

Letter to the Editor

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by Billy Richardson

When my opponent, Wesley Meredith, was questioned by the Observer on his response to the Dan River spill and the course of environmental regulation in the State over the past several years, he recited his talking point of "helping small business" and argued that voters mandated this type of "change" by electing him and those like him to power. I have some points in response:

1. **Duke Energy is not a small business. It is the largest electric utility in the United States. It had profits of nearly 3 billion dollars last year alone! Duke's stock soared, and company shareholders like Governor McCrory made millions. Instead of forcing Duke to clean up its toxic coal ash ponds, one of which is within feet of the Cape Fear River, Meredith sides with his leadership and with Duke Energy. It is big money, not small business, that has a place at the table in Raleigh.**

Duke Energy has made it clear that it will, with Meredith's support, raise its electrical rates to clean up its toxic ponds, passing the bill to everyday consumers, including regular North Carolinians and the small businesses Meredith claims he is protecting. This is flat out wrong. Our parents and teachers taught us that we clean up our own messes in this State. We don't pass the bill on to those less powerful and less privileged. Is this the change Meredith believes we wanted?

2. **I believe in small businesses. I own and co-own three of them, including a law practice, an apartment business, and a property management company. I employ dozens of people in Cumberland County.**

I understand that for any business to succeed, it must be made of well-educated and well-trained individuals.

After receiving a degree from Fayetteville Tech, Meredith should appreciate the value of our community colleges. Instead, he voted to cut funding for our community college system altogether.

Meredith and his leadership have shown nothing but disdain for our teachers and public schools. Unlike Meredith, I know the value of a public education. The public schools of Cumberland County and the University of North Carolina provided me with the opportunities that made me who I am today.

The future of our State lies with our children. It is becoming more evident that we are cheating them out of the education and opportunities that we are morally and constitutionally mandated to provide. Unlike Meredith, I will vote to give ALL of our hardworking and dedicated teachers a raise, not insult our experienced teachers by just giving our beginning teachers a raise.

3. **The more I examine Meredith's voting record on education, the environment, and economic policy, the more I am convinced that his plan for change is to make North Carolina more like his home state of Mississippi.**

I travel to Mississippi on a regular basis to defend a man who sits on death row for a crime he did not commit. I do it pro bono because I believe it is my obligation as an attorney. Barbara and I try to teach our children that with blessings come a responsibility to assist

those who cannot assist themselves. In my time in Mississippi, I have learned that we in North Carolina are steps ahead as a State, but I am afraid the current leadership in Raleigh wants to take us backward.

I am proud of North Carolina and its reputation as a leader in the South. I was proud of our accomplishments when I was your legislator in the 1990's. Those times seem so bright today. Let's keep moving forward. Tell Meredith this is not the change we were looking for when he was elected.

I ask for your vote in November.

Billy Richardson - Candidate for Senate - District 19