



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: Maria Passanante - Derr Age: 58

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 3

Campaign Address: 15 West 114th Street 9C NYC 10071

Campaign Telephone Number: (917) 848 3919 Fax: (212) 989 7795

Party Affiliation(s): Dem Campaign Manager Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Website & Email: www.MariaForCouncil09.com; Maria@MariaForCouncil09

Education: JD; MPA

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): attorney

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

CB#2 - 6 yrs; Chair 2 yrs; Greenwich Village-Chelsea Chamber of Commerce Board Members;

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: Maria Passanante Derr Date: 7/16/09

## 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.

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

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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?  | Support        | Oppose |
| b. Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs?  | Support        | Oppose |
| c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members?  | Support        | Oppose |
| 9. What is your position on:   |                |        |
| a. limiting councilmembers' ability to earn outside income?  | <u>Support</u> | 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? See Answer Attached hereto   | Support        | 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? yes, it is self-dealing and a conflict of interest for the council to extend term limits. | <u>Support</u> | 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. I vehemently opposed the extension of term limits by the City Council as a conflict of interest; Council should operate as a separate branch of government and not as a ministerial arm of the Mayor; Quinn was instrumental in shepherding the extension of term limits through the City Council in three weeks; During that time, I lobbied electeds attended news conferences, gave interviews to the press because I was outraged that people were deprived the opportunity to vote on this fundamental democratic issue. This was an assault on Democracy. We voted twice on the issue of term limits and our voice must be heard again.
- Support      Oppose

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

- 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?

- 1 - Disallow over time in the formula for calculating pension
- 2 - Readdress the "Heart" Bill where uniform employees can retire at any age with full pension if heart trouble; ..  
Determine if the heart trouble is "work related".

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?

- 1 - Change in succession, - now Governor, Lt. Governor then Speaker Pro Tem, (elected from a district): should be AG or Controller who is elected Statewide;
- 2 - Clarify appointment of Lt. Gov- eg. opposition to Ravich
- 3 - Budget deadline; If the budget is not passed within 30 days of deadline (4-1-09) then representatives do not get paid;

- 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?

rent stabilization; income tax; sales tax (should not have to go to Albany) Mayoral Control

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?

Reinstate the commuter tax  
Gov should not have all the power over the MTA

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

Currently, if the Council and Mayor disagree, the Council can override the Mayor; but, the Mayor ultimately controls the budget and may not approve funds; Leave the Mayor in charge right now as the discretionary items are a source of corruption.

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 should have been done this year; but, anticipated revenue is more volatile because of the Wall Street meltdown and its consequences, i.e. real estate market problems and no transfer tax revenues.

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.

In an economy where revenues decrease and services are eliminated, a private/public sector partnership must be utilized as a business model e.g. BIDS, developers building schools and other infrastructure related buildings;

Raise luxury taxes and fees at marinas and heliports

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 diversified economy and, it can be effected by  
creating more green jobs which will create more revenue;  
support small business which in turn create more jobs and  
neighborhood character; limit "big box" stores; provide more  
affordable parking to stimulate and encourage visitors into the  
City;

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?

1 - Establish School Districts and Community District Education Council  
(CDEC's) as the basic , meaningful unit of local school governance and  
recognized as having authority to approve school siting, selection,  
opening and closing of schools and relocating of all traditional and ch  
charter schools; 2 - a - change Board appojtment to 5 parent members,  
3 Mayoral apointments and 4 members with expertise in specific policy  
areas; b - Independent Accountability Office to monitor data and bid  
contracts; Inspector General to investigate allegations of improper  
activity; c - Ombudsperson for addressing parent complaints (cont)

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?

See Attached

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?

City Councilmembers <sup>should</sup> ~~should~~ be prohibited from awarding NYC funding to  
non profits where family members or partners are employed or serve  
on Boards;

Additional Comments:

~~#12~~ In theory, in a democratic society there should be no term limits. It should be up to the voters to choose ~~who~~ their elected representatives. But the reality is that the system is tainted: i.e. the power of the incumbency with the name recognition and the voter loyalty generated by member items - the current climate of fraud and theft by the council members who are charged with the public trust; Term limits has also brought diversity into the City Council;

~~#17~~ In order to effect improvements to the Charter, an analysis should be made of the past - however, the problem is that the Mayor makes the appointments to the Commission.

~~#18~~ I generally support multiple tiers; however, it may create an inequitable work place situation where e.g. there is in the same work place a supervisor who retires at 55, an employee who retires at 65 - there may be no motivation on the part of the employees to help the supervisor who is retiring early;

~~#25~~ continued:

~~d - reserve a seat for a parent of a special education student on each of the Community District Education Councils, Citywide Council on HS and on Board of Ed;~~  
See attached press release <sup>about</sup> ~~about~~ my participation in the kindergarten school crisis.



#26

1 - Board, as presently constituted, is bi-partisan, should be non-partisan entity;

2 – Publicize Board meetings and agendas;

3 – Streamline the petition review process; Make petitioning data available on computer; Currently the data ( what petitions are filed, by who, date and time filed; objections filed and date and time objections filed) is available in two different buildings on multiple documents and papers and copies must be requested for review and photocopied;



## 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. Reformation and clarification of term limits procedures;
2. More accountability from developers re: infrastructure consequences and planning
3. Increase affordable housing formula (for zoning bonus) to 70/30 from 80/20
4. Reinstate faith based homeless shelters;
5. Fight for LGBT homeless who are 29% of the runaway population