

PA PAC Questionnaire for N. C. General Assembly Candidates - 2018

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Why You Are Running

1. Of all the issues confronting the State of North Carolina which single issue is most important to you and why? What would you do about it if you are elected?

The rural-urban divide is the most significant issue facing our state now. The shifting of people and resources plays out in a wide range of issues—economics, education, healthcare, and infrastructure, to name a few—and had led to a series of policy decisions and a backlash of legislation that clumsily aims to address the divide. It is also driving much of our partisan politics.

District 22, even in its new configuration, is the most diverse in the Senate. It is the fulcrum of this issue.

Addressing the myriad issues that are affected by the rural-urban divide is complicated will take a long time, with no panacea.

What I have done—and will continue to do—is make myself knowledgeable about a full range of issues, travel throughout the district, and meet with as wide a range of residents as possible.

I have worked against legislation that penalizes our urban communities in an ill-informed and ill-conceived effort to assist rural communities. One prime example of this kind of legislation is repeated efforts to redistribute sales tax and other revenues.

In my work at the General Assembly, I have actively worked with colleagues from rural communities to find common ground, particularly on economic, agricultural, and environmental issues.

My goal in the upcoming legislative term is to continue this work.

Politics and Voting Rights

2. Do you support or oppose placing state legislative and U. S. Congressional redistricting in the hands of a non-partisan commission?

Support. I am the sponsor of Senate Bill 209, which outlines how North Carolina establishes a nonpartisan redistricting commission.

The Environment

3. Should state agencies charged with the management and protection of our environment have the authority to make standards and rules which exceed federal standards?

Yes.

4. Has the state created laws and regulations adequate to protect North Carolinians from the potential harmful impacts of fracking?

No; not even close.

The 2014 lifting of the moratorium on fracking put NC's drinking water at risk by setting the Safe Water Drinking Act, which is now 44 years old, as the ceiling for protection, not the floor. Additionally, the legislation included many loopholes and created a number of specific new rules.

One of those rules makes it a crime to disclose the chemical used in fracking fluid. It also established forced pooling, taking away the property rights of neighbors who live near a well, and allowed fracking wastewater to be stored in pits.

The legislation did not address:

- air pollution from fracking operations;
- certain destruction seismic activity; and
- community costs of transforming rural towns into industrial zones, especially infrastructure costs.

5. What tools would you support in the clean up of GenX, coal ash, and other pollutants in the state's streams, lakes, estuaries and sounds, and water supplies?

All these environmental issues must be considered in the context of significant cuts to the Department of Environmental Quality's budget and staffing over the past seven years. For example, 70 positions in Water Resources have been cut, a 40 percent reduction, and \$1.8 million was cut from the 2017-18 budget.

The first step in addressing any of these environmental issues is restoring significant portions of DEQ's budget and staffing.

GenX

The next step in cleaning up the GenX spills is to pass the House's version of House Bill 189. This bill, which passed the House unanimously in January, provides adequate funding to DEQ for the equipment and staffing needed to begin research and mitigation efforts. (The Senate substitute for this bill gutted these efforts and redirected \$2 million to the UNC Policy Collaboratory, a research function with a dubious partisan beginning.)

While H189 is an adequate start, it is just the next step in an iterative process. Moving forward, the General Assembly should rely on the first-rate scientists and medical professionals already employed in DEQ and DHHS, and we should provide them the resources they need to get their jobs done.

Further, the General Assembly should support the efforts of the Wilmington City Council, the New Hanover County Commissioners, and the Cape Fear Public Utility Authority to require that DEQ cease Chemours' production of fluorochemical compounds.

Coal Ash

Since the Eden coal ash spill affected the Dan River, which runs through District 22, I began working on this issue less than 24 hours after the spill. I was the first legislator to tour the spill site and was the author of Senate Bill 856, the most comprehensive clean-up bill that has been submitted. While this bill did not pass, it had a clear influence on S729, the final clean-up bill that did pass.

While I ultimately supported S729 after negotiating some changes, it is clear that four years later it was not an adequate solution. Just this week, federally-mandated tests have confirmed higher levels of arsenic and other hazardous chemicals in the ground water near four Duke Energy plants. Further, recent and upcoming rulings from the Utilities Commission will transfer some portion of the cost of clean up to rate payers.

Given this, I support some of the standards outlined in my original bill:

- Require Duke Energy to close and move all of its 33 coal-ash ponds to lined and dry storage away from water sources.
- Direct Duke to pay for the cost of cleanup at all of its plants, and not pass that cost along to ratepayers.
- Establish standards for closing the ponds, including monitoring them.
- Establish standards for new utility-owned lined landfills.
- Repeal a provision in a 2103 regulatory bill that allowed companies to have contaminated groundwater up to their property line however large that might be, setting the testing boundary at 500 feet.
- Restore funding to DEQ at a level allowing adequate monitoring of coal ash sites.

- Increase efforts to study the safety of using coal ash in fill dirt in construction sites, road beds, agricultural fields, and other manufactured products.

Educating Our Children

6. What measures, if any, do you believe are necessary to improve public education in North Carolina?

Strengthen Pre-K Capacity

- Do more to attract and retain high quality early childhood educators.
- Expand Pre-K slots for low-income families.

Undertake School Finance Reform

- This has begun with the establishment of the Joint Legislative Task Force on Education Finance Reform.
- Address the chronic and growing gap in funding between higher-wealth and lower-wealth counties. For example, in District 22, total local spending per student in Durham County is \$3147. In Granville, it is \$1406. In Person, it is \$1330. Right next door in Caswell County, it is \$936. Just south in Orange County, it is \$4832. Where do you think teachers and administrators will work...even if they live in another county?
- Provide funding options for capital construction needs.

Improve Educator Compensation

- Improve the new principal pay plan.
- Expand principal preparation programs. LEAs require 300 new principals each year; however, we only fund the program for 120.
- Restore retiree health benefits for educators—and all state employees.

Fix the A-F School Grading System

- Change the formula from 80 percent based on the school's achievement score to 50 percent achievement score and 50 percent growth in student achievement.
- Use the system to provide curricular and professional supports for D and F schools.

Enhance Racial Equity Efforts

- Diversify the teacher workforce.
 - o While the Teaching Fellows Program was reinstated, it was not placed in a single HBCU.
 - o Work to attract more Hispanic and Asian teachers.
- Implement statewide universal screening for academically gifted programs.
- Establish more equitable student discipline practices.

Healthcare

7. Are you satisfied with the current system of providing healthcare to North Carolina residents? Explain. If you are not satisfied, what changes would you make?

No.

Expand Medicaid: Expansion of Medicaid will cover nearly 14,000 residents in District 22. It will bring 5400 new jobs and \$1.1 billion in new economic impact. It's not only the right thing to do, but it will have a huge economic impact on the region.

Review Scope of Practice for Medical Professionals: The General Assembly and Administration should continue to carefully study expanding the scope of practice for various medical professionals: nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, technicians. The dearth of medical specialists in many rural counties could be mitigated by allowing this expansion of care.

Restructuring Graduate Medical Education: I currently serve on a legislative task force that is studying how we might restructure graduate medical education in our state medical schools (and maybe private medical schools) in an effort to train more diverse professionals and establish them in a wider range of communities.

State Revenues

8. Is the current system of state and local taxes and fees fair and adequate to meet the needs of North Carolina residents? What changes should be made, if any? Please cite specific examples.

There is little evidence that the trickle-down policies enacted by the General Assembly over the last seven years are sustainable and will result in long-term benefit. In fact, they will achieve the extremist goal of "starving the beast."

Rather than enacting tax policies that favor those who are already wealthy, we should enact policies that:

- Finance small businesses, especially in rural and low-wealth urban communities. Providing funding for targeted loan funds and community development funds will reach small business owners.
- Build infrastructure in underserved communities. Beyond just roads, we should invest in water/sewer, broadband, and clean energy utilities that attract businesses and residents who can revitalize communities.
 - o Additionally, innovative agricultural endeavors will be a boon to rural communities.
- Provide economic opportunities for people of color, women, and immigrants. Removing barriers to higher earnings for those underrepresented in business will reap important returns on investment. These opportunities could include increased access to capital, increased affordability of skills training, and reduced discrimination.
- Increased educational attainment.

9. State and local governments provide substantial economic incentives for corporations to relocate to North Carolina or to expand their operations in the state. What is your position on the use of economic incentives for private business?

As both a City Council member and a Senator, I have supported economic incentive for businesses. During my seven years on the City Council, we used those incentive wisely. My criteria then and now for incentives are:

- They must be consistent with development plans and with other stated goals.
- They are a good deal for taxpayers.
- The government can vet the company's financials to determine if the incentives are needed to secure the deal.
- There will be no payments until project is completed and paying taxes.
- There are quantifiable financial and job creation criteria that must be met before payments are made.

There are strong clawback provisions in place if the criteria are not met.

Civil Rights

10. Would you support legislation designed to protect gay, lesbian, and transgender people from discrimination in housing, employment, public accommodation, and access to government benefits and services?

Yes.

Crime, Law Enforcement, Courts and Racial Justice

11. What, if anything, should be done about gun violence and the proliferation of guns in North Carolina?

- Permit to Purchase, requiring people to obtain a permit, contingent on passing a background check. States that have implemented PTP for handguns have seen drops in homicide and suicide rates ranging from 14 to 40 percent, with little "substitution effect," meaning criminals didn't switch to other weapons when they failed to obtain handguns.
- Denying guns to perpetrators of domestic violence.
- Repeal of the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. This 2005 law gave broad immunity to gun manufacturers and dealers from liability litigation. In other industries, the threat of litigation has produced incentives for manufacturers to improve product safety. Lawsuits that targeted gun shows and wholesalers engaged in facilitating illegal straw purchases, resulting in substantial reductions of illegal weapons where the lawsuits were filed.

12. Should state and local government law enforcement agencies have the discretion to decide the extent to which they cooperate with U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement with regard to detainees and programs such as Secure Communities and the 287(g) program?

Yes.

13. Do you support or oppose the recent statutory changes that discourage North Carolina judges from waiving court fines and fees for indigent defendants? Why or why not?

No. This change has made the process of waiving court fees so burdensome that few judges will fines and fees.

The suggestion by proponents that these fees are needed to fund our schools and courts is disingenuous. The General Assembly should be funding these vital functions of government without relying on such fees.

14. At times, both political parties have suggested moving from the election of judges to some form of “merit selection”. What do you believe is the best way to select independent and qualified judges?

Frankly, I doubt that North Carolina voters will ever support relinquishing their ability to elect judges. It has become part of our public DNA.

In theory, merit selection is the best way to select qualified judges. However, I have yet to see a selection system proposed that is truly based on merit. And rushing any proposal through the General Assembly in the manner we have seen this year does not give me any comfort. Absent such a system and much more consideration, the system of electing judges is the best we have.

Yes or No

15. Please answer the following questions by circling (or underlining) YES or NO. You may explain or qualify your answer to any question, but *please use no more than 40 words*.

a. Should North Carolina voters have to present some sort of identification in order to vote?

YES or **NO**

b. Do you support increased state funding for a crisis pregnancy center?

YES or **NO**

c. Should North Carolina have a paid sick leave law?

YES or NO

d. Should cities and counties have the authority to use inclusionary zoning to promote affordable housing?

YES or NO

e. Should cities and counties have the authority to control rents to promote affordable housing?

YES or NO

f. Do you support or oppose requiring a supermajority city council vote in re-zoning cases when qualified neighbors file a protest petition?

YES or NO

g. Should polluters be exempt from fines and civil penalties imposed by the state?

YES or NO

h. Should magistrates or other government officials be excused from performing their lawful duties because of their religious beliefs?

YES or NO

i. Should the death penalty in North Carolina be abolished?

YES or NO

I support the death penalty for horrific crimes with undeniable evidence. Given that this is the ultimate penalty, we must ensure that we never execute an innocent person. Further, we must ensure that race, economic status, and mental incapacity do not play a role in the prosecution of death penalty cases or the seating of juries in these cases. I support the reinstatement of the Criminal Justice Act and would make that a top priority when a new majority or a more balanced partisan split is in place. Until then, I favor an actual or de facto moratorium.

j. Do you support the Jordan Lake and Falls Lake rules?

YES or NO

Concerning You

16. Have you ever been convicted of any criminal offence other than a minor traffic offense? Have you ever been charged with a felony (without regard to the disposition of the charge)? If the answer to either of these questions is yes, please describe the charge or charges, the circumstances, and the outcome.

No.

17. For whom did you vote in the 2012 and 2016 general presidential elections?

2012: President Obama

2016: Secretary Clinton

Biographical Statement

Mike Woodard is the North Carolina State Senator representing District 22: Caswell, Durham, and Person counties. He is the 2018 Democratic Party nominee for the reconfigured District 22: Durham, Granville, and Person counties.

Senator Woodard serves as Deputy Democratic Whip and his committee assignments include Agriculture/Environment, Education, Health Care, State and Local Government, and Transportation. He also serves on the Legislative Ethics Committee and the Elections Oversight Committee.

He is an active member of the Agricultural/Rural Caucus, the Life Sciences Caucus, and the Motorsports Caucus.

In 2017, Senator Woodard was named "Senator of the Year" by the League of Conservation Voters and "Legislator of the Year" by the Association of Teachers' Assistants and by Toxic Free NC. In 2015, Senator Woodard was named "Legislator of the Year" by Equality North Carolina. In 2014, he received the "Rising Star Award" from the League of Conservation Voters.

In 2018, Senator Woodard was chosen a Fellow of the NC Institute of Medicine and as State Lead for the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators.

Before joining the General Assembly in 2013, Senator Woodard served on the Durham City Council for seven years.

In his professional life, Senator Woodard is a long-time administrator with Duke University and the Duke Health System. Currently, he works in the Financial Services division on the management of Duke's computer-based financial system.

A native of Wilson, NC, he graduated from Duke with degrees in economics, political science, and non-profit management.

Senator Woodard has been active in community affairs for more than 25 years. He is currently serving as President of the Durham Arts Council. Senator Woodard served as State President of the North Carolina Jaycees and President of the Durham Jaycees. In addition, he has held leadership roles with St. Philip's Episcopal Church, the Durham Rotary Club, the Dispute Settlement Center, the Durham Inter-Neighborhood Council, the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce, and Triangle United Way.

Other awards and honors Senator Woodard has received include: the 2012 City of Durham Human Rights Award, presented to an elected official who has supported and promoted human rights causes and issues; the 2011 Goodman Award for Regional Leadership by a Public Official; and in 2009 being named one of the first recipients of the Reliable Ally Award presented by the Southern Anti-Racism Network. In 1998, he was recognized as one of the Five Outstanding Young North Carolinians.

He is married to the Reverend Sarah Woodard, a human resources officer for Duke Medicine, an ordained minister serving St. Titus' Episcopal Church and as Episcopal Chaplain for Duke Hospital, and President-Elect of the Sir Walter Cabinet. In 1997 they were named the Durham Jaycees' Family of the Year.