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Another important election season is before us. In November, we will make decisions that will drive our policies, our goals and our future. We have great assets here in North Carolina, but we also face real challenges.



All of our communities have felt the effects of the economic down turn. Our state is consistently ranked as one of the top in the nation for business and industry, but at the same time, our unemployment remains close to 10 percent, and too many families have felt the sting of job losses. Our state's infrastructure is in need of updating, modernizing and significant investment. Our local governments are working even harder and more efficiently and creatively to provide the needed services for our citizens in an economic environment where our normal revenue sources, in most cases, have been reduced.

As the chair of the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, I have had the opportunity to understand what these challenges mean, not only for Durham, but for cities all over this state. Representing 28 of the state's largest cities, the Coalition is a strong voice for North Carolina's future. We understand the importance of economic growth that supports and sustains the entire state. We know that to move North Carolina forward and to build the economy of the future, we must create and attract jobs for all our citizens, not just those within our city borders.

We can all agree that North Carolina needs leaders with real plans to create jobs and support economic development, keep our communities safe and prepare our state and our people for the needs of the future. That is why we issued a survey to all three candidates for governor – Walter Dalton, Barbara Howe and Pat McCrory. Only Dalton submitted answers and they are printed here. This survey will allow you to hear directly from Dalton on the issues most important to our Coalition and to our constituents.

North Carolina is a great state, but we must work together to reach our full potential. The next governor will set the stage for progress and determine the policies that will drive the state's development. This election is important for our cities and for our entire state.

Our Coalition will continue to advocate for smart, forward-thinking policies that build our cities and our economy. Let's make sure those issues are at the forefront during this campaign and in the voting booth.

2012 Gubernatorial Candidate Survey

TRANSPORTATION

1 Share your thoughts on our state's current dependence on the gas tax as the primary source of transportation revenues and how you would address the continually decreasing nature of this revenue source.

DALTON—We must examine other project funding options to offset the impact of decreasing gas tax revenues. I chaired the state's Logistics Task Force, which discussed public-private partnerships and lease purchases as alternative funding opportunities. We also discussed the need to keep the Mobility Fund in place. Overall, we need to keep all funding options on the table to ensure that we can meet our current and future transportation needs.

Additionally, North Carolina needs to receive the full benefit from our contributions to the federal gas tax. For many years, North Carolina has been a donor state, but recently, we have been able to nearly balance this funding and help offset decreases in state tax funding.

2 What do you see as the role of our state's big cities in transportation and specifically, what is your position on the transfer of state roads to local government?

DALTON—I firmly believe in our coordinated system under a single state entity because transportation is a statewide issue, not an urban or rural issue. Each part of the state is affected by gaps and breakdowns, and dissolving the DOT into local government could damage our ability to efficiently move people and freight statewide.

Our large cities certainly have unique transportation issues stemming from congestion, which need to be alleviated. Cities and regions can take action to improve their critical issues. As part of economic development, cities could incentivize remote work environments, which decrease the amount of travel during during peak hours. These programs have been explored in Minnesota and other states through "e-WorkPlace" initiatives. Cities can also provide incentives to individual citizens to live inside the city beltline, and developing robust public transportation systems help alleviate congestion.

3 Share your thoughts on expanding the use of tolling in our state and how you think we can leverage tolling most effectively.

DALTON—Toll roads should be a last resort for highway funding, but each project must be considered on a case-by-case basis. If local government and Transportation officials decide to add tolls to transportation projects, I will work to ensure there are efficient alternate routes and methods for local residents to avoid the toll.

4 What are your thoughts on the state's move away from naming specific transportation projects in statute over the last few years toward a data driven process for project selection and as Governor, will you continue this course of action?

DALTON—Data-driven transportation systems are necessary to ensure that partisanship and political spoils do not cloud decision making. We must also strike the balance between population and ensuring that all parts of the state have the infrastructure they need for economic development and statewide logistics. As Governor, I will continue the program and push for improvements that make the best use of our resources and provide the most benefit to the people and businesses throughout our state.

5 What are your thoughts on the role and importance of transit, light rail, and high speed rail in the urban parts of our state and the state's role as a partner in funding these modes of transportation?

DALTON—With over 1.5 million new people coming to our state in the past decade, public transportation and mass transit are needed to make sure our cities continue to thrive. Plus, these projects can serve as economic development tools as we put people to work, recruit new companies, alleviate congestion, and attract the best and brightest minds to North Carolina. As Governor, I will ensure that the state is a partner in transit projects, committing funding where possible and leveraging federal dollars.

6 What are your thoughts on the “complete streets” concept and what role do you think the state should play in funding bike and pedestrian facilities within cities?

DALTON—Our rapid population growth and economic development needs will require us to embrace the concept of complete streets where it makes sense. Bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and room for mass transit help us recruit top talent to North Carolina. Plus, they can help us tackle public health issues stemming from obesity by increasing options for physical activity.

CRIME

7 What are your thoughts on the appropriate level of funding for our judiciary and courts?

DALTON—Keeping our communities safe is a top priority. Strong law enforcement and an adequately funded court system are essential to public safety. We cannot compromise the safety of our citizens.

ECONOMY

8 As Governor, how will you partner with the state’s large cities to enable them to remain vibrant, healthy centers of commerce?

DALTON—As Governor, I will work closely with our cities to make sure North Carolina moves forward and that our commerce is vibrant. Some specific projects include:

- Strengthening economic development tools like the One North Carolina Fund and J-DIG
- Creating a state Global Commerce Center with a counselor assigned to each of our economic regions to increase exports and international business opportunities
- Developing a “Made in North Carolina” program that helps market North Carolina goods for export and that gives in-state firms priority on state contracts
- Creating a Manufacturer’s Capital Fund to help employers expand in our cities
- Proposing an Infrastructure Bank with Virginia, South Carolina, and Tennessee to share expenses

on mutually beneficial projects to better move people, goods, and information

- Promoting a Dollar\$ for Development program to strengthen North Carolina research institutions, recruit and retain top researchers, and commercialize research
- Developing comprehensive regional inland ports, generally centered with cities as the hub

These programs would help our cities grow, develop revenue, and continue taking the lead in making North Carolina globally competitive.

9 What are your thoughts on how we can unleash the potential in our big cities to further their economic success?

DALTON—The programs I outlined in the last question will unleash our cities’ potential, but we have tremendous potential in urban-rural partnerships. By tying the economic development needs of our cities with rural areas, we can create job opportunities across the state.

We have seen great examples of urban-rural partnerships already. For example, I sponsored the University Cancer Research Fund, which is based in Chapel Hill but has statewide partners, including rural, remote counties. The Research Fund delivers healthcare services, bolsters cutting edge research, and puts people to work in healthcare professions across the state. Working together, we can put people back to work in all 100 counties.

10 Share your thoughts on the need for differentiated legislation, policies, and solutions for large cities facing uniquely urban challenges?

DALTON—Our cities and rural areas have unique challenges, and differentiated legislation can be one solution. The Metro Mayors Coalition and the League of Municipalities have been leaders to advocate for urban areas. As Governor, I will make sure that their opinions are strongly considered in our public policy decisions. For North Carolina to have a strong economy, we must consider the needs of our urban areas. I want the Metro Mayors, the League of Municipalities, and other groups to be at the table to discuss our common concerns such as jobs, education, crime, transportation and revenue.

11 The General Assembly has made drastic changes to the municipal annexation statutes, so there will be few significant city initiated annexations in the future as adjacent areas develop and need urban services. Would you support reasonable changes to the statutes to help keep our cities and towns strong and economically vibrant?

DALTON—Annexation has helped our economy grow and let our cities expand in an orderly manner. Residents who are annexed should receive city services such as water, sewer, law enforcement, and solid waste service in a timely manner.

12 What is your position on the provision of traditional municipal services (water, sewer, etc.) beyond city limits? Should those decisions be made by the elected leaders of the municipality or by the General Assembly?

DALTON—Generally, the owners of water and sewer systems are municipalities. They should control their operations. Water and sewer are essential services, and expansion beyond city limits should happen when demand and acceptance of the public who are affected exists.