



State Employees Association of North Carolina  
**2020 CANDIDATE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**



Candidate name: Abbie (Bud) Lane

**Opening Statement**

1. Please tell us what issues regarding state employees and retirees are most important to you and how you would address them?

A top priority is expanding what was started with the Clear Pricing Project. I have long advocated that a large portion of increase cost is due to a lack of transparency in not just what providers are charging insurance companies and systems such as Medicare but what insurance companies actually pay opposed to what they report to the consumer as cost. A prime example was when my husband and I both went to the same emergency room less than 2 months apart for the same situation, had the same test, saw the same doctor, and have the same insurance but when we received our bills they were over \$1000 different in cost to us.

We have to change how the General Assembly addresses pay raises when it comes to state employees. Each time the conversation is had it turns into a situation where they effectively turn each group of employees on the rest Hunger Games style to determine which will receive the funding instead of simply realizing that all are state employees and should be treated to the same adjustments requirements.

2. The Teachers and State Employees Retirement System is a defined benefit plan. The State is currently contributing 14.78% of payroll to the active employees 6% contribution. Over the past decade or so, there have been discussions about converting the plan to a defined contribution plan. What do you know about TSERS and would you support such a change? Why or why not?

Full disclosure this isn't an area I'm largely familiar with, and while researching don't feel that what I was able to learn was suffice to make a definitive stance without further research and being able to speak to more individuals more directly familiar as I do with all areas that aren't my expertise. As for the question of converting to a defined contribution plan I have found in my previous experiences in the corporate world that those more often than not fold under as it doesn't take into consideration growth fluctuations and irregularities that would make it sustainable.

3. In the past, some agencies have been hesitant to allow SEANC at work locations and at times SEANC may call on them to help. Do you support SEANC having access to the state employees in the workplace to allow for member recruitment, the sharing of information on SEANC benefits such as insurance and scholarships, leadership training and member education?

I'm a huge advocate for transparency and streamlining processes to remove unneeded red tapes and restrictions so I would support SEANCE having acces for the means listed as it would only strengthen all involved.

4. The State Human Resources Act contains employment protections, guarantees grievance procedures, workplace rights, etc. Will you oppose legislation that would remove state employees from the protections of the State Human Resources Act? Why or why not?

I'm an advocate for true equality so I would never support any legislation that sought to remove anyone from having protections granted to others. I'm a firm believer that everyone should be able to not only feel safe in their chosen workplace, but know that if an unfortunate situation were to arise they are supported in speaking up, without repercussions and that it is and should be encouraged instead of silenced.

5. In 2018, Treasurer Dale Folwell presented the Clear Pricing Project to the State Health Plan (SHP) Board of Trustees for discussion and approval. It passed unanimously. The Clear Pricing Project attempted to reign in some of the outrageous charges by hospitals to the SHP and give transparency to what hospitals charge to SHP members. Almost immediately, House Bill 184 was introduced and passed by the House. HB-184 would delay the treasurer's ability to even attempt any changes to the State Health Plan until 2021.

**Incumbent House Member:** How did you vote on HB-184 and why?

**Incumbent Senate Member or Challenger:** Would you have voted for HB-184? Why or Why Not?

While researching this I discovered that my opponent Shelly Willingham was actually a sponsor on the bill. While I usually do prefer studies being done before advocating changes by all that I was able to research that had already properly been done and had even been implemented with the intended results in other states. So on this bill I wouldn't have voted for HB-184 as I don't feel the delay helped anyone or has shown to offer anything we didn't already know. I am not a candidate that supports dragging your feet for the sake of wasting time until you think you can get the votes for something else which is what this appeared to be.

6. In 2017, the minimum wage for most state employees was raised to \$15 per hour, but non-certified school and community college employees were not included. Will you support raising these employees to \$15 per hour? Why or why not?

This goes back to a previous answer of what issues are important to me. I believe when the General Assembly pick and choose as they have in recent years which employees receive raises it creates fractures in the united voice of the collective and takes power from all involved in future negotiations since it in turns creates an environment where each are more likely to look out for their sub group rather than the collective. I fully support raising these employees to \$15 per hour as well as guaranteeing they are part of any future raises.

7. Given the current state of the economy, do you think it is reasonable to give state employees a pay raise and retirees a COLA? Why or why not?

With the current state of the economy I think its more important than ever to at the very least make sure that retirees receive a COLA. Even in a down economy cost continue to rise and penalizing individuals who put in their years of service that we made a promise to look after isn't what is right. State employees should also at the very least receive the previous promised raises because again we have to create a system where words matter so that in future negotiations all can enter knowing that what is said will be followed through on and build trust. The economy in my opinion is never an excuse for hurting the very people you rely on day in an day out to operate. There are other areas you can cut back on first.

8. Given the current state of the economy, do you think it will be necessary to furlough or lay-off state employees?

I would love to say no but we all know the reality of any business including government is that there are no guarantees. By that I mean just as I stated before I believe costing employees should always be the last resort BUT if you do reach that point in the chain it sometimes does become a necessity but should always and only be used as a last resort, only have extinguishing all other options, and after first offering voluntary lay offs to those who are able and willing to with stand the financial burden. In turn for anyone who does volunteer I believe there needs to be future incentives such as an additional one time bonus pay or additional vacation time, etc.

9. Last summer after the governor vetoed the state budget in a partisan vote, the legislature passed a mini-budget (*Senate bill 226*) that would give a 5% raise over two years to most state employees and it was signed by the governor. A second mini-budget (*Senate bill 354*) was passed that would have given a 4% raise over two years to university and community college employees, a 3.9% raise to teachers and 2% raises to non-certified school employees with the caveat the raises would go into effect once the governor's veto of the state budget had been overridden. The governor vetoed the education mini-budget because it didn't give enough money to teachers. That veto was upheld by mostly party line votes in the House and Senate.

**Incumbent:** How did you vote on the education mini-budget and veto override and why?

**Challenger:** How would you have voted on the education mini-budget and veto override and why?

Under the circumstances I would have had to vote no on the education mini-buddget as well as the veto override. In my opinion the trade off wasn't sufficient. The caveat that the funding only would happen IF the Governor's veto of the full budget was overridden is the basis for such. The budget was loaded with special interest projects and pork spending while not doing nearly enough for everyone else including educators and educators shouldn't have been used as black mail to try and strong arm it's passage. Once you give in to such demands once you set the precedent for all future negotiations and lose all leverage. Educators deserve better.

10. Privatizing state services usually results in higher costs to taxpayers and leaves the state liable for any damages or activities that arise from contractors who have no oversight from state agencies. Overspending and lack of oversight has resulted in a budget hole for the Department of Transportation and has been left to the General Assembly to fill the gaps. This lack of leadership and oversight ultimately resulted in highway projects being halted and state employees being furloughed. What is your position on privatizing state government operations and services?

I support privatization as a means of handling overflow only BUT with any private contracts we first have to have a system in place that gives those agencies oversight just as if they working in a corporate setting with independent contractors. Speaking of the DOT when I was a Governor's Page 20 years ago I remember coming out with concerns over how projects were funded and handled and because of that as part of my campaign platform have made a priority are reining in the cause of those very concerns including in how we handle not just private contracts but all project contracts. The government needs to be run my like a corporation where contracts aren't open ended and contractors know that they will be handed a blank check and be able to pocket more money if they create delays. At the same time I know the importance of those private contracts to smaller communities where it puts an influx into local economies as well as helps to create jobs locally. So there has to be a new balance found to address all these issues BUT it begins by first fixing the flawed system that created the original problem.

## Closing Statement

11. Please tell us why you deserve EMPAC's endorsement.

I'm not the type of person that believes I "deserve" anything and instead simply work day in and day out to EARN everything that I receive whether it be an endorsement or someone's vote. The same is true with this interaction. I answer these questionnaires first and foremost because I believe in full transparency and we have for too long allowed politicians to run on party instead of principles and that is what I'm looking to change. I'm the only candidate in my race that has support from Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, Greens, and Unaffiliated voters which speaks volumes to my message as well as the person and candidate that I am and what I represent being truly for the good of all. I'm not a candidate that panders as I make all of my issues and platform public as I do my replies to all answered questionnaires so that there is never any confusion on what I represent or how I am expected to vote when that issue arises. Still with that said I'm always willing to listen, learn, and evolve but every decision I make is always for what I believe is good for my district and my state not myself.