**2016 North Carolina General Election Candidate Questionnaire**

**Name as it appears on the ballot:  Joe John
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Years lived in the district: 24**

**Questions:**

1. What inspired you to run for NC House of Representatives District 40 and if elected what do you want your legacy to be after you leave?

Throughout my many years of public service, I have had the responsibility of dealing with legislation passed by the NC General Assembly. As a District Court, Superior Court and Court of Appeals Judge for nearly 25 years, I was called upon to enforce laws enacted by the Legislature; later, for a number of years as DMV Deputy Commissioner and State Crime Laboratory Director, my role was to implement legislative enactments. With the 2016 election coming up, I was not involved in other positions and decided to bring my experience to bear upon the actual process of making law. Indeed, as a State Representative, I would be the first person in State history to come to the legislative branch of government with extensive experience at the highest levels of both the judicial and executive branches. My expectation is to use my experience to help avoid many of the unintended consequences of legislation that others without my background may not anticipate.

I would hope to be remembered as a legislator who, rather than march in lock step with a rigid ideology, took an approach to proposed legislation which reflected my historical role as a judge—carefully considering all sides of each issue, weighing the pros and the cons, and then making the best decision I can under the law and in the best interests of the taxpaying citizens of North Carolina.

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?

Unfortunately, the issue on the minds of most North Carolinians at this time centers upon HB 2. The disastrous effects of this hastily passed law upon the economy and reputation of our State have brought us to the point where repeal is the only way forward. As a former Judge and certified mediator, I would anticipate using my conflict resolution skills in helping guide this issue to the appropriate conclusion.

However, notwithstanding the dominance by HB 2 in the news, I believe the most important issue is establishing by law an independent Redistricting Commission (see below). Both parties have abused the current system which has resulted in numerous “safe” districts where Representatives are not held accountable for their actions and may govern from the extreme right or left without considering different views. The redistricting task, next scheduled for the 2020 census year, must be taken out of the hands of the politicians and placed with an independent group. The recent drafting of model North Carolina Congressional Districts by a group of retired Democratic and Republican NC Supreme Court Justices under the auspices of the Duke University Sanford School of Public Policy demonstrates that this *can* be done where there is the talent and the will to do so.

1. What policy areas are the most important to you and if elected what changes would you make?
2. As indicated in the previous response, I believe we must have a truly independent, impartial, non-partisan Redistricting Commission to draw NC Congressional and Legislative districts so that every NC citizen has fair and equal representation and so NC voters will select their representatives instead of the politicians selecting their voters as happens today. My first act as a member of the General Assembly will be to sign on as a Co-Sponsor of the bipartisan redistricting bill currently pending in the House and to do whatever I can to move that bill to passage.
3. A strong educational system, from the beginning years to the community college and university levels, is absolutely essential, not only to allowing our children to develop their natural abilities to the fullest, but to promoting and supporting a robust economic and business climate in North Carolina. We must maintain a high quality and connected educational environment so that all North Carolina’s children may be prepared for the jobs of the future.
4. Having held Court in nearly 70 North Carolina counties, I know that the needs of our judicial system, particularly in the area of technology, have long been ignored, with the judicial branch almost never receiving more than 2% of our State budget. Swift justice in the criminal courts and the prompt resolution of litigation in the civil courts, where business disputes, domestic cases and other law suits are decided, have become seriously jeopardized. It is time to bring our courts statewide into the 21st century.
5. 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?

As noted previously, I will bring to the State House a strong, extensive background in State courts and government and nearly 25 years of experience in conflict resolution as a Judge. In addition, I am a trained and experienced Certified Mediator, capable of facilitating the resolution of issues with divergent views. Lastly, as Director of the State Crime Laboratory between Nov. 2010 and June, 2014, during which time the Lab was located in the Department of Justice under Democrat Attorney General Roy Cooper, I personally worked with the Republican majority in the General Assembly to secure the personnel and other resources needed by the Lab to fulfill its mission. I believe that this combined experience, coupled with a personal determination to move North Carolina forward, will enable me to work together with all members of the General Assembly.

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

My personal favorite is Grandma John’s Graham Cracker Cream Pie. However, banana pudding and peach cobbler are traditional North Carolina desserts following a barbeque dinner and either would certainly qualify for the “official State dessert” title.