

PA PAC Questionnaire for NC House and Senate - 2022

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Why Are You Running?

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

Providing a first-class system of public education, from pre-K through post-secondary

- Raise teacher and principal compensation to the national average
- Protect and expand use of teachers' assistants
- Provide more nurses and healthcare resources
- Universal Pre-K
- Enhance racial equity efforts

Accessible, affordable healthcare for all North Carolinians

- Expand Medicaid
- Implement Medicaid Transformation
- Enhance rural healthcare, especially medical specialties
- Enhance behavioral health

A strong economy that works in every part of the state

- Rebuild and expand infrastructure
 - Transportation
 - Water/Sewer
 - Broadband
- Expand opportunities for work
 - Economic development projects
 - Training, retraining, and apprenticeship projects
 - "Ban the Box" and other programs to hire formerly incarcerated people

State Revenues, State Spending, and the Economy

2. Is the current system of state taxation fair? 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 ten years are sustainable and will result in long-term benefits. 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.
 - 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.

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.

School Vouchers for Private Schools: These dis-invest in our public schools.

“Crisis Pregnancy Centers”: These centers engage in manipulative tactics to prevent women from making informed choices.

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.

Salaries for all public educators: faculty, administrators, and support staff in K-12, community colleges, and universities.

Maternal health services: North Carolina has shown little improvement in prenatal, delivery, and postnatal health care.

Rural infrastructure: Our rural communities are struggling in providing basic services like water, sewer, broadband, transportation.

4. What is your stance on the state of North Carolina utilizing economic development incentives, such as the One NC and JDIG programs to attract and recruit corporations?

When used effectively—providing a strong return on investment, offering clawback provisions, important to closing a deal—these programs are an important part of our economic development efforts.

Secure Elections, Fair Elections, and the Right to Vote

5. What changes need to be made to NC law to protect the right of all people to vote in free and fair elections?

There are some changes that can be implemented with a new majority or with a more balanced partisan division.

- Automatic Voter Registration: I am the author of two comprehensive AVR bills that I sponsored the last two sessions. I will continue to introduce and advocate for this bill until it passes.
- Independent, non-partisan redistricting commission.
- Implement Voter ID in a manner that is least harmful to voters, especially those who are historically disenfranchised.
- Public financing of all judicial elections.

Eventually, I would like to move to public financing of all elections. This is an aspirational goal that will require more than just a change in the majority. However, we should remain vigilant in working toward it.

Housing

6. What, if anything, should the NC government do to promote affordable housing and home ownership? What specific policies or programs would you use to do that? Do you support down payment assistance for first time homebuyers? Rent control? Inclusionary zoning? Please detail your answer.

First, we should remove any regulatory obstacles that prevent local governments and the private sector from building affordable housing. I am proud to have sponsored three bills over the last two years that have eliminated these obstacles.

Second, we should increase funding for affordable housing grants and programs.

Third, we must fight any legislation that would limit the ability of local governments to provide affordable housing options. In recent years, we have been able to stop such bills.

I support the ideas listed. However, with the current environment in the General Assembly it is unlikely we will be able to enact them.

7. What should the NC government do, if anything, to avoid an eviction crisis following the lifting of the COVID-era moratorium on evictions?

The State should allow local governments to enact their own eviction ordinances.

Wealth

8. What is your stance on the minimum wage? What do you consider to be a livable wage? What role should the NC government play in regulating wages?

I support raising the minimum wage and the goals of the “Fight for \$15” movement.

As for a specific amount, I have read recent studies that suggest the ideal minimum wage should be set by pegging a local minimum to a percentage of the local median wage. This is an idea worth exploring, as it addresses communities like San Francisco, San Jose, and Washington, DC, and even Durham where a minimum of \$15 per hour is still not providing a living wage.

Additionally, this method would be reasonable for the rural communities in North Carolina where an artificially high minimum would be detrimental to the local economy.

9. How can we bring more progressivity to North Carolina’s tax code?

Reinstate the Earned Income Credit for low wealth working families.

Stop the scheduled phased-in cuts to the corporate income tax.

Fix North Carolina’s worst-in-the nation employment insurance system.

Guns

10. What, if anything, should be done to reduce the proliferation of firearms and reduce gun violence in NC?

- Gun violence restraining orders (“red flag” laws)
- Universal background checks
- End gun show loopholes
- Ban bump stocks, AR-15s and other military-style weapons

Civil Rights and Race Equity

11. What should the state do to promote racial equity and diversity, such as increasing opportunities for under-represented and under-served people of color? Can you provide an example of your advocacy for race-equity and diversity?

Early in my tenure on the City Council, I began working with advocates to “ban the box” in the City of Durham’s hiring. It took a couple of years and a lot of lobbying, but we were successful in making it a City policy.

When I joined the Senate, I began working with colleagues to implement similar policies in State government. While we have had a few victories, there is much still to do—and I will continue that work in my next term.

The Environment

12. Addressing the climate crisis through transformative, intersectional policies will be essential to keeping NC communities safe, healthy, and vibrant. What do you see as the most critical environmental and climate justice issues facing NC and your district? If elected, how would you leverage your role to address them?

I chair the Senate Democrats’ Energy Huddle, and last year we were successful in enacting more programs to assist low-and-moderate-income families with energy costs in the energy bill (H951) and in the budget. I will continue working with colleagues in both parties and both chambers as well as the Governor and the Utilities Commission to expand these LMI programs and secure more funds.

13. Duke Energy’s monopoly on our utilities has severely curbed the expansion of clean energy across North Carolina and locked us into the expansion of harmful gas plants – with disproportionate pollution and cost burdens falling on Black and Brown communities. What creative ideas will you bring to the Legislature to push back against Duke Energy to create a more safe, affordable, and resilient electricity sector?

14. Other states like California and Colorado have rolled out “Climate Corps” programs that create thousands of good jobs increasing community resilience to climate change,

reducing pollution, and building out renewable energy. What ideas do you have for how North Carolina can promote green jobs and workforce development, while addressing the climate crisis and reducing pollution in our most-impacted neighborhoods?

I worked on the committee that developed Governor Cooper's Executive Order 80, which outlined the administration's initial clean energy plan. I chair the Senate Democrats' Energy Huddle that negotiated last year's important energy bill, H951. And in January, Governor Cooper issued EO 246, taking significant further steps toward our clean energy future.

All three of these important measures will need refinement, along with funding and legislative action. As the senior Democrat on the Agriculture/Energy/Environment Committee, I will be working closely on these efforts in the next biennium.

State and Local Government Relations

15. In what ways should NC preempt local governments? In what ways in which it currently does so should it not?

As a former member of the Durham City Council, I strongly support local government and its ability to govern within its jurisdiction. I do not favor preemption except in the most extreme cases affecting health, safety, and national security. However, given North Carolina's history as a Dillon's Rule state and the governing actions of the legislative majorities, I fear that the most we can do for the foreseeable future is play defense on this front.

Education

16. What is your record of support for community colleges and what do you see as the role of community college in increasing access to economic mobility and higher education for those who want it?

Having taught and worked as an administrator at Durham Tech for seven years, I have firsthand knowledge of the critical role community colleges play in educating North Carolina residents. My record of support for our community college system is among the strongest in the General Assembly, including my sponsorship of Session Law 2021-133, which assists students in qualifying for state-resident tuition rates.

17. What policies would you pursue to increase access to four-year college, community college, training programs, and workforce development initiatives?

The first step to increase access to post-secondary education is to provide our students the best secondary education available. Secondly, we need to provide adequate counseling to ensure students are fully aware of their options in order to choose the best opportunities for them.

Then we must remove the obstacles students face in pursuing their education. In my experience as a college administrator and teacher, most of these obstacles are financial. Therefore, we should keep the cost of post-secondary education affordable and provide the financial resources to assist students in financial need. I am proud to have authored and sponsored Session Law 2021-133, which assists community college students in qualifying for state-resident tuition rates.

18. What, if anything, should the NC government do to promote the education of youth in the history of civil rights, racial inequality, and the legacy of racial discrimination in the United States and NC?

State government should stay out of the way, allowing our professional educators to work with the families they serve and their administrations and school boards to develop the curriculum.

I led the Senate Democrats' debate on HB324 last year.

<https://www.wral.com/senate-debates-critical-race-theory-ban/19843960/>

My remarks begin at the 15:40 mark.

Party Politics

19. If you find your party in the minority in your elected body, what do you see as the role of the minority party? Please detail the role of deal making with members of the opposing party, especially on issues on which deep divisions exist. Please give specific examples from your past.

Members of the minority party have the obligation to serve their communities by providing robust constituent service and working to influence policies and budgets. Despite having served in the minority for the last nine years, I have a strong record of working to pass good legislation, having more bills become law in the 2021 long session than any other Senate Democrat; working to improve legislation that can be made better, like HB951 (energy bill) in 2021, HB77 (transportation) in 2020, and SB729 (coal ash cleanup) in 2014; and leading the fight against bad legislation, like HB324 (“critical

race theory” bill) in 2021, HB2 (“bathroom bill”) in 2016, and HB142, the alleged fix for H2 in 2017.

Campaign Funding

20. Does your campaign have specific policies regarding from whom it accepts donations? Please specifically detail any contributions from corporations to your current and prior campaigns. How do you see the influence of donors on policy, both for yourself and for others?

I do not have a specific policy regarding contributions.

It is illegal under North Carolina law to accept contributions from corporations, and I have not accepted any.

I do not allow contributions to influence my work in office or my votes on legislation.

Your Politics

21. For whom did you vote in the 2020 United States Senate and presidential elections?

Presidential Election: Joe Biden and Kamala Harris

US Senate Election: Cal Cunningham

Senator Mike Woodard

Mike Woodard is the North Carolina State Senator representing District 22: Durham, Granville, and Person counties. Before joining the General Assembly in 2013, Senator Woodard served on the Durham City Council for seven years.

Senator Woodard currently serves on the Health Care, Finance, Budget, Transportation, Agriculture/Energy/Environment, and Rules committees. He is co-chair of the Life Sciences Caucus and of the Arts Caucus, as well as an active member of the Agriculture-Rural Caucus.

In his professional life, Senator Woodard is a long-time administrator with Duke University and the Duke Health System. He also worked as an administrator and instructor at Durham Technical Community College.

A tenth-generation North Carolinian and a native of Wilson, 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 30 years. He 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 Arts Council, the Durham Rotary Club, the Dispute Settlement Center, the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce, and Triangle United Way. He was recently elected to the board of directors of South Arts, a regional non-profit funded by the National Endowment for the Arts that presents, promotes, and produces Southern arts and cultural programming, as well as advocates for the arts and arts education, in the nine southeastern states.

The awards and honors Senator Woodard has received include: the Long Term Care Association's 2020 Legislator of the Year; the North Carolina Craft Brewers' 2019 Senator of the Year; the 2019 Durham County Honorary Fire Chief Award; the 2017 Public Official Conservation Award from Sound Rivers; the 2017 Legislator of the Year Award from the North Carolina Association of Teacher Assistants; the 2017 Senator of the Year and the 2014 Rising Star awards from the League of Conservation Voters; the 2017 Legislator of the Year Award from Toxic Free NC; the 2015 Legislator of the Year from Equality North Carolina; the 2012 City of Durham Human Rights Award, presented to an elected official has supported and promoted human rights causes and issues; the 2011 Goodmon 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 a hospital chaplain, and an active community volunteer.

In his free time, Senator Woodard serves as a tutor at C.C. Spaulding Elementary School and enjoys bicycling, hiking, watching sports, reading, and attending arts events.