**2016 North Carolina General Election Candidate Questionnaire**

**Name as it appears on the ballot**:  Linda Stephens **Campaign website**:  www.judgelindastephens.org **Phone number:** (919)346-3564 **Email**:  info@judgelindastephens.org **Years lived in the district:** 42

**Questions:**

1. What inspired you to run for Court of Appeals and if elected what do you want your legacy to be after you leave?

I am running to retain my seat at the Court of Appeals. I continue to feel inspired by my job because I have a strong work ethic and commitment to the rule of law. For over 10 years, I have been making decisions that impact people’s lives. I do not take this lightly. It is a position that requires discipline and humility. I strive to treat everyone fairly and to favor no one. I learned the values of hard work and respect from my grandparents, who raised me in humble circumstances and encouraged me to work my way to better my circumstances. While I do not believe that I should be the voice of any one person or set of circumstances, I do want to leave a legacy of sound, compassionate decision making based on the law.

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?

While I imagine that for many North Carolinians, the daily struggle to make ends meet and care for their families is first and foremost on their minds, I know that some of us have the luxury of thinking about other issues. With recent events, the current political climate, and developments in our State, I think a big issue we must all face concerns how we treat each other. This doesn’t sound like much, but our basic civility has degraded to a point that we are unrecognizable. I see this in the courtroom of the Court of Appeals, in judicial races, and in the cases that come before me. While bias is not present in every case, the presence of bias in some cases (usually before they get to the appellate level) reflects a failure in our system to maintain civility and respect for every person. We must treat every case and every individual as we would wish to be treated, fairly and honestly.

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

As a judicial candidate, it is important that I not comment on policy matters. I would never want to even appear to have any bias in matters that come before me at the Court of Appeals. I cannot implement changes in policy from the bench; I can apply the law as it is written to the cases that come before me. I can also ensure that I treat everyone the same regardless of gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientations, religion, and socio-economic status. I can also further educate people about the legal and court systems to help improve negative popular perceptions.

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?

Over the past 10 years, I have worked collaboratively and cohesively with my colleagues who are from a different political party. Political ideology has never affected my interest in or ability to work with another colleague on the Court of Appeals. Because of my years of service on the Court, it is easy to check my record by reviewing the hundreds of opinions I have authored that have been joined by my colleagues. Additionally, at the Court of Appeals, we rely on each other for specialty information. For example, I practiced for over 2 decades in the area of workers’ compensation. My colleagues come to me to help them understand complicated workers’ compensation issues and to make sure they have a practical understanding of the practice of workers’ compensation law. Likewise, I consult with my colleagues who might have expertise in criminal law or family law. In my experience, it is rare for Judges to disregard the expertise of their colleagues because of political ideology.

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

Blackberry Cobbler – with wild blackberries grown all over North Carolina (but it would have to be vegan for me!!)