

The Barbara Lee Congressional Archive

Providing Community Access to Power and Opportunity



A steadfast advocate for social justice, empowerment, and accountability, Congresswoman Barbara Lee served with distinction in Congress for 27 years before being elected as the first Black woman to serve as Mayor in Oakland, California, in a historic 2025 Special Election. Her career is marked by her shattering a number of glass ceilings as the first Black woman in Northern California to serve as State Assemblymember, Senator, and Congressional representative. Her unwavering dedication to progressive values, equity, and principled leadership and her willingness to stand alone on critical issues have solidified her reputation as a courageous and compassionate public servant.

Now, Congresswoman Lee has entrusted her congressional papers to Northeastern University Oakland, home to Mills College, the Mills Institute, and the Barbara Lee Distinguished Professorship, where they will form a permanent archive for research, education, and public access. **We seek philanthropic gifts totaling \$1 million to curate and digitize this inspirational collection so that all may be able to access it.**



Preserving a Legacy of Courage and Conviction

The Barbara Lee Congressional Archive represents more than just historical documents—it embodies a quarter-century of unwavering advocacy at pivotal moments in our nation’s history. For example:

- As the sole dissenting vote against unlimited war powers after 9/11, Lee’s papers reveal the inner workings of one of the most consequential and courageous stands in modern congressional history.
- During the global HIV/AIDS crisis, her groundbreaking work on the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund saved millions of lives worldwide and transformed America’s approach to global health.
- Through economic recessions, social upheaval, and political polarization, her consistent advocacy for racial justice, economic equality, and human rights offers invaluable insights into how progressive leadership operates in challenging times.

By supporting the establishment of the Barbara Lee Congressional Archive, you’re not merely preserving documents—you’re safeguarding a blueprint for principled leadership that future generations desperately need. In an era of political cynicism, Congresswoman Lee’s papers demonstrate how one determined voice can change the course of legislation, policy, and lives.

A Champion for Justice

Born in 1946 in El Paso, Texas, Barbara Lee moved to California in 1960. She raised two sons as a single mother on public assistance while earning a bachelor’s degree from Mills College and a master’s in social welfare from UC Berkeley. Her early political involvement included working on Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm’s 1972 presidential

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campaign and serving as chief of staff to Congressman Ron Dellums. Later, Lee served in the California State Assembly and State Senate—the first Black woman from Northern California to do so—where she authored California’s first Violence Against Women Act and the Schools Hate Crimes Reduction Act. In 1998, she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, representing California’s 12th District until 2025. She held prominent positions including Chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, and Co-Chair of the House Democratic Steering Committee, and she co-founded the Congressional Equality Caucus.

Elected Mayor of the city of Oakland in a historic 2025 Special Election, Lee was elected outright with a majority of votes in a field of 10 candidates, garnering a broad-based coalition of supporters from every neighborhood. Mayor Lee has vowed to put her state and national experience to work toward tackling issues such as economic development, public safety, and homelessness.

Mayor Lee strongly believes that “as one climbs, one must also lift.” She founded the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Center with former Oakland Mayor Elihu Harris to engage young people in civic affairs. And in 2024, she championed the campaign of Mills alumna Lateefah Simon—a student when Lee taught at Mills—who became the second Black woman to be elected to California’s 12th Congressional District. Mayor Lee continues to mentor and include young people in all aspects of public policy and community engagement in her efforts to prepare tomorrow’s leaders.

Your Partnership and Impact

Northeastern is home to other complementary collections. The Boston campus archive preserves the history of Boston’s social movements, including civil and political rights, homelessness, and urban and environmental justice. And the Oakland campus collections include women’s history and an archive documenting Mills College history.

With your contribution toward our \$1 million goal to help establish the Barbara Lee Congressional Archive, we will:

- **Professionally preserve and catalog** over 27 years of her papers, correspondence, legislation, and media—creating a comprehensive resource for understanding some of the most contentious and consequential policy debates in recent American history.
- Digitize these vital materials and **create innovative access tools**, ensuring students of all ages, community members, researchers, activists, and policymakers worldwide can examine firsthand how progressive advocacy works within the legislative process.
- **Develop educational programs** that use these materials to inspire the next generation of civic leaders who will confront today and tomorrow’s most pressing challenges.

Your investment will ensure that this collection stands as a living testament to how grassroots organizing and principled leadership can transform national policy. From a single mother on public assistance to one of Congress’s most respected moral voices, Barbara Lee’s journey provides an irreplaceable roadmap for future changemakers.

Join us in ensuring this remarkable legacy becomes a catalyst for the next chapter of American progress. **To learn more or make a gift, please contact Kristin Barrali, Director of Major Gifts, at k.barrali@northeastern.edu.**



“As a graduate of Mills College, I was continuously inspired by the activism and sharp social justice lens of my professors and peers there. I can think of no better home for my congressional papers than this place, which truly values accessibility to all and the collective power of the people.”
—Barbara Lee