



Mechanical Engineering  
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

## **Lee Leffingwell, BSME**

*Distinguished Mechanical Engineer, 2009*

BSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1961

*Mayor (Retired 2015)*  
City of Austin

A native Austinite, Lee Leffingwell graduated from Travis High School. His parents were both native Texans and public servants in Austin. His mother worked for The University of Texas Admissions Department and his father was a Deputy Sheriff for Travis County.

After graduating from The University of Texas at Austin with a degree in mechanical engineering in 1961, Lee served on active duty in the United States Navy as an officer and a pilot in the Vietnam War. After five years of active duty, he continued to serve as a pilot in the U.S. Navy Reserves, retiring at the rank of Commander with 20 years total active and reserve service.

He was employed with Delta Air Lines for almost 32 years as a pilot and flew as captain on domestic and international routes on several aircraft, including the Boeing 767 and MD-11. He also served as a proficiency and line check pilot and as a manager in the Flight Training Department for several years.

After retiring from Delta, Lee was appointed to the City of Austin's Environmental Board, serving as board chair for several years. He was elected to the Austin City Council in 2005 and re-elected in 2008, and served in Place 1 until 2009.

When Lee was elected Mayor of Austin in 2009 and re-elected in 2012, the nation was facing a major economic recession. He made it his mission to pilot

the city through economic and financial turbulence by focusing on the fundamentals. He helped make Austin's economy one of the strongest in the nation by focusing on targeted business recruitment and job creation.

He championed many regional transportation and infrastructure projects. He was a strong advocate for the City's veterans' programs, for which the City of Austin received the Freedom Award from the U.S. Department of Defense. He also established the Commission for Seniors to address issues associated with aging populations.

Lee was the recipient of many awards during and after his public service. For the year 2014, The Austin Chamber of Commerce named him the Austinite of the Year, the Greater Austin Asian Chamber of Commerce named him Outstanding Community Leader, the Real Estate Council of Austin gave him the annual Community Service Award, and he received the State of Texas Veterans Commission Leadership Award.

In 2015, he received the Polly Scallorn Community Trustee Award from Leadership Austin, and in 2017, he received the Lady Bird Johnson Humanitarian Award from the central Texas chapter of the American Red Cross.

Lee is married to Julie, a registered nurse, and has two grown children and five grandchildren.