

Sarah Taber Candidate Questionnaire

What is your background in politics? If you are an incumbent, please state which offices you have held and when.

When we moved to North Carolina in 2016, my husband and I got to work organizing in our new hometown of Fayetteville. I helped launch Fayetteville PRIDE. He helped a local historical society become fully racially integrated. We both played a key role in moving Fayetteville's local government from majority Republican to Democratic over the last eight years. That's in a town with such a large military and rural character that everyone assumed it would be a GOP stronghold forever. Back in 2012 I helped launch a group called Mormons for Obama. It wasn't the easiest political organizing. Lots of people thought we were a joke or a con. But by 2020 it grew into LDS Dems: a major canvassing operation in Arizona, Nevada, and other LDS-heavy swing states. We doubled the number of Mormons under 40 who voted for Democrats. Our canvassers also surged turnout in Maricopa and other suburban counties. When Arizona's election results came in solid blue early on election night, it derailed Trump's plan to claim early victory. We did that. And we didn't get there by doing what was easy. We got there by doing what had to be done, even when it was hard.

Why were you drawn to run for office?

As I worked with my farm clients in North Carolina, I saw that they all ran into the same problems over and over again. It started to feel like Groundhog Day! I realized that the issues they faced – development pressures, changing weather patterns, poor profits – were too big for any one farm to fix on their own. The deeper I dug into my farm clients' problems, the worse it got. We lead the country in farmland lost to development. Our farms make as little as half as much money per acre as their neighbors in Georgia and Virginia. Our young farmers are leaving agriculture entirely because they can't afford to make a living growing food anymore. I saw our current leadership wasn't up to the task. If they were going to fix things, they would've done so by now. I didn't want to see our state lose our oldest and largest industry to poor leadership. We needed change.

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

I'm the most passionate about the economic issues this office can address; farmland loss, farm profitability, and bringing new people into agriculture. I've spoken with many farmers who worry they won't be able to pass down their farm to their children. Young farmers have told

me they're considering leaving agriculture altogether. We're on track to lose 1.2 million acres of farmland to development by 2040. We're losing farms and new farmers so quickly because our farmers aren't making enough money. For decades, our agricultural leadership's pushed farmers to grow row crops like cotton, tobacco, and soy. It made sense to promote these kinds of crops twenty years ago. Times have changed. Farming's already hard enough, but it's even harder when you're barely breaking even. Farmers sell to development because they don't have another option to stay afloat. They don't have another option because they're not making money. And they're not making money because our leadership pushes them to grow the wrong things.

We fix it by expanding what we grow. There are lots of crops that are more profitable per acre than those three – tomatoes, hazelnuts, pumpkins, berries – but our farmers don't grow them because our leadership hasn't brought food infrastructure in this state. If you grow peanuts, for example, you need somewhere that can shell them, roast them, and turn them into peanut butter, which is how most Americans consume peanuts. If you don't have a facility like that in your state, you can't financially justify growing them – there's no buyer who will purchase enough peanuts to make them worth planting. One of my top priorities is to bring food processing infrastructure to North Carolina so farmers can grow diverse, dense, lucrative crops. Our farmers can make far more per acre than they're making right now, and we can make sure that young people see a future in agriculture. It just takes the right investment.

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

Politics is a team sport. Nobody can get anything done by themselves. It's essential to have good relationships with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. It's especially important for this role because the state legislature approves the Department of Agriculture's budget! But it's not just about the budget; our state's farmers need a legislative advocate who's looking out for them in Raleigh. If our legislature is debating whether or not to pass a law that impacts North Carolina's farms, I want our representatives on the left and on the right to know that they can always ask for my honest opinion.

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

This role should advocate for our state's farmers, expand the state's agricultural economy, and protect North Carolina's consumers from unfair practices. The Commissioner of Agriculture office wouldn't exist without North Carolina's farmers. They need someone who will look out for them – someone who will amplify their voice in the state legislature, someone who can advocate

for them on the national stage , and someone who can represent their interests to foreign markets. The Commissioner of Agriculture should fight to make sure that our agricultural economy works for all of us, not just special interests. They should incentivize investment in food processing, logistics, and new farming practices that benefit all of North Carolina's farmers and their communities. This office also has an important role to play in consumer protection. This role is in charge of weights and measures – we make sure that the scales in grocery stores are accurate so customers aren't overcharged for groceries. It's up to the Commissioner of Agriculture to ensure that when North Carolinians pay for a gallon of gas, they get a gallon of gas, and when they pay for a pound of bananas, they're charged for a pound of bananas.

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

I live in Fayetteville! I like it a lot, especially when the city comes together for the Fourth of July. Fayetteville's a vibrant, diverse place with a strong agricultural heritage. It's where my husband and I raised our daughter, so I might be a little biased, but I think it's the best city in the state.

Where do you think our state is headed? What stands in the way? How can you help us get there?

I'm not sure where our state's headed, but the agricultural path we're on right now seems pretty rocky. North Carolina's an incredible state because we can grow almost *anything* here, but our leadership's kept us stuck in the same place for too long. Our agricultural sector is the largest part of our state's economy, and if we can get it on the right track with good, smart investments and sound financial decisions, we can lift our entire state along with our farmers. I'm a proven business leader with a long track record of helping my clients become financially successful. I'll do the same for our state's agriculture.

Our state seems divided by party. What are some of the things that both parties agree on?

I think both parties agree that agriculture is a crucial part of North Carolina's economy. It's our oldest and our largest single sector, and it's so important to make sure our farmers are able to make an honest living. Nobody wants to see North Carolina lose its farms. We might disagree on the best way to fix things, but we all want what's best for our state's farmers.

What are the drawbacks of gerrymandered districts to our state? Are there any benefits?

Gerrymandering stifles democracy by tipping the scales in one party or the other's favor. It makes it very difficult for voters to have adequate, fair representation in our state's government. It's hard for voters who belong to a different party than their representative to have their voice heard, and it's hard for voters who belong to the same party to remove a representative who doesn't share their interests. There's nothing good about it.