



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: Tremaine Wright Age: 36

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 36

Campaign Address: 376 Tompkins Ave #2

Campaign Telephone Number: (718) 801-2455 Fax: (718) 504-7657

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat Campaign Manager Name: Maurice Cummings

Website & Email: www.changewrightnow.com / tremainewright@yahoo.com

Education: Duke University ; University of Chicago Law School

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office):  
Owner - Common Grounds A Neighborhood Coffee House

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:  
Community Board 3; Volunteers of Legal Service ; Bed-Stuy Biking Coalition ; Tompkins Avenue Merchants Association

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: Tremaine Wright Date: Aug 8, 2009

## 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.

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### VOTING AND ELECTIONS REFORM

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|---|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. What is your position with respect to allowing voters who are registered as independents to vote in party primaries?   | Support           | <u>Oppose</u> |
| 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?  | <u>Support</u>    | Oppose        |
| 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<br>UNSURE | Oppose        |
| 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? | <u>Support</u>    | Oppose        |
| 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?  | <u>Support</u>    | Oppose        |

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### CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

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|---|----------------|--------|
| 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? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
|---|----------------|--------|

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

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**CITY COUNCIL REFORM**

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| 8. What is your position on allowing Council committees to function more independently of the speaker than is presently the case?  | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| a. Should committee staff be hired by and report to committee chairs?  | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| b. Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs?  | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members?  | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 9. What is your position on:   |                |        |
| a. limiting councilmembers' ability to earn outside income?  | Support        | Oppose |
| b. making the job of councilmember a full-time position?   | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| c. eliminating or limiting stipends for committee chairs and leadership positions?   | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 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? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 11. What is your position on consolidating the current City Council committee structure and reducing the number of overall committees?   | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 12. What is your position on term limits for elected officials?  | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 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        | Oppose |

- 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. Support  Oppose

The recent extension of term limits for the City's elected officials should have been determined by the voters of New York City, not the elected officials.

**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 Oppose
- 16. What is your position on changing the current land use process under UJURP to increase the role of community-based planning?  Support Oppose
- 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 Oppose
- 18. What is your position on reforming the current pension funding structure to create multiple tiers for future city government employees? Support Oppose  
UNSURE

- 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?

Any adjustment to the current pension plans should be fairly negotiated by affected parties. But in order to plan for future obligations the City must have a low-risk investment portfolio

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  Oppose

- a. If support, what are the three most important areas that need improvement?

Areas in need of improvement =

- Succession of leadership
- taxation
- Campaign Finance

- 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?

New York City needs greater autonomy with respect to rent guidelines and managing the MTA.

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?

In order to address MTA's fiscal problems we must have a clear understanding of what money it has and how it is being allocated. The MTA needs to be audited, and its management reformed. Then we can address how to fund the MTA & assess the need for improvements and maintenance.

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

Granting committees the ability to amend budget proposals as well as greater influence over the use of allocations to agencies which a committee oversees are two possible methods.

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?

It is understandable for the City to prepare for future obligations by pre-paying, and it is reasonable for the City to determine that currently due obligations should take precedence over future obligations.

23. What is your view of how the taxes paid by New Yorkers compare to the value that is received in City services? Do you believe that taxes should be raised or lowered? To the extent you believe taxes should be changed, please provide specific proposals about what taxes you would raise and what services you would cut, if you didn't raise taxes, listed in order of greatest magnitude.

This question of value is truly a question regarding how City tax dollars are spent. Should our tax dollars be used in the manner prescribed? It makes no difference whether we raise or lower taxes if the resources are not being spent in a manner reflecting community priorities and sound policy judgments.

24. Many policy advocates champion the creation of a more diversified economy, and one that is less reliant on Wall Street. What is your position on such a plan? If you support it, what would you do to diversify the city's economy? How would you adjust spending in New York City to accommodate the anticipated reduction in tax revenue as the tax base shifts to lower paying jobs?

I support a more diversified economy and believe the City must use its resources, including existing buildings and land, to attract new businesses. Further, the City must be responsible and use its tax revenue in the most cost-effective manners as possible.

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 parent coordinator, CEE and Leadership Team must be given a meaningful way to participate in the schools' operations including opening or closing of schools and selection of programs.

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?

There needs to be a major education initiative because most voters have no idea what the BOE does other than process voter registration cards.

Further, the BOE needs to be independent of political party influence.

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?

We must require timely disclosure of all recipients receiving funds from NYC; identifying any potential conflicts. Information should be posted on the City Council website in addition to required City Council financial disclosure documents.







### 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. I am not making any promises as part of my campaign, rather I
2. have identified goals:
3. - to operate an office that is accountable & accessible
4. - to advocate for affordable housing for all members of our community
5. - to support innovative solutions to reduce crime in the area  
- to advocate for small business initiatives which promote improved service and growth.