



# **2026 Primary Election Candidate Questionnaire**

## **-Burke County-**

For additional details regarding C.P.R. Inc., visit our website at [www.CPRforYourCounty.org](http://www.CPRforYourCounty.org). The content in this document is provided for informational purposes and has been directly sourced from the candidates. We have made diligent efforts to present the information as accurately as possible.



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## Introduction

Christian Perspective Representatives Inc. is a cooperative group of volunteers from churches who stand in unison for Biblical values and Constitutional rights, support and affirm human dignity, and value all people.

C.P.R., Inc. began in 2021 as a nonpartisan group to circumvent the loss of freedoms of our children, parents, and employees in public schools and institutions throughout our state and nation. Since we believe there is a potential for topics such as sexuality, gender identity, and extreme theories to be taught to our children in harmful and potentially damaging ways, we want to be part of the solution.

C.P.R. Inc. operates strictly on a volunteer basis. No one involved with C.P.R. receives any type of compensation.

C.P.R. does not endorse or oppose any candidates for public office or any political party. This questionnaire is being distributed electronically through our website, mainstream and social media, supporting churches, and other means. We have produced a questionnaire for: (1) Board of Education, (2) Board of Commissioners, (3) District Attorney, and (4) Sheriff races.

The purpose of our questionnaire is to inform and educate voters of each candidate's position on a variety of general topics that are relevant to C.P.R.'s mission. As a faith-based organization, the questionnaire was designed to be distributed through Churches where the topics of the questions are of the utmost interest to a Christian voter.

## Questionnaire Information

The responses gathered from the questionnaire were provided directly by the candidates themselves. C.P.R. utilized a multiple-choice format for the questions, offering candidates the option to expand on their responses within a 950-character limit. Upholding the questionnaire's integrity, candidate answers are presented verbatim, without any modifications for grammar or spelling. Each candidate was contacted in an attempt to encourage their participation using the contact information obtained from the North Carolina State Board of Elections website.

If a candidate did not submit a response, the publication will indicate "Did Not Respond." In cases where a candidate replied via email, telephone, etc., but opted not to participate, the publication will note "Refused to Respond." The party affiliation of each candidate is listed beside their name: (D) for Democrat, (L) for Libertarian, (R) for Republican, (U) for Unaffiliated.

## **Board of Education Questionnaire**

- 1) Do you believe life begins at conception and deserves legal protection?
- 2) Who has the ultimate responsibility for the education of children in public schools?
- 3) Should sexually explicit books be removed from school libraries and classrooms?
- 4) Do you support any Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) programs?
- 5) Should all classroom materials and lesson plans be publicly available to parents?
- 6) Should biological males be allowed to compete in girls' sports or use girls' locker rooms?
- 7) Should schools emphasize civics, patriotism, and America's founding principles?
- 8) Do you support the Parents' Bill of Rights (SB49)?
- 9) Should teachers and administrators be held accountable to community standards?
- 10) Do you support school choice options (charter, private, homeschool)?

## Board of Commissioners Questionnaire

- 1) Have you ever been convicted of a felony or penalized for sexual misconduct?
- 2) Do you believe life begins at conception and deserves legal protection?
- 3) Who has the ultimate responsibility for the education of children in public schools?
- 4) Do you agree that excessive regulations and taxes hinder small business growth and startups?
- 5) Do you support the county enforcing public nuisance laws and cooperating with federal authorities to address illegal activity, including drug use, trespassing, and unlawful immigration?
- 6) Should county funds support DEI training, programs, statements, or policies?
- 7) Would you oppose any new restrictions on the Second Amendment?
- 8) Should the Ten Commandments or "In God We Trust" be displayed in county courthouses?
- 9) Will you defend churches and ministries from government overreach or discrimination?
- 10) How would you approach county funding for local emergency services (law enforcement, fire, and EMS)?

## District Attorney Questionnaire

- 1) Have you ever been convicted of a felony or penalized for sexual misconduct?
- 2) Do you believe life begins at conception and deserves legal protection?
- 3) Should crimes involving child abuse, sexual exploitation, or trafficking be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law?
- 4) Should repeat offenders of crimes against children face enhanced charges or sentencing when allowed by law?
- 5) Should violent crimes be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law whenever legally possible?
- 6) Do you oppose “catch-and-release” policies that quickly return repeat offenders to the community?
- 7) Should drug trafficking and fentanyl-related crimes be treated as top prosecution priorities?
- 8) Should victims’ rights, especially those of children, be prioritized in charging decisions, plea agreements, and sentencing recommendations?
- 9) Should the District Attorney publicly report prosecution outcomes to ensure transparency and accountability?
- 10) Do you support faith-based or restorative justice programs for non-violent offenders who voluntarily participate?

# Board of Education Candidate Responses

## Central District

### Tiana Beachler (R)

- 1) Do you believe life begins at conception and deserves legal protection?

Answer: Yes. I believe life begins at conception because, at that moment, a unique human being is created with distinct DNA and a continuous path of development. Life does not appear gradually; it begins. Scripture affirms this truth: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jeremiah 1:5). Because life begins at conception, it deserves legal protection. The purpose of law is to protect the most vulnerable, and unborn children cannot protect themselves. Recognizing their right to life upholds human dignity and justice. Legal protections should also support mothers and families, affirming that every human life has inherent value from its very beginning.

- 2) Who has the ultimate responsibility for the education of children in public schools?

Answer: Parents. Parents have the ultimate responsibility for the education of their children because they are the primary caregivers and are directly accountable for a child's well-being, values, and development. Children are not the responsibility of the state first; they belong to their families. Parents know their children best and are best positioned to make decisions that serve their child's needs.

Teachers are essential partners in this journey, bringing professional expertise, guidance, and daily instruction that help students grow. District leaders and school boards exist to support that partnership by setting policy, providing resources, and ensuring schools are safe, effective, and accountable. Education works best when parents lead, teachers partner, and school systems support every step along the way.

- 3) Should sexually explicit books be removed from school libraries and classrooms?

Answer: Yes. Burke County has already addressed this concern in a responsible and transparent way. The district has policies and review processes in place to ensure that instructional materials and library books are age-appropriate and aligned with educational standards. When concerns are raised, they are reviewed thoughtfully, with input from educators, administrators, and parents.

This approach respects parental rights while recognizing the professional role of teachers and librarians. It also ensures decisions are made locally, based on community values, rather than through reactionary or one-size-fits-all mandates. By addressing concerns through established policy and open dialogue, Burke has demonstrated that it can protect students, support educators, and maintain trust with families without unnecessary controversy.

- 4) Do you support any Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) programs?

Answer: Do not support. I support diversity in the sense that every student deserves to be treated with dignity, fairness, and respect. That principle has always existed in public education and does not require a special label to be upheld.

I do not support DEI programs, policies, or statements that divide students or staff into categories based on race, ideology, or identity, or that prioritize outcomes over individual merit and responsibility. Education should unite students around shared standards, equal expectations, and opportunity, not sort them by characteristics they cannot control.

- 5) Should all classroom materials and lesson plans be publicly available to parents?

Answer: Yes. Parents should have access to classroom materials and a clear understanding of what their children are being taught. Transparency builds trust and strengthens the partnership between families and schools. This should be done in a practical way that does not place unnecessary burdens on teachers. Providing materials through existing platforms or upon request, along with open communication, respects both parental rights and professional judgment.

- 6) Should biological males be allowed to compete in girls' sports or use girls' locker rooms?

Answer: No. Biological males should not be allowed to compete in girls' sports or use girls' locker rooms. Sex-based sports and private spaces exist to ensure fairness, safety, and dignity for girls. Allowing biological males in these spaces undermines competitive fairness and ignores the biological differences that sports classifications are based on.

This position is not about exclusion. It is about protecting opportunities for female athletes and preserving privacy for girls. Schools can respect every student while still maintaining clear, common-sense boundaries.

- 7) Should schools emphasize civics, patriotism, and America's founding principles?

Answer: Yes. Schools should emphasize civics, patriotism, and America's founding documents and principles. A strong understanding of how our government works, why it was created, and the values it is built on is essential to an informed and engaged citizenry. Teaching the Constitution, the rule of law, individual liberty, and civic responsibility helps students understand both their rights and their duties. Patriotism in education does not mean ignoring our nation's flaws; it means teaching students to appreciate the principles that allow us to correct them. When students understand America's foundations, they are better equipped to think critically, participate responsibly, and contribute positively to their communities and country.

- 8) Do you support the Parents' Bill of Rights (SB49)?

Answer: Support. I support the Parents' Bill of Rights (SB49) because it reinforces a fundamental principle: parents are the primary decision-makers in their children's lives and education. The bill promotes transparency, communication, and parental access to information about curriculum, materials, and student well-being. It does not undermine teachers or schools; it strengthens trust by clearly defining roles and expectations. When parents are informed and involved, students are better supported. SB49 helps ensure schools and families work as partners, with shared accountability and respect, which ultimately benefits students and strengthens public education.

- 9) Should teachers and administrators be held accountable to community standards?

Answer: Yes. Burke should look like Burke and strive to be the best Burke we can be. Our schools and policies should reflect the values, needs, and strengths of our own

community, not outside agendas or one-size-fits-all solutions. We know our students, our families, and our challenges better than anyone else.

When we focus on what works here and commit to continuous improvement, we honor our community while setting high expectations for ourselves. Being the best version of Burke means protecting local control, valuing collaboration, and always putting students first as we work together to build a strong future.

10) Do you support school choice options (charter, private, homeschool)?

Answer: Support. Yes, I support school choice options, including charter schools, private schools, and homeschooling. Families should have the ability to choose the educational setting that best meets their child's needs. With that choice, especially when public funds are involved, comes accountability. All schools receiving taxpayer dollars should be held to clear and consistent standards, particularly in grading and academic outcomes.

The goal is the same across all settings: to graduate competent, capable young Americans prepared to build the future that generations before us sacrificed to create. Responsible funding, transparency, and accountability ensure school choice strengthens education without lowering expectations or weakening public trust.

## **Central District**

### **Mark Smith (D)**

Did not respond.

## **Eastern District**

### **Leslie Ritchie Taylor (R)**

1) Do you believe life begins at conception and deserves legal protection?

Answer: Yes. As a Christian, I believe it is my responsibility to protect life at all times even from the moment of conception.

2) Who has the ultimate responsibility for the education of children in public schools?

Answer: Parents. Parents have the ultimate responsibility for their child's education, even while partnering with public schools who provide the academic instruction.

3) Should sexually explicit books be removed from school libraries and classrooms?

Answer: Yes. I feel books should be age appropriate and developmentally appropriate under the guidance of educators and their parents.

4) Do you support any Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) programs?

Answer: Do not support. I feel that DEI fosters division and reverse discrimination.

- 5) Should all classroom materials and lesson plans be publicly available to parents?  
Answer: Yes. I believe lesson plans should be made public ensuring academic transparency, parent involvement, and as a resource for sharing tool for teachers. Its a good practice for all stakeholders.
- 6) Should biological males be allowed to compete in girls' sports or use girls' locker rooms?  
Answer: No.
- 7) Should schools emphasize civics, patriotism, and America's founding principles?  
Answer: Yes.
- 8) Do you support the Parents' Bill of Rights (SB49)?  
Answer: Support.
- 9) Should teachers and administrators be held accountable to community standards?  
Answer: Yes. Educators and administrators should be held to high ethical standards within their jobs, ensuring that educational goals align with the values of the stakeholders they serve.
- 10) Do you support school choice options (charter, private, homeschool)?  
Answer: Support. I feel that it is the parents' choice to make the decisions on which environment their children best learn in.

## **Western District**

### **Aaron Johnson (R)**

- 1) Do you believe life begins at conception and deserves legal protection?  
Answer: Yes.
- 2) Who has the ultimate responsibility for the education of children in public schools?  
Answer: Teachers. I think it is a collaborative responsibility between parents and the school system.
- 3) Should sexually explicit books be removed from school libraries and classrooms?  
Answer: Yes.
- 4) Do you support any Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) programs?  
Answer: Do not support. No, I feel like this programs discriminate and are often used as a crutch, which does not challenge individuals to work hard and contribute to society.
- 5) Should all classroom materials and lesson plans be publicly available to parents?  
Answer: Yes.

- 6) Should biological males be allowed to compete in girls' sports or use girls' locker rooms?  
Answer: No. Absolutely not, to include restrooms.
- 7) Should schools emphasize civics, patriotism, and America's founding principles?  
Answer: Yes.
- 8) Do you support the Parents' Bill of Rights (SB49)?  
Answer: Support.
- 9) Should teachers and administrators be held accountable to community standards?  
Answer: Yes. I think school officials should be held to a higher standard and should be compensated as such.
- 10) Do you support school choice options (charter, private, homeschool)?  
Answer: Support. I feel school choice has always been an option for parents. I do not think public school monies should be used or reduced to accommodate this. I think each parent should do what they think is best for their child.

# Board of Commissioners Candidate Responses

## Randy Burns (R)

- 1) Have you ever been convicted of a felony or penalized for sexual misconduct?  
Answer: No.
- 2) Do you believe life begins at conception and deserves legal protection?  
Answer: Yes. I believe that every human life is created by God with purpose and dignity from the moment of inception. Scripture tells us that God knows us before we are born and that each life is fearfully and wonderfully made. Because of that, I believe the unborn deserve our care, our compassion, and legal protection. Life is precious.
- 3) Who has the ultimate responsibility for the education of children in public schools?  
Answer: Parents. All above are important pieces of the larger effort, but parents should always have the final say.
- 4) Do you agree that excessive regulations and taxes hinder small business growth and startups?  
Answer: Agree: Excessive regulations and taxes make it harder for small businesses and startups to grow. I support limited government, fair taxes, and a regulatory environment that encourages entrepreneurship, job creation, and local economic growth.
- 5) Do you support the county enforcing public nuisance laws and cooperating with federal authorities to address illegal activity, including drug use, trespassing, and unlawful immigration?  
Answer: Support. Yes. I support enforcing public nuisance laws and cooperating with federal authorities to address illegal activity. Upholding the rule of law protects public safety, property rights, and quality of life, while respecting constitutional rights and proper roles of government.
- 6) Should county funds support DEI training, programs, statements, or policies?  
Answer: No. Never! County government's role is to provide core services effectively and fairly for all residents, not to promote ideological agendas. Public dollars should be focused on essential responsibilities such as public safety, infrastructure, education support, and efficient service delivery.
- 7) Would you oppose any new restrictions on the Second Amendment?  
Answer: Yes. Shall not be infringed, period!
- 8) Should the Ten Commandments or "In God We Trust" be displayed in county courthouses?  
Answer: Yes. Absolutely, I believe recognizing this foundation honors our history, respects our Constitution, and affirms the values that underpin the rule of law.
- 9) Will you defend churches and ministries from government overreach or discrimination?

Answer: Yes. In short, I will stand up for religious liberty, oppose discrimination, and keep government in its proper role, while working cooperatively with churches and ministries that serve our communities every day.

- 10) How would you approach county funding for local emergency services (law enforcement, fire, and EMS)?

Answer: Increase. I support funding public safety as a top county priority while remaining fiscally responsible. My approach focuses on ensuring law enforcement, fire, and EMS have the staffing, training, and equipment needed to protect lives, using data-driven decisions to avoid waste, and leveraging grants and partnerships to minimize the burden on taxpayers. The goal is strong, reliable emergency services delivered efficiently and accountably.

## **Shawn Freeman (R)**

- 1) Have you ever been convicted of a felony or penalized for sexual misconduct?

Answer: No. I have been in public service for all of my adult life. I am a Gulf War veteran and served in the U.S. Air Force where I was a crew chief on the F-16 and F-117 Stealth Fighter. After my military service I began a career in law enforcement with Morganton Public Safety. I served at Bald Head Island as the Deputy Chief of Public Safety. After Bald Head, I took a Chief of Police position with the Beech Mountain Police Department. I served as the Chief of Police at Black Mountain where I was also a board member with the North Carolina Chiefs of Police Association. After retiring from Black Mountain in 2021, I continue to teach Basic Law Enforcement firearms and hazardous materials as well as firearms for the North Carolina Private Protective Services Board.

- 2) Do you believe life begins at conception and deserves legal protection?

Answer: Yes. I believe God creates all living things. Jeremiah 1:5 says God said, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." This demonstrates God's intimate involvement and foreknowledge of individuals at that moment. I feel human life is made in God's image and this starts at fertilization.

- 3) Who has the ultimate responsibility for the education of children in public schools?

Answer: Parents. I feel education begins at home with the children's parents. Over the years, parents have put too much trust in others educating their child. Parents should take a proactive approach in raising their children. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." As parents, we are given the task to equip and teach our children, this includes teaching our children about the love of Christ.

- 4) Do you agree that excessive regulations and taxes hinder small business growth and startups?

Answer: Agree. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has stated that burdensome regulations hinder small business growth. I feel many times it is very difficult for small businesses to navigate the complex regulatory requirements. These regulatory requirements and taxes cause problems for the small business owners. We need to work

together to reduce the complexity of the regulations and develop initiatives that help local small businesses thrive.

- 5) Do you support the county enforcing public nuisance laws and cooperating with federal authorities to address illegal activity, including drug use, trespassing, and unlawful immigration?

Answer: Support. Through my law enforcement career, I have always supported these initiatives. I have found by working with all authorities, it helps to provide a safer environment for all those living in our county.

- 6) Should county funds support DEI training, programs, statements, or policies?

Answer: No. County funds should not be used for DEI. DEI has already been proven to be a failure. People should never be promoted or given a position based solely on race, sex, etc. People should be promoted based on their training, experience and knowledge. I am a firm believer that ANY American can be as successful as they want with good morals, integrity and work ethic.

- 7) Would you oppose any new restrictions on the Second Amendment?

Answer: Yes. I believe in the Right to Keep and Bear Arms. The Second Amendment was not created by our Founding Fathers to keep the country safe, it was created to keep its people safe against a tyrannical government.

- 8) Should the Ten Commandments or "In God We Trust" be displayed in county courthouses?

Answer: Yes. Absolutely. I believe our God created these commandments to help us guide our lives. Even if a person does not believe in God or the Bible, the Ten Commandments are a good tool to help guide. The phrase "In God We Trust" was placed on coins during the American Civil War by Abraham Lincoln. The phrase was adopted during this turbulent time when the country sought comfort and strength in their faith and to show that our nation was united under our common belief in God.

- 9) Will you defend churches and ministries from government overreach or discrimination?

Answer: Yes. I think it is the duty of our elected officials to protect churches from governmental overreach. Take the COVID 19 outbreak, the Biden Administration and Roy Cooper tried to interfere with churches during a time when people sought comfort during a contentious time. Government has no right to stop citizens from their right to Freedom of Religion.

- 10) How would you approach county funding for local emergency services (law enforcement, fire, and EMS)?

Answer: Increase. My career has been in emergency services as a law enforcement officer, fire fighter and EMT basic. Of course I would like to see the county provide more funds to help agencies provide better services. With that being said, I also know the strain on our families with high taxes, interest rates, food cost, gas, etc. While I would encourage better funding, I feel we must do this under a revenue neutral budget. We should look at other areas in the budget in order to trim excess allowing us to redirect funds to these very essential needs.

## **Tony Padgett (R)**

Did not respond.

## **Phil Smith (R)**

- 1) Have you ever been convicted of a felony or penalized for sexual misconduct?  
Answer: No.
- 2) Do you believe life begins at conception and deserves legal protection?  
Answer: Yes.
- 3) Who has the ultimate responsibility for the education of children in public schools?  
Answer: Parents.
- 4) Do you agree that excessive regulations and taxes hinder small business growth and startups?  
Answer: Agree.
- 5) Do you support the county enforcing public nuisance laws and cooperating with federal authorities to address illegal activity, including drug use, trespassing, and unlawful immigration?  
Answer: Support.
- 6) Should county funds support DEI training, programs, statements, or policies?  
Answer: No.
- 7) Would you oppose any new restrictions on the Second Amendment?  
Answer: Yes.
- 8) Should the Ten Commandments or "In God We Trust" be displayed in county courthouses?  
Answer: Yes.
- 9) Will you defend churches and ministries from government overreach or discrimination?  
Answer: Yes.
- 10) How would you approach county funding for local emergency services (law enforcement, fire, and EMS)?  
Answer: Increase.

## **Steve W. Starnes (D)**

- 1) Have you ever been convicted of a felony or penalized for sexual misconduct?  
Answer: No.
- 2) Do you believe life begins at conception and deserves legal protection?  
Answer: No. When life begins is a question that I am not qualified to answer since I am not a biologist or health care professional. I believe that abortions should be kept legal

and safe. I also believe that ultimately the decision on whether or not to terminate a pregnancy is between the women and her healthcare professional. The Government should not pass any law that limits healthcare choices of any person.

3) Who has the ultimate responsibility for the education of children in public schools?

Answer: Parents. The responsibility for deciding the type of education a child receives is up to the parents. School Boards and Teachers along with public input is and should be responsible for the development of curriculums used to educate the children. School Administrators and Teachers and the ones who should be charged with the execution of those curriculums in the classroom.

4) Do you agree that excessive regulations and taxes hinder small business growth and startups?

Answer: Agree. Excessive taxes not only hinder business growth and startups they also grind the process to a halt in a lot of cases.

5) Do you support the county enforcing public nuisance laws and cooperating with federal authorities to address illegal activity, including drug use, trespassing, and unlawful immigration?

Answer: Do not support. I support county law enforcement enforcing all county laws. I do not support supporting cooperation between local law enforcement and federal authorities. The federal authorities have engaged in blatant violations of citizens and non-citizens' right to due process. They have also used excessive force in carrying out orders from the White House and the Department of Homeland Security. A lot of the tactics used by ICE smacks of Nazi Gestapo tactics during the Third Reich in 1930's Germany.

6) Should county funds support DEI training, programs, statements, or policies?

Answer: Yes.

7) Would you oppose any new restrictions on the Second Amendment?

Answer: No. I believe we need common sense gun control laws. Background checks, red flag laws and restrictions assault weapons should be codified into law.

8) Should the Ten Commandments or "In God We Trust" be displayed in county courthouses?

Answer: No. That is a clear violation of "separation of church and state". I would however support displaying the Ten Commandments in County, State or Federal Buildings if they were displayed along with other religions' documents with similar content and intent.

9) Will you defend churches and ministries from government overreach or discrimination?

Answer: Yes. I am opposed to discrimination by any organization against any person for any reason.

10) How would you approach county funding for local emergency services (law enforcement, fire, and EMS)?

Answer: Increase. We must protect all our citizens using the best equipment and technology available and that requires increasing the level of funding that is currently being allocated.

## District Attorney Candidate Responses

### Taylor A. Rockett (R)

- 1) Have you ever been convicted of a felony or penalized for sexual misconduct?  
Answer: No. I have never been convicted of a felony nor have I ever been penalized for sexual misconduct.
- 2) Do you believe life begins at conception and deserves legal protection?  
Answer: Yes. The Bible says God knows us before we are formed in the womb. If we have souls before being “formed in the womb,” then “life” has certainly begun at conception! All human life deserves protection under the law.
- 3) Should crimes involving child abuse, sexual exploitation, or trafficking be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law?  
Answer: Yes. Those who will harm children and the innocent should not be roaming the streets freely. These predators pose a threat to our very way of life, and it is the absolute obligation of law enforcement and prosecutors to keep these individuals out of society in accordance with the rule of law. My office will vigorously prosecute those who harm or seek to harm the most vulnerable members of our society.
- 4) Should repeat offenders of crimes against children face enhanced charges or sentencing when allowed by law?  
Answer: Yes. I believe ALL habitual (repeat) offenders should be prosecuted as such where allowed by law. Children are our greatest commodity, or as the Bible puts it: “Children are a heritage from the Lord” and they must be protected at all costs. Individuals who commit crimes against children should be prioritized for aggravated and/or habitual sentence enhancements any time such is available. If North Carolina law gives us the option to put repeat offenders in custody for a longer period of time, there is no excuse for us to not do it!
- 5) Should violent crimes be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law whenever legally possible?  
Answer: Yes. Violent crime threatens the very fabric of our society. If the evidence shows that you have committed a violent crime, you will be prosecuted for it to the greatest extent possible. A civilized nation governed by the rule of law, cannot tolerate or be soft on violent crime, period.
- 6) Do you oppose “catch-and-release” policies that quickly return repeat offenders to the community?  
Answer: Yes. Unfortunately the District Attorney alone can’t unilaterally put an end to this cycle. Judges and magistrates play a significant role in this process also. However, I, if elected as District Attorney, pledge to argue for substantial bonds where appropriate, indict cases expeditiously, and prosecute vigorously those who repeatedly violate our laws.
- 7) Should drug trafficking and fentanyl-related crimes be treated as top prosecution priorities?

Answer: Yes. In my current position as Assistant District Attorney, I am assigned to the prosecution of large scale narcotics crimes. The truth is, the use, abuse, and distribution of illegal drugs exacerbates the commission of all other crime. Drug crimes perpetuate violent crime and property crime and are directly related to dozens of deaths in our district annually. The prosecution of such offenses MUST be prioritized.

- 8) Should victims' rights, especially those of children, be prioritized in charging decisions, plea agreements, and sentencing recommendations?

Answer: Yes. The Victims Rights Act (aka Marsy's Law) requires the District Attorney's office to communicate with victims of specified crimes and make them aware of their rights. As a prosecutor, I have always made every effort to keep victims informed and educated about the judicial process in general and about the status of their case. If elected, I will establish office policies that ensure victims' phone calls are returned within a reasonable time and that their questions are answered and their concerns are addressed.

- 9) Should the District Attorney publicly report prosecution outcomes to ensure transparency and accountability?

Answer: Yes. Elected officials work for We The People, and We The People should know what our leaders are doing! Transparency is the key to accountability! Additionally, the outcomes of prosecutions (except in juvenile cases) are public record in North Carolina. So, even if a District Attorney did not publish those results, any civilian can obtain disposition information from the Clerk of Court.

- 10) Do you support faith-based or restorative justice programs for non-violent offenders who voluntarily participate?

Answer: Support. This is a bit tricky. While I am a born-again Christian and I believe that the power of God can transform anyone, the Constitution does not allow the Government to advocate for, or require, faith-based programs in accordance with the First Amendment. However, in certain cases where a defendant requests to attend a faith-based or restorative justice program in an effort to lessen his possible criminal penalty, my office will review the facts of the case, speak with the charging law enforcement agency, and speak with victims to determine if these are appropriate options/resolutions for that particular case.

## **Mitch Walker (R)**

- 1) Have you ever been convicted of a felony or penalized for sexual misconduct?

Answer: No.

- 2) Do you believe life begins at conception and deserves legal protection?

Answer: Yes.

- 3) Should crimes involving child abuse, sexual exploitation, or trafficking be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law?

Answer: Yes. When we have sufficient evidence to support these types of charges, I will pursue stiff sentences for these offenders.

- 4) Should repeat offenders of crimes against children face enhanced charges or sentencing when allowed by law?  
Answer: Yes. When allowed by law, absolutely.
- 5) Should violent crimes be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law whenever legally possible?  
Answer: Yes.
- 6) Do you oppose “catch-and-release” policies that quickly return repeat offenders to the community?  
Answer: Yes. Catch and release policies for repeat offenders are unacceptable. New guidelines for judicial officials enacted through Iryna’s law has helped address some of the repeat offender release issues.
- 7) Should drug trafficking and fentanyl-related crimes be treated as top prosecution priorities?  
Answer: Yes. Drug Trafficking should be treated as a high priority for two main reasons: 1) Fentanyl is a deadly threat to our communities everyday. 2) The distribution of narcotics in our communities is often the source of many other types of crimes that threaten our communities.
- 8) Should victims’ rights, especially those of children, be prioritized in charging decisions, plea agreements, and sentencing recommendations?  
Answer: Yes.
- 9) Should the District Attorney publicly report prosecution outcomes to ensure transparency and accountability?  
Answer: Yes. Yes, I believe providing transparency is important, as long as doing so doesn’t compromise victim or witness privacy.
- 10) Do you support faith-based or restorative justice programs for non-violent offenders who voluntarily participate?  
Answer: Refuse to answer. These type programs are more appropriate for a case by case analysis rather than a blanket support or non-support.