

## MELANIE WADE GOODWIN 1970-2020



RALEIGH — Melanie Wade Goodwin, 50, of Raleigh passed away Tuesday, September 1st at 6:07pm at Transitions LifeCare. She was born on July 22, 1970 in Richmond, Virginia and lived most of her life in North Carolina, and is the daughter of Albert and Nancy Wade, who both survive her.

Melanie, a 1988 alumna of Sanderson High School, graduated from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill in 1992 with an undergraduate degree in English, while participating in and enjoying leading roles in the all-female a cappella group, the UNC Loreleis. Prior to obtaining her juris doctorate from Campbell University, she worked with the NC Council for Women - where, among other things, she helped domestic violence shelters statewide - and was part of the delegation to attend the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, China.

After marrying and then graduating law school, Melanie created her own law firm and went on to practice family law and represent injured workers in Hamlet and Rockingham, North Carolina for several years before succeeding her husband as State Representative in the NC General Assembly, representing Richmond and Montgomery counties from 2004-2010 for three terms.

As a legislator and the first woman elected from Richmond County in the General Assembly, Melanie sponsored legislation that strengthened investments in public education and rural economic development, helped improve public health and the courts system; and she always championed women's rights and women's health. Further, she served two terms as Chair of House Election Laws and Campaign Finance Reform Committee as well as House co-Chair of the Joint Legislative Administrative Procedures Oversight Committee. As Chair of the Elections Law Committee, Melanie brought about progressive, good government, voter-friendly changes to North Carolina laws, and proved instrumental in passage of laws that improved the integrity of elections and the campaign process. Melanie also helped lead the effort to stop the spread of video poker in North Carolina. Most of all, she fought for women, children, and families, and the needs of rural North Carolina.

She additionally introduced the legislation adopting the Salute to the Flag of North Carolina as the Official Pledge to the State Flag, codifying the Tar Heel version of the Pledge of Allegiance. It reads: "I salute the flag of North Carolina and pledge to the Old North State love, loyalty, and faith."

Melanie also made history in a unique way as the first sitting North Carolina legislator to give birth to a child while serving in office, which prompted then-Speaker of the House Joe Hackney to set aside an additional office in the Legislative Building for Melanie to nurse and care for her newborn while still serving as a lawmaker. When asked about it at the time, Melanie said: "I hope that young women who are concerned about serving in the legislature and having a small child see this as an opportunity and wouldn't let it stand in their way. ... I think we can do both. We can be mothers and public servants at the same time."

To her surprise and the delight of her family and friends, Melanie was recognized as the "Richmond County Citizen of the Year" in 2009. Shortly after concluding her legislative service and moving back to Raleigh, she was then selected as Deputy Commissioner at the NC Industrial Commission in 2011, and then appointed Chief Deputy Commissioner in 2019. Dedicated to public service and the legal profession, Melanie continued valiantly and courageously working over the years throughout the painful cancer treatments and surgeries as long as she could muster, not stepping back officially until Summer 2020, using her skills and the law to hear cases, and make rulings that were fair, just, and grounded in the law, and empathetic to the parties appearing before her.

Melanie dedicated her life to public service both in her career and through her volunteer work. For example, she volunteered for and later led the Junior Woman's Club of Rockingham and the Democratic Women of Richmond County, and served on the Richmond County Arts Council board, the First United Methodist Church Women's Circle, and served on the founding board of the Christian Closet. Melanie also was an active member of the NC Woman's Club for many years. She served on the Girl Scouts of NC Coastal Pines Board and was presented the "Woman of Tomorrow Award." The Democratic Women of North Carolina honored her with a Star Award and she was one of the earliest candidates endorsed by Lillian's List in her legislative campaigns.

Beyond her professional accolades, Melanie also dedicated her life to her family, raising two beautiful children and dog Coco alongside her husband, Wayne, former State Representative and NC Insurance Commissioner. Her

11-year battle with cancer only further proved her strength, courage, and perseverance. She was loved and cherished by all those who had the chance to know her — an inspiring, incredible role model for her children, her nieces and nephews, and young women seeking to change the world for the better.

The family expresses its gratitude for the countless friends and strangers who offered up prayers and words of comfort as Melanie fought the good fight. The family especially gives thanks to her long-time, dedicated oncologist, Dr. Mark Graham, and the awesome medical and nursing staff at Waverly Hematology Oncology; her dedicated, long-time therapist, Katherine Fabrizio, MA, licensed professional counselor; the nurses and caregivers at WakeMed-Cary; her surgeon at UNC Hospitals; and the wonderful, caring hospice staff at Transitions Lifecare in Raleigh, and to anyone and everyone who cared for Melanie, especially her closest, dearest friends who helped her make it from day to day.

In addition to her parents in Raleigh, she is survived by her husband of 22 years, Wayne Goodwin, and their children, Madison (17) and Jackson (12); and her Richmond County family, which include her brothers and sisters-in-law Robert and Beth Howell, and Adam and Sarah Shepherd; and her mother-in-law, Diane Goodwin, and many loving nieces and nephews.

A private service to honor and celebrate Melanie's life will be held at Edenton Street United Methodist Church. This service will be live streamed through [www.esumc.org/live/](http://www.esumc.org/live/) at 2pm on Friday, September 4, 2020. A graveside service will follow at Historic Oakwood Cemetery in Raleigh.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation: North Carolina Triangle to Coast. <https://komennctc.org>

Arrangements by Brown-Wynne Funeral Home, Saint Mary's St. , Raleigh.

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Additional information at:

<https://apnews.com/article/d1ebc8511084880e43c3119459132181>