

**CITIZENS UNION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL
ELECTION 2009**

Citizens Union would appreciate your responses to the following questions related to policy issues facing the City of New York that are of concern to Citizens Union and the citizens of the City. We plan to make public your responses to this questionnaire in our Voters Directory, on our website, and in other appropriate venues. Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union will use to evaluate candidates who are running for office in order to determine our "Preferred Candidates" for the primary election and "Endorsed Candidates" for the general election. In order to receive Citizens Union's "preferred" or "endorsed" status, in addition to completing the questionnaire, candidates must participate in an interview with Citizens Union's Local Candidates Committee.

We thank you very much for your response.

Candidate Name: Tony Perez Cassino Age: 43

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 11

Campaign Address: 5670 Riverdale Avenue, Front 1, Bronx, NY 10471

Campaign Telephone Number: (347) 346-8951 Fax: (347) 346-8953

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat Campaign Manager Name: Chris Miller

Website & Email: www.cassinoforcouncil.com cassinoforcouncil@gmail.com

Education: **I attended JFK High School and Fordham University in the Bronx, then NYU Law School**

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): **I am an attorney. I am Director of Pro Bono Affairs at Milbank Tweed Hadley McCloy**

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

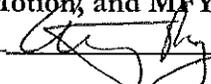
I have not previously run for office.

In 2001, I was appointed to Bronx Community Board 8, and from 2004-2008 I had the honor of serving as its Chairman. In that capacity, I worked on virtually every major issue facing the community from zoning to schools to parks to parking. During that time I also served on the Croton Filtration Monitoring Committee, where I advocated for Bronx jobs, better air quality, and financial accountability at the massive water-filtration plant being built in Van Cortlandt Park. I also served on the Task Force to develop the Kingsbridge Armory into a large commercial center. I am

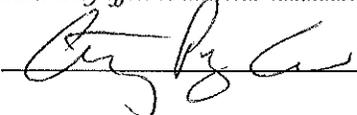
currently the Chairman of the Traffic and Transportation Committee of Community Board No. 8.

In order to better understand the needs of our schools, I served as Principal for a Day at both PS 81 and PS 24 on three separate occasions. As a result of that experience, I created a unique collaboration among more than a dozen local public and private schools known as the Coalition of Riverdale/Kingsbridge Schools (CORKS). Through this organization, local schools have begun to develop close partnerships to enhance their academic, athletic and after-school environments.

My interest in helping young people led me to serve as Board Chairman of two organizations—the Riverdale Nursery School & Family Center, and Adolescent and Family Comprehensive Services in the south Bronx. I also served on the board of Bronx Legal Services, a program that provides free legal services to thousands of Bronxites a year. In order to increase participation in the political process and identify strong candidates for public office, I founded the Northwest Bronx Democratic Alliance (NBDA) in 2001.

I have been honored for my public service by organizations including The Legal Aid Society, inMotion, and MFY Legal Services. 

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES NO ___
Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings? YES NO ___
(Please note: Citizens Union can grant its "Preferred Candidate" and "Endorsed Candidate" rating only to candidates we have interviewed. We will make every effort to interview candidates in each race for City Council.)

Signature of Candidate: 

Date: 8/3/09

I. CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

Please state your position on the following issues by indicating whether you support or oppose each. You may elaborate in the space provided at the end or on additional paper.

VOTING AND ELECTIONS REFORM

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 1. What is your position with respect to allowing voters who are registered as independents to vote in party primaries? | Support |
| 2. What is your position on passage of state legislation that would allow referenda initiated by the City Council and/or the public to appear on the ballot at the same time as a referendum initiated by a charter commission appointed by the Mayor? | Support |
| 3. What is your position on increasing the pay of Election Day poll workers above the current \$200 they are allotted per election event? | Support |
| 4. What is your position on restructuring New York's current board of elections model to eliminate political party responsibility for overall election administration and replace it with a system that narrows political party involvement to certification of candidate petitions and the actual counting of votes? | Support |
| 5. What is your position on having an election administration system where there is a local elections executive director appointed by the mayor upon recommendation by a new board that is chosen by the mayor and the city council? | Support |

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

- | | |
|---|---------|
| 6. What is your position on implementing "war chest" restrictions that would prohibit a candidate from transferring funds raised in a previous election cycle into a current campaign committee for a different office? | Support |
|---|---------|

7. What is your position on allowing campaign financing for ballot proposals? Support

CITY COUNCIL REFORM

8. What is your position on allowing Council committees to function more independently of the speaker than is presently the case? Support
- a. Should committee staff be hired by and report to committee chairs? Support
 - b. Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs? Support
 - c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members? Support
9. What is your position on:
- a. limiting councilmembers' ability to earn outside income? Support
 - b. making the job of councilmember a full-time position? Support
 - c. eliminating or limiting stipends for committee chairs and leadership positions? Support
10. What is your position on requiring that any future increase in councilmember compensation not affect those serving in the current term of the council and only be applied prospectively to the following term? Support
11. What is your position on consolidating the current City Council committee structure and reducing the number of overall committees? Support
12. What is your position on term limits for elected officials? Support
13. What is your position on modifying the City Charter to require that changes to term limits may only be approved by the voters? Support

14. What is your position on the recent extension of term limits for the city’s elected officials to three consecutive four-year terms? Please explain your answer. Oppose

___I strongly oppose the overturning of term limits. The people have spoken on this issue twice, and clearly. That voice needs to be honored. When I join the City Council I will make it a priority to change the system that made the overturning of term limits possible._____

POLICY ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE

Please state your position on the following issues by indicating whether you support or oppose each, where applicable. Please also use the space provided below each question or on a separate sheet of paper to elaborate on your positions on the questions which require a detailed answer. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.

15. Knowing that the police department and commissioner retain ultimate authority for determining whether an officer is guilty and penalty, what is your position on transferring power to the Civilian Complaint Review Board to prosecute cases of police misconduct, such as force, abuse of authority, discourtesy, and offensive language? Support

16. What is your position on changing the current land use process under ULURP to increase the role of community-based planning? Support

17. What is your position regarding the creation of a Charter Revision Commission to review specifically the roles of the various offices of government and how well government has functioned since the 1988 and 1989 charter review commissions? Support

18. What is your position on reforming the current pension funding structure to create multiple tiers for future city government employees? Support

- a. In FY 2008-09, New York City spent \$12 billion on pensions and fringe benefits for City employees out of a total budget of \$62 billion. What would

you do to address the growing pension costs borne by the city and New York City tax payers?

This has become a serious issues as the costs have grown dramatically. We will have to consider creating additional tiers for future employees who will have to bear some of the cost of their benefits.

19. What is your position with respect to the City Council passing a resolution calling upon the State Legislature to establish a State Constitutional Convention? Support

a. If support, what are the three most important areas that need improvement?
___Redistricting, term limits, campaign finance reform,

b. Do you believe that greater home rule should be granted to the City of New York? If so, in what areas should further sovereignty be given?
_____Yes, especially in the areas of rent control and education

20. Taking into consideration the lessons learned from the debates surrounding congestion pricing and the Ravitch Commission’s recommendations to provide the MTA with long-term funding, what would you propose to address the MTA’s fiscal solvency issues and ensure that the burden for funding the MTA is equitably distributed among all stakeholders?

The MTA’s costs are very frustrating to the City residents. Ridership has never been higher and yet every year there is a deficit. We first need to restore public trust in the budget

allocated to the MTA. After that we will need to evaluate some of the long term capital projects to determine whether to put them on hold. The only way the public will tolerate additional fare increases is if they have faith in MTA's fiscal management and the quality of the services. The State and the City at that point need to ensure that the system receives adequate funds to operate well, including looking at other measures to raise revenue that would only be used for the system – for example, certain bridges should be tolled such as the Brooklyn Bridge – but not the small crossings between the Bronx and Manhattan.

21. What would you propose in terms of creating a greater role for the city council in determining and deciding the city budget?

We need to reduce the total power of the Speaker in the process. There should be a representative group of Council members more closely involved in the budget process who are not solely appointed by the Speaker.

22. What is your position regarding the City's past practice of using surplus tax revenues to pay down future health cost and pension obligations, and the decision not to do so this year?

Its always prudent to pay down debt and obligations and I would hope that in the future when the resources are available we would continue to do so.

Of course more needs to be done to expand the City's economy and make it less reliant on Wall Street. Although Wall Street should and will always be an important part of our City and economy. I believe that the key things to do are to support small businesses through tax incentives and creating areas of the City that will help to incubate businesses. Some of that was done during the technology boom and it did help to attract new businesses. This could help the outer boroughs like the Bronx and Queens, where there are areas conducive to new businesses because of good transportation and real estate availability.

25. What would you propose the Department of Education do to increase the ability for parents and teachers to become more meaningfully involved in the education system? What other positives changes can be made to the New York City public school system?

____ The biggest complaint I have heard from parents is the lack of meaningful input by the community in the new school system. The best way to correct this is to reform the way the Community Education Councils function. They should be made independent of the DOE and supported by Borough Presidents in the same manner as community boards function. They should be given numerous review and advisory functions and a set timeframe for doing so that would ensure that they hold public hearings on issues and provide meaningful input into the process.

26. What would you propose to increase the transparency of the Board of Elections in the City of New York's operations and accountability to the city and its voters?

The more information that can reasonably be put online will improve transparency, and as mentioned above, the hiring should not be done on a political basis.

27. What would you propose to further enhance transparency regarding the relationships between council members, their families, and nonprofits that receive funding from New York City?

All discretionary funding by each Councilperson should be put online so that it can be examined and any relationships at nonprofits must be disclosed in that online listing. In addition, there should be an additional review by the City to determine the appropriateness of the relationship and funding.



CANDIDATE ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Citizens Union is adding a new element to its evaluation of candidates running for office. As a candidate who presently does not hold elected office, CU is interested in knowing your top five campaign promises you are making to the voters during this campaign for this position.

If elected, Citizens Union will use these promises to evaluate your performance while in office, as well as, to evaluate your candidacy in the future.

We thank you very much for your response. Please feel free to use additional paper if the space provided is not sufficient.

TOP FIVE 2009 CAMPAIGN PROMISES

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____