

2 candidates for Pender Superior Court clerk

With no Democratic challenger, GOP primary winner takes seat

By F.T. Norton

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PENDER COUNTY — Two candidates are vying for the seat of Pender County Clerk of Superior Court in the Republican primary.

There is no Democratic challenger, which means the results of the primary will decide who wins the seat, currently filled by an appointee after the early retirement of former clerk Robert Kilroy in 2017.

The salary, set by N.C. statute, is \$89,188.

1) What makes you more qualified than your opponent for this position?

**Craver:** My Experience. I am the clerk of court, having been appointed more than a year ago to fill the unexpired term of Robert Kilroy. I have worked in every department of the office. I routinely perform the duties of judge, comptroller, record keeper, administrator and manager of 10 deputies and four assistant clerks. Prior to my formal appointment, I had been delegated many clerk responsibilities by Mr. Kilroy. I am known for fairness, a professional judicial temperament and have attended and completed multiple continuing education classes to provide effective service to the citizens of Pender County and users of the courts system.

**Lunsford:** I applied and was hired in 2001 as a deputy clerk of Superior Court. I have worked hard for my advancement in position over the past 16-plus years. I have advanced and became an assistant clerk of Superior Court on my own merit and hard work. I have always worked hard to advance and achieve my goals on my own, not relying on the name or merit of family or others. I have the want, determination, professionalism and know how to serve the citizens of Pender County in the manner in which they deserve.

2) Are you familiar with N.C. open records law and what are your thoughts on the public's rights to access?

**Craver:** Yes, I am very familiar with the open records law and the laws requiring confidentiality in some matters to protect victims, minors, etc. There is also the need to protect some data to avoid danger of identity fraud. In general, records are public unless specifically designated by law as protected. The clerk is obligated to follow all legislation and the specific rules of record keeping in determining what records are required by law to be withheld from public inspection.

**Lunsford:** Yes, I feel that the public should have access to all court records, with the exception of involuntary commitments, juvenile justice records, and adoptions. I also feel strongly that criminal records should be open whether same is expunged or not, especially if the subject is seeking election to public office.

3) What changes, if any, would you make to the office?

**Craver:** I am very proud of my staff. We work daily to provide accurate and timely service to the citizens of Pender County. We achieve this by attending continuing education training classes, keeping up to date with new legislation and procedures. We maintain a positive working environment and work diligently to provide the resources and assistance the public needs to promote confidence in the users of the Pender County courts. No significant changes are anticipated at this time.

**Lunsford:** I cannot at this time pinpoint any particular changes within the clerk's office, but I do have a few concerns that need to be addressed in reference to the service that is being offered to the citizens of Pender County. Pender and New Hanover counties make up the Fifth Judicial District and yet Pender County does not have a judge on duty until 5 p.m. The citizens of Pender County are hardworking, tax paying individuals that deserve the same respect and customer service that New Hanover County does.

4) How did you become interested in this position?

**Craver:** I have been exposed to the court system since birth. My mother, Brenda Tucker, began working in the New Hanover County clerk's office in 1982 and was elected clerk in 1990. She worked there 28.5 years. My stepfather, Elton Tucker, served as a district court judge for 21 years. It was our way of life. My mother loved her job and I would have to file or do odd jobs in the office for spending money when I was younger. I have worked my way up the ladder from a rock-bottom entry level.

**Lunsford:** As of July, I will have been employed in the Fifth Judicial District for 15 years, first as a deputy clerk, and for the past nine years as an assistant clerk of Superior Court. I have been doing the job of the Clerk of Superior Court as her assistant with the same powers and authority that the clerk possesses. I am from Pender County and I am for Pender County. I want to serve my home community with the passion and compassion they deserve.

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