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## Cooper reaches out to Wilson residents

By Janet Conner-Knox

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Before coming to the Wilson County Democratic Party fundraiser on Thursday night, N.C. Attorney General Roy Cooper, who is running for governor, stopped by the American Legion Post on U.S. 301 to talk with more residents in Wilson.

Cooper went around and shook hands and listened to what citizens had to say before telling them some of the things on his platform. About 30 people attended the event.

Cooper took some time and talked with The Wilson Times about why he filed a lawsuit seeking to overturn the FCC's decision that had cleared the way for the city of Wilson to expand its community broadband service, Greenlight.

"The Legislature has passed a lot of bad laws, but it is the job of the attorney general to defend state laws," Cooper explained. "And I wish the governor and the General Assembly would stop passing so many bad laws that create litigation. We've seen that in many instances. This is another situation where the attorney general's office is duty bound to defend state law."

On another issue, Cooper said it was a difficult decision when his office decided not to seek retrial against Randall Kerrick, a Charlotte police officer accused of shooting and killing an unarmed man in 2013.

Cooper said his office worked hard on the case and presented the evidence in the best light they could.

"The three prosecutors said it would be very difficult if not impossible to be successful with the prosecution and they all unanimously made the decision in our department," Cooper said.

Cooper told the group he grew up in Nash County, picking tobacco and cucumbers on a farm. He went to public schools in eastern North Carolina and is sensitive to the needs of eastern North Carolina, he said.

"I grew up in eastern North Carolina and understand the challenges rural counties face," Cooper said. "So many people in North Carolina have not seen the benefits of the small economic recovery that is out there. It is mostly people who already are doing well who are seeing the benefits."

Cooper said that North Carolina is last in wage growth in the South.

"It's reflected often in people who are in rural areas who don't have jobs or who work in low wage jobs," Cooper said. "We've got to invest in education. We've got to invest in our public schools and community colleges to give people the opportunity." Cooper said it is important to have the rural center be robust to help with infrastructure.

"We've got to work to recruit industry with better paying jobs," Cooper said. "We've got to have state leaders who understand the positives in eastern North Carolina in rural areas. We've got a lot of good things to sell. We've got good people here who work hard. It is critical that we have a leader who understands these challenges."

Ray Chambers, first vice chair of the Wilson County Democratic Party, said Bob James, an advocate from the community, impressed upon him that candidates need to come out into the community, not assume they would just give a candidate their vote without asking them for it.

"I know that there are a lot of people who really care about who their next governor is going to be and can't afford to spend \$50 to \$500 to help us," Chambers said to the group. "So I called a member of his staff and asked while Roy Cooper was in town could we get him to come out and meet some of the real people."

Chambers said the whole event went well.

Attendee Mary Joyner, president of the Wilson branch of the NAACP, said if she could sit down one-on-one with Cooper, she would talk about criminal justice reform.

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