The Order of the Long Leaf Pine from Governor Jim Hunt in August of 1980 at the age of 21.

Steve is married to Susan Biggs, who retired after 34 years with the Chowan County School System. He has two grown sons, Josh and Johnson; a daughter-in-law, Elizabeth; and two perfect granddaughters, Skylar and Sadee.

Mr. Doug Bean

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Doug Bean is director of government services for Raftelis Financial Consultants, Inc., a utilities financial management and consulting firm with offices in Charlotte, NC. He is also an adjunct instructor at the University of North Carolina School of Government. Prior to joining Raftelis, he was director of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities Department for sixteen years. He served as city manager for the City of Asheville from 1986 to 1994, city manager for the City of Morganton from 1978 to 1986, and assistant city manager for the City of Morganton from 1976 to 1978. He received the 2004 Distinguished Practitioner Award from the Southeastern Conference on Public Administration and National Achievement Awards from both the American Water Works Association Management Division and the National Association of Counties. Bean holds a BA in history from Lenoir-Rhyne College and an MPA from UNC-Chapel Hill.

Ms. Lydian Altman

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Lydian Altman works with and across various public sector organizations to diagnose, design, develop, and deliver leadership programs and services for public officials through the School's Center for Public Leadership and Governance. Since she joined the School in 1999, her work has included consulting with elected and appointed leaders to create strategic plans, teaching leadership topics, and facilitating retreats for governmental and nonprofit organizations and cross-sector community groups to help them plan and work together to solve public problems. Many of her project-generated articles have been published in ICMA's IQ Report and PM Magazine, the American Review of Public Administration, Popular Government, and PA Times. Altman holds a BS in industrial relations and an MPA from UNC-Chapel Hill.

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