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## **Lester Maddox Biography**

### **Maddox, Lester, 1915-2003**

#### **Biography:**

"Born in Atlanta, Georgia, on September 30, 1915. He was educated in Atlanta public schools but dropped out of high school to pursue odd jobs. Maddox engaged in industrial manufacturing management; and he was owner and operator of restaurant, grocery, and furniture stores. In 1944, Maddox opened a short-order grill in Atlanta that was sold a year later for profit. He continued to hold odd jobs in groceries and real estate until 1947 when he once again opened a restaurant, the Pickrick. This cafeteria-style establishment fared so well that it would expand 9 times within the next 15 years. The restaurant also served as a launching pad for Maddox's political career. Beginning in 1949, its weekly newspaper advertisements entitled "Pickrick Says" provided Maddox with an outlet for his political beliefs. These advertisements became more political after the 1954 school desegregation decision, putting Maddox in the public eye. Maddox's outspoken response to integration continued to be a catalyst for his political career, as evidenced by his 1957 campaign for mayor of Atlanta. Running as an independent, anti-integrationist candidate, Maddox was defeated. Four years later, in 1961, he once again lost his bid for the mayor's office. Maddox faced his third defeat in 1962, after running for lieutenant governor. Although it was not successful, the campaign made him a well known figure in Georgia. He achieved national notoriety in 1964 when he drove African-Americans from his restaurant in defiance of federal civil-rights legislation and then closed the establishment rather than desegregate it. In October 1965, he announced that he would seek the Democratic nomination for governor. Maddox ran a grassroots campaign with a platform based on segregation and federal encroachment on state and individual rights. This proved effective, for Maddox came in second to Ellis Arnall in the Democratic primary and defeated Arnall in the runoff. In the General Election, the Republican, Howard "Bo" Callaway received more votes but fell short of the majority due to a write in campaign for Arnall. The election was, therefore, sent to the General Assembly which elected Maddox on the first ballot. The new governor was sworn in on January 10, 1967. During his tenure, Maddox increased funding for the university system as well as state teachers' salaries. He attempted to raise money for state education, welfare and mental health with a one cent sales tax, but could not push it through the state legislature. In 1970, Maddox succeeded in passing funding for the women's prison as well as a work release center. While Maddox appointed many blacks during his term, none were given positions of great power or responsibility. He continued to be an outspoken opponent of school desegregation as well as busing. Eventually, he encouraged private segregated schools and favored freedom of choice in schools rather than strict segregation. Maddox also urged full victory in Vietnam and warned Georgians of ever-present communist and socialist influences.

Since the Georgia Constitution barred him from consecutive terms, Maddox was unable to succeed himself. He attempted to have the law overturned but was unsuccessful. Maddox ran for lieutenant governor and won in 1970, making him the first former governor to become lieutenant governor. His term was filled with conflict between himself and Governor Jimmy Carter. In 1974, he attempted to regain the office of governor but lost to George Busbee. Maddox did not fade out of political life, however, and in 1976 the former governor ran for president as the American Independent Party candidate. His campaign was seen by many as an act of revenge aimed at his political rival, Jimmy Carter. He lost that election as well, receiving only 170,000 votes. After this campaign, Maddox remained out of politics until 1990, when he made his last attempt at political office. On January 25, he made a formal announcement from the state capitol that he would once again run for governor of Georgia. Maddox ran a small, grass-roots campaign and lost the election. Governor Maddox passed away on June 25, 2003."--National Governors Association, WWW site, retrieved February 13, 2008.