**Name as it appears on the ballot: OIen Watson III**

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**Years lived in the district: 17 years (except for time spent in the military)**

**Questions:**

1. What inspired you to run for NC State House District 38 and if elected what do you want your legacy to be after you leave?

My life has been dedicated to serving others. After high school I enlisted in the United States Marine Corps where I spent eight years serving my country. When I returned home, I enrolled in college for a degree in Biblical Studies. I applied my knowledge and passion for helping others to a position teaching Special Education. Though I am no longer an educator, I still strive to do everything within my power to better my community, the same one in which my grandparents settled down and raised their family. Along these lines, I feel called to be a public servant, which is why I am currently running for NC State House. I want my legacy to inspire members of my community to become invested in the well-being of their neighbors, the success of local businesses, and the education of future generations.

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?

My biggest concern is the growing incarceration rate and the increasing portion of tax income NC continues to waste on keeping non-violent criminals in jail. I aim to reduce the number of offenses that result in incarceration, thus reducing the amount of money we frivolously spend on non-violent criminals.

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

My top three policy priorities include education, criminal justice, and taxation reform.

1) Education Reform: While Wake County is known for being a beacon of educational excellence in the state, these opportunities are rarely available to lower-income families. We need to create better education options that are accessible to lower-income North Carolinians. Many students leave high school with no ambition to attend college and no marketable skill set, leaving them unemployable at 18. We need to shift the focus toward vocational programs, an aspect of public education that is sorely lacking in Wake County Schools.

2) Criminal justice reform: I strive to guarantee non-violent criminals their constitutional rights. The growing incarceration rates along with the tenuous relationships between the police and communities leave citizens without a voice in the community. By providing counseling or other alternatives in lieu of incarceration for nonviolent offenses, as well as reducing the police force’s stop-and-frisk opportunities, our community will grow stronger.

3) Taxation: I plan to eliminate wage taxes in North Carolina and convert to a consumption-based model with zero sales tax on food, medicine, utilities, medical equipment and clothes. This transition will leave more money in the pockets of businesses and their employees, which in turn will bolster the state economy.

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?

As a Libertarian I do not have a “side of the aisle.” As such, I am willing to work with anyone who holds the same ideals as I do. For too long our political system has been broken- Republicans and Democrats fighting with each other to preserve each party’s expectations. We should not be shocked at the sight of bipartisan legislation; we should do everything in our power to encourage it. My approach is to focus on the needs of the community, those whom we swear to represent, and find common ground among legislators regardless of political affiliation.

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

Reminiscing on my childhood, nothing made me feel more at home in North Carolina than a trip to my Grandma’s house and a serving of her *‘Nana Puddin.*’