

Like the rest of the nation, North Carolina has been facing difficult economic times -- demanding many difficult decisions. I have had to make painful budget cuts in important areas of government. But I believe I have approached this challenge in a way that is consistent with my values and the values that have made our state a wonderful place to live and raise a family. I have spent my tenure in office - and, in fact, my adult lifetime - fighting for things that I care deeply about. And as anyone who knows me will tell you, I do not back down from tough fights.

But I understand this: We live in highly partisan times, where some people seem more worried about scoring political points than working together to address the real challenges our state faces. And it is clear to me that my race for re-election will only further politicize the fight to adequately fund our schools. A re-election campaign in this already divisive environment will make it more difficult to find any bipartisan solutions.

The thing I care about most right now is making sure that our schools and schoolchildren do not continue to be the victims of shortsighted legislative actions and severe budget cuts inflicted by a legislative majority with the wrong priorities. Therefore, I am announcing today that I have decided not to seek re-election. I hope this decision will open the door to an honest and bipartisan effort to help our schools.

To those of you who have supported me throughout my years of public service, I will always be grateful for the confidence you have placed in me. In my remaining months in office, I look forward to continuing to fight for the priorities we share, by putting North Carolinians back to work and investing in our children's future. To my children and grandchildren, and especially to my husband Bob, thank you for always being there for me - especially as I've weighed this difficult decision.

Thank you all, and God bless North Carolina.