

Triad City Beat 2024 Candidate Questionnaire

Please send back responses to sayaka@triad-city-beat.com by Oct. 7 for inclusion in our Oct. 17 election guide. Please send a headshot with your answers.

For all candidates:

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

I am a first time candidate who is bringing both my experience as an educator with a PhD as well as that as a wife and mother who has to work to make ends meet like most folks in my district.

- **Why were you drawn to run for office?**

North Carolina has been my home for 12 years and it's where I've gone to school, met my husband, worked as an educator and much more. We used to be the state that ensured that no matter who we are or where we come from, all of our families have a shot at upward mobility. But thanks to deep partisan divides and a system that prevents politicians from facing accountability, we see these opportunities crumbling before us with policies such as the defunding of our public schools. I want better for my family and I know that we can get it done with the right leadership.

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

Public School Funding: North Carolina is on track to remove well over a billion dollars from our public schools in order to provide the super wealthy with private school vouchers with our taxpayer money. This has already led to devastating impacts to our schools which no longer have the ability to make repairs or pay their teachers a living wage. For close to a decade, our teachers and young professionals have been leaving the state to find more competitive salaries, leaving our children and future generations in a precarious situation. We must provide equal opportunity in education across our state.

Women's Reproductive Freedoms: As a mother who nearly lost her son during childbirth, I know firsthand the shortcomings of our state when it comes to reproductive rights and maternal care. North Carolina is ranked near the top when it comes to black women mortality rates from childbirth, and our state spends far too much time criminalizing both doctors and basic access to women's care. When we place abortion restrictions and other barriers to treatment, medical emergencies inevitably follow which were avoidable to begin with. We cannot say that we are pro-family if our policies directly hurt women and expectant mothers. We must also ensure that services such as

childcare, pediatric care and basic necessities are affordable for parents in order to ensure long term success for their children.

Public Safety: I am a proponent of ensuring the safety of both community members and police officers, which is why I support funding for mental health professionals and crisis responders who may be better equipped to deal with certain situations. I also believe that we must better fund our EMT and fire departments in rural areas, as this issue is personal to me. Several years ago, my husband and son were involved in a car accident that nearly cost their lives. Due to us living in a semi-rural community, help did not arrive for nearly an hour after the accident. We must ensure that these emergency services are given the attention they deserve in order to better guarantee the safety of our small town and rural community members in moments of crisis.

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

I am a strong proponent of the idea that we must represent ALL who live in our district, not just those who happen to agree with us the most. House District 59 is growing, and with that comes not just new families but increased needs for better infrastructure, funding and support for businesses and more. If elected, I will work in good faith with my colleagues regardless of party affiliation in order to get results for the people in my district.

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

The General Assembly is ground zero for legislation and policy in North Carolina. What we decide as a legislative body directly impacts the work of our courts, our governor and much more. We have to ensure that our government works for all people in our state. Right now, we see a supermajority that has given in to extremism, placing the priorities of the super wealthy over working families. I am committed to a government created by the people and for the people, and this will be my guiding principle when I'm elected to office.

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

Our family lives in Pleasant Garden. I love the family-oriented nature of the community, with ample sports programs available for our son Brayden, as well as the unique small businesses that make up the backbone of our town.

For state races:

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

Our state is currently at a crossroads. For over a decade, we have seen a General Assembly marred by extreme partisanship and a hostility to integral parts of our

communities such as our public schools. We cannot continue down the path laid out to us by politicians such as Mark Robinson and his enablers, including my opponent. We must bring balance back to the General Assembly, and a vote for my campaign is a vote for ensuring that everyone in our district gets a voice at the table.

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

I think that regardless of party affiliation, we can all agree on common values such as personal freedoms, opportunity for all and economic mobility. The differences may come in how that policy is implemented, and those conversations are important, but at the end of the day my focus is on the people of Guilford County and ensuring that my constituents get the representation they deserve at the NCGA.

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

I would work to enact legislation that repeals the abortion restrictions placed on our state in 2023, and would additionally work to improve our state's unacceptable rate of maternal mortality, particularly in the Black community. The status quo is not enough to keep all women and mothers safe during pregnancy, and our state must do better in this area.

- **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?**

Unfortunately, the NCGA has continued to push an anti-working family agenda, a situation that has only worsened with the supermajority. I strongly oppose HB 10 which continues the trend of removing much needed dollars from our public schools and placing them in the hands of private schools at the taxpayer's expense. I support the right of parents to have their child educated in any manner they see fit, but it should not be at the expense of removing funds from an already weakened public school system that desperately needs more support from our state.

I oppose the 12 week abortion ban and all policies that restrict access to reproductive care. Across the country, we are seeing a rise in maternal mortality rates in direct correlation with anti-abortion measures. When we stigmatize and in certain cases criminalize this kind of healthcare, mothers who are in need of medical treatment are less likely to access those resources, which can lead to lethal consequences. It is past time that we put control of our bodies back in our own hands and trust our doctors to do their jobs.

- **For state representatives: Who are your legislative role models and why?**

In terms of peers, the first who comes to mind is Rep. Lindsey Prather. When I heard her say the words “I was just a teacher in Buncombe County,” this was my inspiration to run for office as well. Our schools and families are better off when teachers are in the rooms where policies are being made, and I want to add to that growing voice at the NCGA.

Rep. Renée Price has been a staunch advocate particularly for marginalized communities who are too often left out of the spaces where they should be heard.

I am also inspired by local elected leaders in Guilford County, including but not limited to Ashton Clemmons, Amos Quick and Pricey Harrison.

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

Gerrymandering has led to a lack of accountability in our General Assembly by placing incumbents in a position where they never have to worry about being voted out of office. Regardless of your party, this is counterproductive to a healthy democracy and allows for extremism to take hold in our politics. We cannot say that we are a government elected by the people and for the people if we intentionally suppress the will of the voters with every new map that is drawn, to the point that folk no longer know who is representing them in Raleigh.

● **Guilford County candidates: What’s your take on a 1-percent prepared food tax that would go toward sports tourism projects? Would you support it? Why or why not?**

While I am a firm believer in the importance of investing in our communities, I’m not convinced that this tax is in the best interest of our small businesses, many of whom would be the primary contributors to this new revenue source. I am not in support of it.