

Margie Benbow

For all candidates:

- What is your background in politics?

I champion various causes (education, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math), economic development, public health, ethics, veterans affairs, environmentalism, art and more). All of these areas are integrated with policy. My decades of work require understanding data and being energetic to work at the grassroots level as well as the policy level to make NC better. To illustrate the depth and breadth of my work, my philanthropy includes: Serving on the Boards of the NC Zoo, NC Motorsports Association, NC School of Science & Mathematics, Leadership North Carolina, Rotary (Rotarian of the Year, Paul Harris +6), Piedmont Craftsmen Inc., American Red Cross, NC Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, NC Institute of Political Leadership, NC Sustainable Energy Association, community college and university colleges. I am not an incumbent - but running against a career politician. It is time for new leadership in District 62.

- Why were you drawn to run for office?

In this election cycle, our rights, liberties and even our democracy are on the line. For example, a recent Princeton study listed North Carolina as one of the worst gerrymandered states in the nation. Gerrymandering silences our votes. Basically, with gerrymandering, legislators determine who represents you. I support having North Carolina create a non-partisan or bipartisan commission to redraw districts and stop gerrymandering. I promise to listen to and represent my constituents and be the change agent they want me to be. There are other issues, but they are addressed below.

- If you had to pick three issues (housing, economy, schools, policing, etc) which three issues would you say are most important to you?

Public Education - we must increase funding to the schools, including pay for our teachers! When I taught high school science and coached mens soccer, NC teacher pay was 48th in the nation. Decades we are still in the bottom ten. Yet, our teachers have probably one of the most important jobs - they empower our children and shape their futures.

Women's Reproductive Health - My opponent is in lock step with Mark Robinson when it comes to taking away women's choice. Women today do not have the same rights they were afforded for 50 years under Roe v. Wade. Already in the legislature, there are bills to continue to strip more reproductive rights away. Reproductive choice is between a woman and her physician. Politicians hte the government do not belong in the exam room.

Good Jobs - Right now it is harder to make ends meet. For example, the cost of groceries, utilities and housing have increased. As legislators we must be cognizant of how hard it is for North Carolinians. For example, my opponent voted to turn away billions of dollars that the federal government had earmarked for NC to use to provide health insurance to North Carolinians. This money was earmarked for North Carolina - instead, the money went to other states. To send billions earmarked for North Carolina and make life harder for our most vulnerable makes no sense. Education comes into play when we speak of good jobs. **I will fight**

for resource-rich public schools, infrastructure improvements, and a business-friendly environment to foster economic growth. The role of public schools and community colleges for student empowerment and the benefit to our employers cannot be overstated. Good education equals good paying jobs for North Carolina. Through education we are empowering our citizens to make better wages. My opponent supports defunding our public schools at all levels.

- If elected, how would you work with fellow representatives on the other side of the political aisle?

First, I come to the legislature as a moderate - not an extreme ideologue. I am supported by both Governor Roy Cooper (D) and Governor Jim Martin (R) for my public service. In law and business, I have negotiated with opponents and collective bargaining groups and learned the best way to get to yes is by listening. I have always practiced seeking first to understand then to be understood.

- What do you see as the role of the office you seek?

Listen to my constituents - not special interests.

- Which city do you live in and what are three favorite things about it?

I live in Summerfield, NC. As a farmer, I love the farmer's market. My favorite event is founder's Day. I am extremely proud of our public schools, and I will fight hard to make sure they are properly funded and do not continue to lose funding and become more overcrowded.

For state races:

- Where do you think our state is headed? What stands in the way? How can you help us get there? North Carolina has great potential because we have so many resources - including natural resources, jobs, and education. Our universities / colleges and community colleges are very good. But the legislature, including my opponent, continue to defund schools.

\$800,000,000 of your tax dollars is going to private schools! Headmasters at private schools may make over \$400K, have cars and memberships to clubs. Public dollars belong in public schools.

We have very good employers staying and coming into the state, and we must keep it that way. In economic development, it is very important that we do not signal to companies that our legislature is involved in culture wars. HB2 cost the state billions of dollars in direct investment and cost NC jobs. When we show companies, that we treat people with dignity and respect, they are more likely to come to and stay in North Carolina. Our Natural resources are beautiful - from the mountains to the sea. Safeguarding clean air and water and protecting our parks and open spaces is critical for us, our children, and grandchildren. The health of our citizens and agriculture that contributes \$111 billion to our economy are dependent upon a clean environment. Recently, the North Carolina legislature voted to end protection of millions of acres of wetlands (larger than the size of Delaware). Wetlands are critical for food supply, cleaning our water and protecting us from storm water surges. Hurricane Helene is a devastating reminder of the importance of keeping these lands protected to provide buffers.

- Our state seems divided by party. What are some of the things that both parties agree on? I would hope we could agree on two things. Education and the end of gerrymandering. North Carolina should stop the practice of gerrymandering. Representatives should have the integrity to want to win (or lose) in fair elections. It is time to stop the party politics and give the voice to the people. Education - deceased Representative Linda Johnson (R) said - "When it comes to education, both parties must put our children first and champion public education. There are no sides of the aisle when it comes to education." I could not agree more. After teaching, I learned firsthand that there is no better investment than in the classroom. Furthermore, we have no greater obligation than to make sure all children have access to quality public education. (Access to quality education is in the NC Constitution)

- For state representatives: If elected, what are some pieces of legislation you would work to draft or sponsor?

I will champion public schools. Public dollars belong in public schools! Currently, North Carolina is 48th in the nation (% budget going to public schools). After more of your tax dollars (from \$540 Million to \$800 million) was sent to the private (not charter) schools, mandatory cap for the teacher to student ratio in K-2 went from 1 teacher to 18 students to 1:20. I want to fund public schools properly and reverse overcrowding.

- For state representatives: Which laws that have been passed in the last few years are you most in support of? Which do you least support? My opponent, along with the supermajority voted several times to send billions of federal dollars earmarked for health insurance to other states, leaving hundreds of thousands of North Carolinians without health insurance coverage for 12 years. Finally, Governor Cooper spearheaded the effort to reverse the previous decision that resulted in hundreds of thousands not receiving necessary healthcare. My opponent was not part of the decision that finally gave healthcare coverage to 33,000 people in Guilford County.

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Least Support -- North Carolina legislators decreased the rights of women after the reversal of Roe v. Wade immediately by two months (8 weeks). Currently in the legislature, there is another Bill poised to decrease a women's choice to 6 weeks. Every pregnancy is unique. The patients and her doctor should determine the best course of action - not the government nor politicians.

- For state representatives: Who are your legislative role models and why? I have many legislative role models. I respect people who listen to their constituents, are not party puppets and leave a legacy that put North Carolina and our children in a better place.

- What are the drawbacks of gerrymandered districts to our state? Are there any benefits? There are no benefits to gerrymandering - they threaten our democracy. I will work hard to give voice to every voter.. The largest percentage of voters is unaffiliated, followed by democrats then republicans. Together we can make sure we are represented fairly. Some states are even considering crafting an amendment for their states to disallow gerrymandering.