**2016 North Carolina General Election Candidate Questionnaire**

**Name as it appears on the ballot:** Jennifer Ferrell

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**Years lived in the district:** 9

**Questions:**

1. What inspired you to run for North Carolina House of Representatives and if elected what do you want your legacy to be after you leave?

There are several different life changing events in the last 8 years which led me to run for NC House to serve. Policy affected my life and those I love in a negative way and I wanted to work to change it. With 7 year old twins now in public school and volunteering in their 1st grade classrooms, I directly see the cuts from 2013 that are playing out now for them and their peers. In order to stay in NC and continue to raise my family, I decided to raise a hand to serve all voices in

our district. Something I feel our current Rep. has not done very well and as his constituent also directly experienced.

Public service and public education advocacy is in my blood with my mom nearing retirement as a 4th grade teacher and my dad serving on my hometown school board for 12 yrs, always working towards solutions for teachers and children. I want to leave the same legacy for my family and others by raising a hand to serve by fairly legislating and helping as many as I can move forward. I want to work towards policy that will help and lift up all families and bridge the divide we tend to see and feel more these days in "politics." Get back to "policy" basics instead is a better legacy to leave behind.

1. In your opinion what is the biggest issue on the minds of North Carolinians right now and how do you believe you could have the biggest impact?

In my opinion and what I hear often on the doorsteps as voters as I canvass to introduce myself and have all year, is that public education funding needs to be a priority again. This goes beyond teacher pay and a raise in an election year, after pushing for one for 2­3 years and being supplemented by local county school boards­­this should be adequately funded from the start in our state budget. Bringing back 7k Teacher Assistants who were cut in 2013, leaving grades 2­3 without these resources will make a big impact in restoring strong public ed in our state.

As class sizes continue to rise due to our area of Wake County being very desirable to raise a family, we need the budget funds to provide for basics like desks, textbooks ­­ new ones and more of them so children are not having to share and reams of paper ­­ a constant ask of our parents in our schools. Restoring Pre­K services to thousands across the state on a waiting list is another factor of public ed funding going to good use. Education is the great equalizer I feel and leads to growing leaders who can thrive in the global economy, it all begins with public education for many children. I feel by my continued advocacy for the above issues related to education that I can make this biggest impact for families in our district and in turn state.

1. What policy areas are the most important to you and if elected what changes would you make?

I already touched on public education, but the safety of all families is a policy priority for me also. Smart, common sense and stronger gun laws, without taking away rights, are a good place to start to really protect women and children.

Curbing domestic violence with the use of deadly weapon and "accidental" shootings due to negligence begin with ensuring they are not in the hands of abusers and mentally ill. So many of us didn't grow up in this current gun culture and feel our families shouldn't have to either. In 2013 the NCGA majority pushed through a gun bill opening up concealed carry to our parks, restaurants and bars­­none of which have a place in these public spaces for families. I feel that expanded healthcare access to all via Medicaid Expansion will help lift up 300k currently w/o coverage via private insurance or the Affordable Care Act. Expanding Medicaid is also a smart economic move as it is estimated to create nearly 43k jobs by doing so and helping our more rural families stay healthy and thrive.

Another policy area that I feel is crucial in our state is the creation of an independent redistricting commission, outside of the NC General Assembly and politicians to redraw our state and district maps fairly. For too long both parties have benefitted from being in the majority to draw them in their favor. It's far past time that voters have a level playing field to vote for their representatives and not the other way around where legislators choose their voters due to gerrymandered districts.

1. As a large community organization we don’t always agree with each other on the best way to accomplish many of our projects, but we always work together to get the job done. In what way do you believe you will be able to work together with members of the opposite party to work together?

I was raised in a very loving, moderate Republican household and even though I personally changed my own mind and had it opened more when policy affected me, I feel that finding bi­partisan middle ground is an absolute must for moving forward. We've seen the results of the extreme sides of policy coming from the majority in power on a national and especially a state level in NC. I will work with fellow legislators for sound policy for all and not treading on anyone's lives or rights.

By having open door policies as a legislators with a priority for constituents to be a part of the legislative process and not lobbyists is also how I'd like to get work down together and encourage other legislators to do more of the same. I yearn for and will push for the ability of members of both parties come together outside of their private caucus meetings on opposite sides and work together on creating policy. Not behind closed doors and too fast for legislators and constituents to weigh in and really consider the consequences of such policy benefitting some and not all.

1. Just for fun: North Carolina doesn’t have an “official State dessert”, but if we did what would you want it to be?

If North Carolina had an official state dessert (and we should), I would envision it being Sweet Potato Pie. It's simply southern and our state grows more sweet potatoes than any other state I've heard. We should embrace that, great question!