

**[Long-term Rep. Mel Watt and challenger Jack Brosch face newly drawn District 12 in N.C.](#)** (Charlotte Observer – October 30, 2012)

U.S. Rep. Mel Watt hasn't faced a tough election since the Charlotte Democrat became the first person to represent North Carolina's newly drawn 12th Congressional District two decades ago.

If demographics and fundraising are an indication, that's not likely to change this year. And neither he nor Republican challenger Jack Brosch are happy about it.

The 12th District, which includes uptown Charlotte and snakes through six counties to Greensboro, is one of two in the state that packs in registered Democrats and racial minorities, who have voted overwhelmingly for the party in past elections.

Last year's Republican-led redistricting process made it even more comfortable for Democrats. What once was a district where 48 percent of registered voters were black and 57 percent were Democrats, is now 57 percent black and 63 percent Democrat.

Watt's closest call came when he captured 56 percent of the vote in 1998 against Republican Scott Keadle and Libertarian Michael Smith. Since then, Watt has never won less than 65 percent of the vote and hit 72 percent in 2008.

"Now I might get 75 to 80 percent of the vote. That's ridiculous," Watt, 67, said Tuesday. "I hate what they've done with the district."

But Brosch, 54 and a Charlotte Republican, is far from ceding the race. He identifies with the tea party movement and said he intends to represent fiscally conservative voters whose voice he believes haven't been heard in the district. He says he feels like he has a chance to win. "The way I see it, if the Romney wave is big enough – I was born and raised in California, I know how to surf – I can ride that wave," he said Tuesday. Brosch says the \$16 trillion debt is one of the biggest issues the country faces, and supports a balanced budget amendment to the

U.S. Constitution. He believes Watt and President Barack Obama have governed like Socialists and is in favor of rolling back regulations on business while decreasing tax rates.

Brosch said he doesn't blame the new Republican majority in the N.C. General Assembly for the 12th District's changes, but is in favor of turning over redistricting to a computer program, rather than having it done by legislators.

"I understand what they did. I understand why they did it," Brosch said. "I wish the people of the 12th didn't have to pay for it." Brosch said he's worn out several sets of tires driving up and down through the district meeting with religious and political groups. But he's facing a sizable disadvantage in fundraising. Watt had raised more than \$780,000 through the middle of October, according to Federal Election Commission records. Totals include more than two dozen corporate political action committee donations of more than \$5,000, and contributions from notable Charlotteans Erskine Bowles and Philip Blumenthal. Brosch had raised about \$1,200 through June, and loaned his campaign an additional \$8,300. The required October financial report has not yet been filed, which Brosch attributed to an "oversight." Watt said he is campaigning on his record. "I've got 20 years of experience at doing the job and 20 years of experience in getting results at the job," he said, pointing to a new bridge on Interstate 85 over the Yadkin River and new federal housing projects in Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Greensboro and Salisbury. He also touts involvement in developing the Dodd-Frank financial reform law from his spot on the House Financial Services Committee.

Watt has also spent a great deal of time stumping for President Obama and gubernatorial candidate Walter Dalton. He's also transferred more than a quarter of a million dollars to other candidates and party committees.

"There's no reason for me to beat up on Jack Brosch, or whatever his name is, just because he's out there. If he's honest with himself, even he would acknowledge that," Watt said. "That's not arrogance, that's just reality. I didn't draw these districts. I don't support them."