



## Tips for Deciding Which Office Is Right For You

Ready to change the face of power and run for elected office? There are several considerations once you decide that you want to make a difference by running for elected office. A few key considerations include (1) for which offices are you eligible, (2) for which offices are your skills best suited, and (3) what issues are you most passionate about. Answering these questions will help you decide which office is the best fit as the duties and responsibilities of various offices can vary greatly.

### 1. Which offices are you eligible to run for based on your address?

Look yourself up in the [NC Voter Search](#) to find the list of which jurisdictions you can run in based on the location where you are registered to vote. Research the elected office descriptions on the government website. Look through local news, voting records, and legislation to determine what issues these elected bodies actually work on. It may take some digging.

- a. Research your representatives at every level and whether they share your values.
- b. Once you have identified an office of interest, assess how the election is conducted. For example, some offices are by district, some offices are elected at-large, or statewide. There are advantages and disadvantages for each election format.
- c. Determine when the next election will be held. Approximately how much time would you have to campaign? Do you have any major plans (new job, moving homes, getting married, having a baby, etc) in that timeframe that would require a lot of your attention and would take time away from your campaign? You should run at the most opportune time for you and that could be in the very next election or later in the future.

### 2. What skills and expertise do you bring to the table?

As long as you meet the legal qualifications to run for office then you are a viable candidate. Diversity of age, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, sex or sexuality, etc. are all important perspectives that need to be reflected at all levels of government. You'll need to articulate how your experiences, skills, and expertise will benefit your community and distinguish you from your opponent(s). The most basic expertise you'll need to run for political office is knowledge of your community, its needs, and problem solving.

### 3. Which issues are you most passionate about? Ideally, you should run for the office that has the most impact on those issues.

- a. Every elected office will likely have duties and responsibilities beyond your platform or current interests so be open to learning new areas of expertise and ways to benefit your community. You'll need to be well versed in all of the major areas of authority of the office you want to run for, be able to articulate your

positions, and why you are best qualified to serve. Realistically, most of the time and energy you devote to holding an elected position will not be spent on your preferred platform.

- i. Before you run for office determine what work you are already doing on your preferred issue in your community. Is there more you could do outside of running for office?
- b. We strongly recommend you attend or listen to a public meeting put on by the elected body you're interested in so that you can learn how they function.

**Things to think through when you are considering running against an incumbent:**

- What political party are they registered with? What is their background before they were in office? How does the community perceive this person?
- What kind of legislation does this person introduce and how have they voted in the past? Do you agree with their priorities and votes? What is this person's stance on the issue you care most about? What are their public statements?
- Is this person accessible to the members of their community? How would you be either more accessible or accessible in a different way than this person?
- What lens or lenses (businessperson? conservative? feminist? LGBTQ? etc...) does this person view their work through? What perspective do you think you would bring to this role and what difference would that make to the community?
- Is your potential opponent a minority (race, gender, sexual orientation, political party) in their political body? Would the community gain or lose anything from this person no longer being in office?
- What is the pulse of the community? Is your potential opponent popular? Who do you need to speak with to determine this? Community leaders, faith leaders, other elected officials?
  - When you are on a fact finding mission about an incumbent you want to be sensitive that you will likely be interviewing people who may have a relationship with this incumbent. Be respectful in your inquiries and know that you can express interest in running for a race without crossing the line of making a formal announcement.
- If it's not the right time for you to run for office what can you do in the meantime to continue working in your community? Serve on a committee or appointed board? Ask the incumbent or another board member to mentor you?