

12th District rep won't be seated soon

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

Some of those seeking to succeed Mel Watt in Congress are panning Gov. Pat McCrory's decision to leave Watt's 12th Congressional District seat unfilled for nearly a year.

Watt left the U.S. House late last year to lead the Federal Housing Finance Agency. McCrory decided against holding a special election to let voters pick a candidate to finish Watt's current term; instead, the 12th Congressional seat will be decided along with other midterm races, with the primary on May 6 and the general election on Nov. 4. Watt would have been up for reelection this year (all members of the U.S. House are), so November's victor, who will be sworn-in immediately after the election, gets a full two-year term of his or her own.

McCrory said his decision to tag the 12th District election onto the midterm ballot will save tax payers up to \$1 million and cut down on confusion. Critics say the Republican governor is leaving the largely black and Democratic 12th District without representation for a long span by design.

"It really disenfranchises 600,000 people," said N.C. Rep. Alma Adams, one of about six people who plan to run for Watt's former seat. "That means that citizens of the 12th District will have no representation. They'll have no vote, no voice. There are a number of critical issues facing the Congress in 2014 and there will be no one to speak for us for almost a year."

The 12th District offices will remain open under the supervision of the Clerk of the House to receive and undertake con-



Vice President Joe Biden prepares to swear-in Mel Watt last week as head of the Federal Housing Finance Agency.

stituent casework until a new representative is elected. Adams, who is in her 11th term in the General Assembly, said while a district office can handle some things, there are many times when it takes a legislator stepping in to get things done for a constituent. The Guilford County Democrat is working on legislation to prevent such a prolonged vacancy in the future. She wants to prevent vacant seats from being left open for six months or more and to shorten the required 10-week period between and primary and a runoff.

N.C. Sen. Malcolm Graham, a Democrat who has represented Mecklenburg County for five terms, also plans to run for the seat. (Candidate filing doesn't begin until Feb. 10).

He agrees that it will take an "unusually long" time to fill the 12th Congressional seat and disagrees with the governor's

argument that the decision was a financial one.

"I think the taxpayers of the 12th Congressional District deserve a voice and a vote. We have over a \$20 billion budget, and I'm pretty sure in that budget, we can find the resources necessary to give the citizens a voice sooner than later," Graham said.

The North Carolina Democratic Party also disagreed with the move.

Spokesman Micah Beasley said that it means that there will be less representation for the state's diverse population in Congress.

"We're disappointed in the decision," said Beasley. "This is a reflection of the governor's priorities. He has money for big tax cuts for the wealthiest North Carolinians and out-of-state corporations, but then says we can't have an election to allow Congressional District 12 to have representation for almost an entire year."

N.C. Rep. Marcus Brandon, a Guilford County second-term who says he is also running for the seat, sees things differently. He says the campaign should be a long one, since it will elect someone who may hold the seat for decades to come. The election schedule will result in higher voter turnout, he said.

He said other candidates oppose it because a longer campaign would help lesser known candidates like him to get their name out in a district that virtually runs the length of the state. Brandon also said current elected officials planning to run for the 12th Congressional District seat fear giving up their current seats, as state law prohibits a candidate's name from appearing on the ballot twice. Brandon, Adams, Graham and all General Assembly members are up for reelection this year.

Brandon sees the longer election cycle as a win-win.

"If you're a leader, you're not scared of people voting, and you want to go through a process where

Honors will be given at MLK program

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Forsyth County Commissioner Walter Marshall and Mel Watt, the newly-installed leader of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, will be honored Monday for their "tireless and distinguished service" at the 34th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Noon Hour Commemoration.



Butterfield

The two men will receive MLK Dare to Make a Difference awards during the ceremony, which is free and open to the public and will start at noon at the Benton Convention Center.

Commemoration founder and host Mütter Evans says other special guests will include poet Helen Losse, musical group David Allen & Company, Mayor Allen Joines, Democracy North Carolina's Linda Sutton and North Carolina NAACP President Dr. William J. Barber II, who will speak via satellite.

U.S. Rep. G. K. Butterfield will give the keynote address. The former N.C. Supreme Court justice represents the state's 1st Congressional District.

everyone has the opportunity to have their voices heard (and) all the candidates have the opportunity to make their case to the people," Brandon said.

Wake Forest University politics professor John Dinan said while it's a longer than normal vacancy, McCrory's decision only prolongs the process by a few months. Any special election would take some time, he said, to give candidates a period to file and Americans living abroad to mail absentee ballots.

Also, he added, federal law states that there must be at least 45 days between each time voters go to the polls, meaning that several months would be required for a primary, a runoff (if the top candidate gets less than 40 percent of the vote) and the general election.

"It seems a long time to go with a vacancy, but it turns out scheduling the special election cycle with the general election cycle is probably the least confusing and the least problematic for voter turnout," Dinan said.

Dinan said the new representative would be sworn in right after the November election, as soon as the results have been certified.

Other candidates who have announced they're running for the seat include Mecklenburg County School Board General Counsel George Battle III and former Charlotte City Council members James Mitchell and Curtis Osborne.

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KNOW WHEN TO ROLL!

RED or BLUE?

ONLY ROLL OUT YOUR RECYCLING CART EVERY OTHER WEEK.
This calendar will help you know when to roll.
Save it on your fridge or near your cart.

Recycling Red Week Calendar

JANUARY 2014							FEBRUARY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4							1
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	

MARCH							APRIL						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1							1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	23	24	25	26	27	28	29

MAY							JUNE						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30					

JULY							AUGUST						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1							1
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30

SEPTEMBER							OCTOBER						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1							1
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30					26	27	28	29	30	31	

NOVEMBER							DECEMBER						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1							1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	28	29	30	31			

2014 Collection Schedule

These holidays (circled on calendar) are exceptions to your normal garbage, yard waste and recycling collections.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY - Jan. 20
Garbage: Normal schedule
Recycling: RED WEEK; Normal schedule
Yard-Waste Carts: Postponed one day

PRESIDENT'S DAY - Not observed

EASTER - April 18
Garbage: Tues.-Thurs.: Normal schedule, Friday on Monday, April 21
Recycling: RED WEEK; Normal schedule
Yard-Waste Carts: Normal schedule

MEMORIAL DAY - May 26
Garbage: Normal schedule
Recycling: RED WEEK; Postponed one day
Yard-Waste Carts: Postponed one day

INDEPENDENCE DAY - July 4
Garbage: Tues. - Thurs. normal schedule, Fri. collected on Mon. July 7
Recycling: BLUE WEEK; Normal schedule
Yard-Waste Carts: Normal schedule

LABOR DAY - Sept. 1
Garbage: Normal schedule
Recycling: RED WEEK; Postponed one day
Yard-Waste Carts: Postponed one day

COLUMBUS DAY - Not observed

VETERANS DAY - Not observed

THANKSGIVING DAY - Nov. 27 & 28
Garbage: Tues. & Weds. normal schedule, Thurs. on Mon. Dec. 1, Fri. on Tues. Dec. 2, Week of Dec. 4: Postponed one day; Friday on Mon. Dec 8
Recycling: RED WEEK;
Mon. - Wed.: Normal schedule, Thurs. & Friday postponed one day.
Yard-Waste Carts:
Mon. & Tues. collected Monday, Wed. on Tues.; Thurs. on Weds.

CHRISTMAS - Dec. 25 & 26
Garbage: Tues. - Thurs. moved up one day, Fri. collected on Mon.
Recycling: RED WEEK;
Mon. - Wed. normal schedule, Thurs. & Friday postponed one day.
Yard-Waste Carts:
Mon. & Tues. collected Monday, Wed. on Tues.; Thurs. on Weds.

NEW YEAR'S DAY 2015 - Jan. 1, 2015
Garbage: Tues. & Wed. normal schedule, Thurs. on Friday, Friday on Monday, Jan. 5
Recycling: BLUE WEEK;
Mon. - Wed. normal schedule, Thurs. & Friday postponed one day.
Yard-Waste Carts:
Mon. - Wed. normal schedule, Thurs. on Friday

Don't know your week? Go to www.recycling.cityofws.org or call CityLink 311