

# Debate Questions for 2024 Special Election:

The Candidate Special Election Debate scheduled for 9/27/2024 was canceled due to Tropical Storm Helene, and the potentially dangerous conditions created by the storm. Instead, candidates were given just under 24 hours to answer the questions below. Candidates may answer none, any, or all the questions below, at their discretion. Candidates are encouraged to reach out to Laney Buckley via phone for clarification on any question; Laney will attempt to answer all questions in as timely a fashion as practicable. Documents submitted will be published on the Catawba Nation website at [Catawba.com/election](http://Catawba.com/election).

## Candidate Name: Phillip (P.K.) George

### Questions

1. What qualifications or experiences do you believe best prepare you to serve our Nation as an Executive Committee member?

In my sixty-plus years, I have learned many valuable lessons. I served as a proud Sailor, covering 5 continents, seven seas, and five oceans for this great nation. I have faced numerous close calls in operations and have overcome significant health issues, leaving me permanently disabled. I believe that surviving these experiences means I have a purpose to fulfill, a path I am unaware of.

My life experiences have prepared me to handle extreme circumstances and remain calm and rational, especially when making decisions with potentially immediate negative reactions. I am running for the Executive Committee because I feel a duty to help my tribe in any way I can. I want to use my experiences to positively influence and motivate our younger tribal members, helping them to be self-sufficient, productive, and achieve their goals.

2. What are your top priorities if you are elected to serve on the Catawba Nation Executive Committee?

**Endowments:** Obtain and protect the corpus of each endowment for at least seven generations. Plan to use a portion of the growth in the budgeting process to help fund the

program for which it was established, helping to relieve the pressure on casino gaming dollars, and using the endowments as a form of economic development.

**Per Capita:** Develop a plan in the budget process that allows for increasing the Per Capita percentage, as requested by the voice of the membership. In the budgeting process is how this will be accomplished to ensure the level of Per Capita will be maintained.

**Cultural Resources:** Our Tribe has many cultural resources, from the language, elder recordings, baskets, and other artifacts. The museum project to house and display all the resources needs to be in future planning. Expansion should come from fund raising and donations not just Tribal dollars. I feel Tribal dollars should be used to expand Tribal member participation in the cultural resource programs.

**Enrollment Audit:** The Catawba Nation, being a Self-Governed Tribe has an obligation to maintain complete and accurate records. The Tribal Council has a responsibility to all the members through the Council Oath of Office to act on any findings of incomplete membership records. As one Council member, I also feel we must explore language for the constitution that the membership can vote on that will help correct the injustices that have occurred because of past enrollment practices.

**Health Coverage:** Continue to explore options to save Tribal dollars and maintain the quality of health coverage. Working to educate the membership to use the tribal membership plan as a secondary payer if other insurance is offered at their workplace or state and federal programs are offered. Also to try and obtain a tribal insurance plan for outside care.

**Sovereignty:** Keep working to protect our treaty rights in our ceded lands, and ongoing education for all local, state, and federal governments and agencies on Catawba treaties. Working to get the tribe's reservation expansion, amending the process to take land into trust and moving it into reservation status.

3. What, if anything, do you think you would like to do differently from the existing Executive Committee?

Educate the members that once you start a money-generation enterprise you must run the tribe as a business, which is hard enough, but it is also a family-owned business as each member (GC) is a stakeholder in its success or failure. You cannot run it whip and chain, nor can you allow family ties to entice sub-standard job performance or affect getting the most qualified persons for the jobs to be filled.

A failure in either direction can cause a failure of the business and ultimately the financial viability of the Nation.

4. Please discuss your understanding of the Catawba Nation Settlement Agreement.

5. What is your position on the substance use disorder problem within the Catawba Nation?

Right now, I see no real attempt other than rehabilitation for substance abuse, and if it fails repeating the process endlessly.

There must be options other than this cycle.

Elimination of the major drugs (meth, cocaine, opioids) on the reservation must become a priority.

So first, get persons bringing on or distributing these drugs off the reservation.

Second, those who get rehabilitation get only two cycles, then removed from the tribal rolls. (That is business, quit the drain on resources). Also making a case for jobs for them, but that is a work in progress. A helping hand up after rehabilitation, not just you had rehab and you are on your own.

Third shutting down known drug houses on the reservation, which includes knowing which properties are rentals, and ensuring they are only rented to tribal members.

But a lot must become tribal law (voted in by the GC) and get the tribal court up and running.

6. Regarding enrollment, do you believe DNA tests should be required regardless of whether the Catawba parent of the proposed enrollee is the mother or the father?

Really?

If the mother is on the roll, why spend the money on a DNA test? A waste of time and resources.

The father on the other hand could be different. So, this I believe is a legitimate concern. I feel this should be the case even if the member puts his name on the birth certificate.

And we do have some in housing that the "father" has moved out, but the mother claims the child is tribal. These should be tested to ensure eligibility.

7. Do you believe there should be a timeframe for enrollment eligibility?

Yes, but reasonable.

Now because of the success of the "business," we are going to see people coming out of the woodwork because they see a way to get money.

We have had people rid themselves of all vestiges of the tribe, and we have some who have not put their children on the roll for their own reasons. What happens if that child upon reaching adulthood desires to be on the roll?

So, what timeline? I have my opinion, but ultimately it would be the CG who would vote to enact this limitation

8. What is your approach to providing transparency regarding decisions made with tribal businesses, entities, funding, and staffing/staff engagement?

The GC must have trust in their leaders. In business, some things must be kept confidential to prevent sabotaging the operation.

Go back to question 3, all the family bickering needs to be checked. I recently had a member tell me how much he hated mine. Ask who his family was, his great grandmother's last name, and he did not know. He was surprised when I told him it was my grandfather's sister. He checked and came back, yea cousin, all good now. So, a lot of this family stuff is just power play that needs to go back to the playground.

We are running a business whether you like it or not for the tribe to be successful we must operate that way.

That includes dealing with other entities, and ensuring funding is in the best interest of the people, so pet projects go away, what is best for the tribe must be the foremost objective And last people. Everyone must remember we are all people. Treat people the way you want to be treated. If they are staff mutual respect is expected. If you feel I am or have disrespected you, talk to me, not to my back.

Now that said, if there are performance issues, first I want to find out the five W's and the big H. Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How.

Most of the time it is a training issue, a miscommunication of expectations, a lack of guidance, and personal issues that leadership can help with. All things which can be fixed. But I cannot fix stupidity or the "give a damn" is broken.

9. What is your position on developing a cannabis industry on the Catawba reservation?

Since the 1700s, marijuana was available throughout North America in a wide variety of medications but saw a major surge in popularity after 1839 thanks to William Brooke O'Shaughnessy, whose research while in India helped its image both in Europe and the New World. It was most popular during the "snake oil" phase of medications in the late 1800s, being used as an ingredient in a wide range of tinctures and drinks used to cure and treat numerous types of ailments. In personal correspondence, it has been revealed that former Presidents Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, and James Madison, as well as Benjamin Franklin and Mary Todd Lincoln, all smoked hashish. George Washington himself grew hemp in his garden and referred to it as a staple crop of America. Across the pond in 1890, Sir Joshua Reynolds, the physician to Queen Victoria, wrote a summary in The Lancet, one of the most prestigious medical journals in the world, touting cannabis' medicinal benefits. The Queen herself utilized it for her menstrual cramps. In 1892, Sir William Osler authored the first textbook of Internal Medicine and advised that cannabis was the most effective treatment for migraines.

"Of course, cannabis has medical uses," says University of California, San Francisco integrative oncologist Donald Abrams, one of the few researchers who have been able to obtain extremely limited, government-approved supplies of research cannabis for human

trials. “It’s pretty clear from anthropological and archaeological evidence that cannabis has been used as a medicine for thousands of years—and it was a medicine in the U.S. until 1942,” Abrams adds. “I’m an oncologist and I say all the time, not a day goes by when I’m not recommending cannabis to patients for nausea, loss of appetite, pains, insomnia and depression—it works.”

Marijuana’s Schedule I status “really is a national embarrassment,” Lee says. “It gives new meaning to the phrase, ‘the big lie.’ It is like saying, ‘The moon is made of green cheese.’ That this could remain until the present day is laughable only in that it keeps you from crying.”

When Colorado passed their law allowing recreational use it was taxed. By law, the state could only collect so much in taxes, and then it had to be returned to the taxpayers. The first year everyone received their full tax payments collected back AND returns from the excess tax collected on marijuana sales.

It is a huge income generator and should be addressed as such. Right now, the Cherokee have their dispensary and have just gone to NOT needing a medical card to buy. It has been a huge money maker for them. And for us capable of generating more than the casino.

This would also entail having to modify our HR, work descriptions to remove cannabis from the drug screening. Cannot be fork-tongued and sell it and condemn it.

10. The Nation’s government has had serious issues with turnover and employee morale. What do you believe is the cause of this and how would you address it?

Poor leadership.

Lack of management.

Lack of accountability.

Too much of the “good ole boy” network, not what you can do but who you know or which family.

People promoted to their next level of incompetence

I have seen and witnessed all of these in prior employment and see them here.

Will it go away tomorrow... no... it will take time and working on all the above to see it improve.

11. As a Nation, unity is important for our prosperity and longevity. What is your approach to creating unity within our Nation?

Education.

Back in the days when the general store was at Nations Ford, it was noted there were at least twenty different dialects of the Catawba language. So at least twenty different tribes operated as one nation.

Now we have less than twenty families that have a hard time operating as one tribe.  
Time to mend some fences, clear the air, and get rid of the better-than-thou attitudes.  
Seen some walk around with their nose in the air where if it rained, they would drown.  
So, in that light, you are either a part of the solution or a part of the problem.