

# PA PAC Questionnaire for Congress - 2018

Please return this completed form along with your resume or a brief biographical statement describing your education, work history, community service, and prior political experience as soon as possible, but by **March 9**, at the latest.

You may e-mail your responses to Tom Miller at [tom-miller1@nc.rr.com](mailto:tom-miller1@nc.rr.com) or you may send a printed copy of your responses to Durham PA-PAC c/o Tom Miller, 1110 Virginia Avenue, Durham, NC 27705

Please note that following the March 9 deadline, the Durham People's Alliance PAC may publish your responses to this questionnaire and your resume.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and your willingness to serve the people of Durham.

Candidate's name: Michelle Laws District 4

Address: 7406 Farrington Road, Chapel Hill NC 27517 (Durham County resident)

E-mail Address:  
init2gether2018@gmail.com

Phone: (919) 475-6388

*When responding to this questionnaire, type your answers in italics, bold, or a different font to distinguish your answers from the questions. Please do not use colors. You may explain your answer to every question, but please be concise. If possible, limit your answer to each question to no more than 350 words. If you use words or ideas from another person, please attribute your source.*

## **Why You Are Running**

1. What are the three most important issues facing North Carolina and the nation? What are your top priorities in addressing those issues?

*I believe that the three most important issues facing North Carolina and the nation are:*

*(1) the devastating effects of unprecedented and widening wealth inequality that is impeding opportunities for upward social mobility for the poor and middle classes and a driving factor for disparate outcomes in health, education, housing, and criminal justice experiences and social outcomes; (2) the attacks against and ostracizing of people of color and immigrants that are eating away at the core values on which our nation stands— "one nation, under God indivisible with liberty and justice for all" including efforts to block these groups from having access to the ballot and (3) disturbing disparities in educational achievement and educational opportunities.*

*My top priorities in addressing these issues are: (1) working with other members of Congress and members of the NC General Assembly to create and advance an economic stimulus and jobs creation bill with that will raise the minimum wage to \$15/hr.; work with NGOs to develop a state block-grant program that will focus on eradicating poverty and homelessness; provide funding for community colleges and employment training agencies for vocational and trade jobs training including electricians, plumbers, construction, automotive mechanics, among a few; increase opportunities for summer youth jobs programs especially in low-wealth communities; and push back against efforts to repeal Dodd-Frank and support revisions to strengthen its enforcement. (2) fight hard to gain permanent status for DACA and work to create a human immigration reform bill; (3) advocate for educational reform that leaves no child behind regardless of SES, race or geography and includes higher education opportunities for reskilling of workers who are no longer in demand fields, and also that creates pathways for good careers for youth who are not interested or unable to attend four year college or university..*

## **The Economy and Federal Spending**

2. What do you see as the primary sources of our current economic problems? What measures should Congress use to address them? What are some of the possible negative consequences of your proposed solutions?

*The primary sources of our current economic problems are: widening wealth inequality and wage stagnation; poorly regulated business (Wall Street) and banking industries; vicious effects of poverty that when combined with encumbered opportunities for social mobility due to low educational achievement, low wages, limited social network, etc. can be persistent and effect multiple generations; chronic un and under-employment of people across the educational achievement level spectrum—educational achievement not rendering a return on the investment; college students' upward mobility opportunity crushed under the heavy burden of exorbitant student loan debts; and lack of investment in non-professional job creation in the US; and a mismatch in skills development and training (education) and skills needed in labor market that is impeding opportunities for upward social mobility for the poor and middle classes.*

*To address these issues Congress should work to create and pass a comprehensive economic stimulus bill that is solely for stimulating economic growth for the middle and lower SES groups-- for "Main Street" and not Wall Street. The bill would include a jobs and educational reform component. The problem I believe in the past has been that jobs, education, and economic issues have been worked on in silos and not as entities that intersect.*

*Some of the possible negative consequences of my proposed solutions are stock market disruption; fierce push back from financial players in our market and government who act out self-interests and avaricious and not in the best interest; the realization that some existing*

*federal and state social and education programs will need to be eliminated (e.g. programs that have been evaluated and not proven effective) in order to support reform.*

3. Are you in favor of reducing government spending in any specific areas? If so, please list your top three specific areas and explain your reasons. Are you in favor of increasing government spending in any specific areas? If so, please list your top three specific areas and explain your reasons.

***I am in favor of reducing government spending in the following areas: (1) by cutting out federal programs and agencies that are deemed as duplication or waste; (2) reducing Defense budget, especially in areas related to supporting and contributing to warfare; and (3) eliminate the life-time benefits paid to members of Congress and other governmental officials.***

***I am in favoring of increasing government spending in education and health and human services. Aside from being humane and just, these are critical areas that directly affect the advancement of our country. When you have a citizenry that is under- or uneducated, sick, poor and low skilled—the ability to remain competitive in the global market is at risk. I am in favor of increasing government funding for mental health services and programs and substance abuse. I am also an advocate for and believe additional funding is needed to support affordable and safe housing programs; no person should be sleeping on our streets, under bridges, in woods, etc. unless by choice.***

4. What changes, if any, do you support with safety net programs (Social Security, Affordable Care Act, Medicare, Medicaid, Veterans programs, etc.)?

***The only change I propose is greater assessment and evaluation of all federally funded and supported social welfare and health programs. However, I firmly believe that these programs have been and are a vital safety net unless proven ineffective (not based on a cost alone but human effects) then I would certainly consider exploring a better way to deliver the same type of services but not to eliminate these programs.***

5. Are you concerned about the affordability of a college education in the U.S.? If so, what role can the federal government play in addressing your concerns?

***As a person who was a first generation college graduate, who grew up in public housing and yet because of college financial aid (including student loans unfortunately), I strongly believe that we MUST eliminate the student debt load that is crushing the future dreams and aspirations of the millennial generation.***

***The federal government can play a critical role by setting federal limits to what lending agencies can require on repayment; establishing more programs that will allow debt-forgiveness for persons who work for public and nonprofit organizations and; fully reinstating the Pell grants for students from low-income families or who themselves are earning at or below the median income level.***

6. Do you support an increase to national minimum wage? What additional measures would you support, if any, to address income inequality in the U.S.?

***Yes I support an increase the minimum wage.***

7. What is your position concerning the future of the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau?

***First, fire Mick Mulvaney. I support the original intent, as defined by Dodd-Frank, however I do believe that the Bureau, especially after Elizabeth Warren's departure needs a revisioning and refocusing back to its original intent: regulating non-banks, including payday lenders, providers of private student loans, debt collectors and mortgage servicers.***

### **The Congress**

8. Public approval of Congress is at an historic low. In what ways has your party contributed to this problem? What measures or reforms, procedural or otherwise, do you believe would promote a more functional legislative branch?

***Although it is not a caste system, I was born into the Democratic Party. I have worked hard to protect and promote the ideals and values of the Democratic Party. However, over the past several years I have grown disheartened at the state of the Democratic party and its failure to truly reflect a "big tent" We have contributed to Congress' low approval rating by not ensuring that we have not left anyone behind and that we have stood strong and courageous against efforts to move our nation backwards to a divided and hate-filled nation. Term limits and campaign finance reform are the two reform measures I will advocate for.***

### **Foreign Policy, Immigration, and Refugees**

9. What are the top priorities for U.S. foreign policy?

***Increasing our DIPLOMATIC not defense presence and working with nations that we have engaged in war to build a stronger and better nation than what existed before we either waged war against them or contributed to the escalation of war against them. Working with the UNC Council on Women and other organizations enact policies (with teeth) to protect women and girls and poor children around the globe.***

10. How would you reform U.S. immigration policy? Since agreement on immigration reform has proved difficult to obtain, what measures should be taken in the meantime that would improve the lives of undocumented immigrants? Is the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency performing as it should?

***First, I think whatever immigration reform policy that is put on the table and advanced must have equitable representation of immigrants who will be affected at the table leading the discussion. Frontal assaults against my immigrant brothers and sisters have pushed many immigrants into the shadows hiding in fear of deportation of themselves or family members and or unjust and inhumane treatment by law enforcement agencies. We must make EVERY community a sanctuary and provide protection to immigrants regardless of legal status until reform is created. And, when and where there are violent offenders as President Trump's administration asserts then by all means use existing laws to deal with them but do not use ICE as a way to terrorize and torment our community members. NO ICE is acting more a terrorist police organization.***

11. What if any effect should person's country of national origin have on their ability to enter and remain in the United States.

***None. That would be antithetical to the core founding principles of our great nation.***

### **Public Security and Criminal Justice**

12. What measures, if any, do you support for reducing the number of incarcerated Americans? ***Working on creating and advancing an economic stimulus and jobs creation bill as aforementioned that will provide opportunities for ex-offenders reentering into communities from incarceration with employment that pays a living wage thereby minimizing the risk of recidivism into prisons. Stop the criminalization of mental illness and substance addiction and thereby reduce the number of persons entering into our jails and prisons for criminal offenses committed as a result of addiction and mental illness. Eliminating the school to prison pipeline that is entrapping far too many poor youth and youth of color. Increase affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization efforts that often become breeding grounds for criminal activities. Eliminating private owned and operated prisons and return control of our prisons to states with reform measures to ensure that we are rehabilitating and not merely punishing. No repeated jail time for persons who fail to pay child support which encumbers negligent parents opportunities to work and earn money that in turn provides the means to support their child (ren). And, stopping the incarceration of nonviolent marijuana users.***

13. What action, if any, should the federal government take to decrease gun violence in the U.S.? Would you support a federal ban on assault rifles?

***First, yes absolutely support a federal ban on assault rifles.***

***As someone whose family has been directly impacted by gun violence by the murder-suicide of my sister, I am and have been for a long time in favor of stricter and sensible gun laws. I do think that there should be a holistic approach to decreasing gun violence including expanding background checks to include domestic violence and reports of threats of gun use, mishandling of guns even violations of hunting permits; increased mental health services; and training for teachers, parents and public to better be able to identify risk factors of persons who are hostile, violent and mentally and emotionally unstable, and associated with or propagators of hate actions targeted towards groups or individuals. I also support Marcia Morey's bill to issue gun violence restraining orders.***

### **Elections, Civil Rights, and the Supreme Court**

14. What are your concerns, if any, with the state of campaign finance in U.S. elections? What measures should Congress take to address your concerns?

***One of my greatest concerns is the influence of what some refer to as "dark money" in politics and, thanks in large part to the Supreme Court's ruling in the Citizens United vs. FEC case, the ability of groups to form corporations for the sole sake of influencing the political process and access to the ballot. First and foremost Congress should enact legislation that strips the power and influence of money in political campaigns and remove the requirement for candidates to pay to file serve in office. All money paid to campaigns should be done so in the light and there should be no protective covering for private entities with regards to their financial contributions to influence our democratic system—that lies in direct contradiction to a republic "of the people, by the people and for the people." Instead it creates a republic that is controlled by corporations and big donors, for corporations and big donors. After each general and mid-term election, there should be a campaign finance public disclosure report***

**conducted and released by an independent agency that provides an analysis of which corporations and large donors contributed to which campaigns and information on any legislation that is at stake prior and post the election cycle in which the corporations benefitted or influenced directly. This agency would be similar to the consumer protection agency, however it would be the US Voter Protection Agency and would build upon and expand the work of the now defunct Election Assistance Commission.**

15. What can be done to protect U. S. elections from interference?

**An independent non-partisan commission akin to the Election Assistance Commission however with enforcement and sanctioning powers. In addition, to swift legal prosecution including jail time and fines of any entity or individual that is found to be in violation of our voter protection laws and tampering with US elections, be they foreign or domestic.**

16. What action should Congress take with regard to the Voting Rights Act following the Supreme Court's *Shelby v. Holder* decision?

**Institute measures that will replace the intent of section 4 of the VRA; establish independent bi-partisan voter protection commission to include a subsidiary division responsible for determining and drawing voting districts after each census.**

17. How would you characterize the Black Lives Matter movement? What policy solutions would you support, if any, to address concerns raised by the Black Lives Matter movement?

**I characterize the Black Lives Matter movement as necessary, relevant, and timely. They matter and should be taken seriously. Criminal justice overhaul, education reform, and economic reform are among a few policy solutions that would support and address their concerns. And although not a policy issue, a few prosecution of law enforcement officers who have killed innocent unarmed blacks and other people of color as well as poor whites would also be good not just for Black Lives Matter but for our nation.**

18. What policies, if any, do you think are important for protecting the rights of the LGBTQ community?

**Simple, enforcing the constitutional right: EQUAL PROTECTION UNDER THE LAW—period. We also must provide supports and better resources like housing and legal assistance for those who are uniquely discriminate against like LGBTQ people of color and youth. We need more LGBTQ members as the policy table. I am glad they are on my campaign team and will definitely be included on my staff in Washington and the District.**

19. What are the two worst and two best decisions made by the U.S. Supreme Court since 2010?

**Two worst decisions the U.S. Supreme court rendered since 2010: The January 21, 2019 Citizens United vs. FEC ruling allowing corporations the same protections as private citizens in terms of electioneering regulations; and the June 25, 2013 ruling that struck down the coverage formula in Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (which was updated by Congress in 1975), which also debilitated the implementation of Section 5's preclearance requirement to change voting laws**

**Two best decisions the U.S. Supreme court rendered since 2010: The court's ruling on Feb. 26 against President Trump's efforts to fast track the halt the renewal of DACA applications and the December ruling that prevented President Trump from enacting a travel ban against select foreign travels.**

## Health and the Environment

20. Do you support universal healthcare for Americans?

***Absolutely, unequivocally YES. If elected I would help continue the fight for a single-payer "Medicare for All" type health care system. In America, with our enormous resources and medical expertise, we should be leading the world and at the top in terms of our health care system and service provisions, not lagging. We can do better and we must work to find a way to do better in ensuring that no person regardless of the means to do so, should go without quality health care coverage.***

21. Do you believe that Planned Parenthood should receive federal support?

***Absolutely, unequivocally YES. Planned Parenthood has been since it was founded in 1919 has literally been a life-line for poor and under- or uninsured women around the country, providing important and vital comprehensive reproductive and complementary health care services (not just abortions, contrary to the propaganda from espoused by those on the extreme right), advocating for public policies that protect and promote the reproductive rights of women and access to quality health care services. As a young adult in my late teens who grew up in a public housing community in a Christian conservative family, Planned Parenthood provided me the chance to exercise agency over my reproductive decisions when there were no other safe alternatives or supports. If elected, I will join others in Congress to protect funding for Planned Parenthood and seek ways to replicate their services by increasing funding to non-PP affiliated community health clinics.***

22. Do you believe that global warming is real and caused by humans? Is it a problem for human life on earth? If so, what actions should Congress take to mitigate the effects of global warming?

***Yes, I do believe that global warming is real and exacerbated by humans with strong evidence suggesting human causality. Congress must begin to be more vigilant in enforcing existing EPA regulations including increasing its sanctioning of large corporations who ignore or slight EPA regs. We must enforce regulations to reduce our carbon footprints and protect our oceans and waterways from fracking and drilling for the sake of increasing corporate profits.***

## Concerning You

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

***In 2012, I voted for President Barack Obama and in 2016 I voted for Hillary Clinton in the presidential general elections.***

*Thank you and please remember to provide us with your resume or biographical statement.*

## **Michelle Laws “Unbought and Unbossed”**

### **A Courageous, Committed, and Compassionate Leader with**

### **New Vision for North Carolina’s 4<sup>th</sup> Congressional District**

Michelle Laws was born and reared in Chapel Hill North Carolina. She spent her early childhood living in a public housing community in Chapel Hill’s historic Northside area and later in the Rogers Road Eubanks community surrounded and supported by a strong kinship network. Born to a teenage mother, Michelle was nurtured by strong women who instilled in her grit and determination to work hard and succeed against all odds; strong family values; a commitment to community service and civic engagement; and a steadfast and unmovable faith in God. Michelle identifies her first engagement in social justice and fighting for the rights of the poor to when she was “around age ten and my grandmother, who was a member of the Chapel Hill Public Housing Residents Council put me out front to request new playground equipment for children living in public housing. I was so proud of myself and amazed at how impressed people were about my public speaking ability at such a young age. That experience put a fire in my belly that has been burning ever since.”

Michelle’s activism expanded from childhood into her undergraduate years at UNC-Chapel Hill where she was among the student activists advocating for a freestanding black cultural center at UNC and helped to organize UNC students to wear green ribbons at a court trial in support of Keith Edwards, UNC’s first black female police officer.

In addition to her activism, Michelle has demonstrated that she has the fortitude, temperament, courage, and intellectual acumen to be a force of reckoning in the political arena as a political strategist and policy maker. Michelle’s skills as a prudent negotiator, critical analyst, and problem solver have served her well throughout her career including in her position as the campaign press secretary for former Congressman Albert R. Wynn (Md-4<sup>th</sup>) and legislative liaison for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, where she garnered the support for the department’s policies and budget from both Democrats and Republicans. Michelle however says she attributes much of her political prowess to her Godmother, the late Senator Jeanne Lucas, the first black woman to serve in the North Carolina senate. Many have compared her courage and political acumen to that of the late Congresswoman Shirley Chisolm “unbought and unbossed.”

Professionally, Michelle is the assistant director for a local community health organization; an adjunct professor at North Carolina Central University. Michelle’s distinguished professional career also includes serving as the former Executive Director of the North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP (2014-2016); a college adjunct professor where she taught undergraduate sociology courses at North Carolina Central University, North Carolina State University and in federal and state prisons; legislative liaison for the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services. Her skill as a community organizer and political strategist proved useful when she relocated for a brief period to Maryland where she was introduced to Maryland and Washington DC politics including landing a job as the campaign press secretary for former Congressman Albert R. Wynn (Md-4<sup>th</sup>) and a campaign organizer for Lafayette Barnes for DC City

Council. Dr. Laws is also an ordained associate minister at Union Baptist Church in Durham NC where she serves under the leadership of senior pastor, Rev. Prince Rainey Rivers.

Michelle is a native of Chapel Hill, NC and holds a BA degree in Mass Communications from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a MA degree in Sociology from North Carolina Central University (Magna Cum Laude graduate) and a PhD in Social and Behavioral Sciences from the Department of Health Behavior and Policy, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine (Phi Kappa Phi honor inductee).

“I have spent my entire career fighting for vulnerable, ignored and forgotten population’s especially poor and working-class women and children and those whom Derrick Bell labeled as ‘the faces at the bottom of the well.’ I believe that one of the greatest tragedies of social progress for individuals and our nation is for people to ascend the social-economic ladder and for corporations to profit off of the labor of the working class and forget those who are left behind caught in a tangled web of poverty, social neglect and obstructed privilege. I believe we do live in the greatest country in the world however there are those who are working hard to destroy and divide this nation and the promise that it holds as a mighty republic and a glowing light for democracy around the world. The very soul and foundation of our nation is at risk of doom and collapsing under the pressures of hatred, division, greed, and exclusion. It is up to everyone who believes we are better and must do better to protect the future for the next generation to join forces and fight with all we have to protect and promote ‘one nation, indivisible with liberty and justice for all’.”

**If elected some of the things I will fight for are:**

- **Protecting a woman’s right to choose and have full autonomy and authority over her reproductive rights.**
- **Promoting a new jobs bill that creates innovative pathways to gainful employment and enacting a workers rights bill that includes fair and just pay for all workers.**
- **Overhauling antiquated criminal justice system that penalizes those addicted to substances and lacks accountability at all levels within the system.**
- **Promoting increased protections for women and girls against violence and sex trafficking.**
- **Reforming our nation’s public school system that is failing to prepare our children to compete as global leaders.**
- **Fighting for equal protection under the law for ALL—including LGBTQ and immigrants.**
- **Enacting sensible and humane immigration reform.**
- **Fighting for more funding for mental health and substance abuse services**
- **Eliminate obstacles preventing access to the ballot and protecting the one of the cornerstones of our country—Voting Rights.**

- **Working to expand affordable housing opportunities based on ideal that housing is a universal right.**