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**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: **Christine C. Quinn** Age: 43

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

Campaign Address: PO Box 1445 Old Chelsea Station  
New York, NY 10011

Campaign Telephone Number: (212) 929-8473 Fax: (212) 929-8472

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat Campaign Manager Name: Jan Messerschmidt

Website & Email: quinn09.com quinn2009@gmail.com

Education: BA Trinity College

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): 10 years as NYC Councilmember

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: Chief of Staff NYC Councilmember Thomas K. Duane, Executive Director NYC Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project

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Peter J.W. Sherwin, Chair • Dick Dadey, Executive Director

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES X

NO   


Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings?

YES X

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: 07/21/09



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Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES  NO \_\_\_

Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings? YES  NO \_\_\_

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## 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

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

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### 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 | Oppose |
|---|---------|--------|

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

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**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 | Oppose   |
| a. Should committee staff be hired by and report to committee chairs?  | Support | <b>Oppose</b>                                      |
| 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?  | Support | <b>Oppose</b>                                      |
| b. making the job of councilmember a full-time position?   | Support | <b>Oppose</b>                                      |
| c. eliminating or limiting stipends for committee chairs and leadership positions?   | Support | <b>Oppose</b>                                      |
| 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 | <b>Oppose</b>                                      |
| 11. What is your position on consolidating the current City Council committee structure and reducing the number of overall committees?   | Support | <b>Oppose</b>                                      |
| 12. What is your position on term limits for elected officials?  | Support | <b>Oppose</b>                                      |
| 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 | <b>Oppose</b>                                      |
| 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

I have always been opposed to term limits for elected officials. I believe that term limits empower legislative staff and not elected officials. It takes some time for new legislators to learn legislative process, land use terms and theories, and creating processes to best serve their constituents. Given those feelings and the fact that New York City is suffering through the worst economic crisis this country has experienced since the Great Depression, I felt the appropriate thing to do was to vote for an extension to term limits. Before voting on this issue, the city council held 20 hours of public hearings in order to let the public comment on the proposed legislation. Hundreds came to City Hall to voice their opinions and be heard.

As I said then New Yorkers are watching as the global economic crisis worsens day by day, and unease is increasing - about how to pay the rent, about the security of our 401-k's, and about whether we can afford our children's college education or the next health care bill. In these difficult times I believe voters should have the choice to keep current leadership. If voters are not happy with any of us, they have the right to vote us out of office next November.

**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?

**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

- 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?

First I must say that the Council Finance Division attributes \$6 billion of budget costs to the pension and not the \$12 billion in the question. Separate pension funds paid \$12 billion, but that is not a budget cost.

The City provides benefits to its workers and I am proud that we do. That is not to say that we shouldn't review those benefits from time to time to ensure that we have a proper balance between current compensation (salaries and wages) and deferred compensation (pensions and other retiree benefits). In the current fiscal environment, we need to consider all available options for managing our costs. However, we should not seek to balance the budget only through employee-related cost savings. We also need to keep in mind that there are two sides to the pension equation -- the benefits we provide to city retirees, and how we pay for those benefits. Our pensions funds have been heavily invested in equity markets, and as a result have -- like everyone else -- lost substantial value this last year. Although the Council does not have a role in determining the funds' investment policies, I would support a more balanced investment approach that is suited to a mature retirement system. Going forward, we should move in the direction of greater emphasis on income-producing investments, and a little less emphasis on growth-oriented equity investments that inherently carry more risk.

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?
- 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, we need greater local control in a number of areas, including taxation, education (municipal control, not just mayoral control) and housing (rent control and stabilization programs, in particular).

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?

I was a strong supporter of congestion pricing not only as a way to reduce congestion, but to create another revenue source for our mass transit system. I agree that the burden for funding the MTA needs to be equitably distributed among all stakeholders, and that we need to continue to work to broaden and strengthen MTA's funding base. A 21<sup>st</sup> century public transit system benefits businesses, residents, drivers, and visitors, and the cost of supporting the system should be borne in proportion to the benefits, including those in the city and the suburbs.

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

I have consistently supported reforms that would make the budget more transparent. This year we held additional round of public hearings after the November Financial Plan was released, which was not mandated by the charter process. I will continue to push to reform the budget to make it align better with service delivery and performance measures, and further increases in transparency. Two specific steps we could take include creating a consensus revenue estimating process giving the Council, the Comptroller, and IBO a role in determining the revenues available to fund the coming year's budget, and giving the Council the power to initiate budget modifications. The capital budget process also needs to be reviewed. Currently only the Mayor has the power to change revenue estimates, and initiate budget modifications. This year, we proposed new state legislation to give the Council a greater role in the DOE five year capital plan process. Currently the only City Council power is to accept or reject the plan, we are not able to alter the document. Responsible legislators should have power to help change the system.

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?



Since I have been Speaker, the Council has worked actively with the Mayor to set aside surplus revenues and manage our budgets prudently. When the inevitable financial downturn hit, it became time to spend the money set aside in order to avoid major dislocations in critical services – not the time to continue to setting aside money for 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.

New York City has one of the highest tax burdens, but also has a rich array of city services and amenities. Due to the current fiscal crisis, both the state and the city have chosen to raise certain taxes in order to maintain and protect core services. Earlier this year, I had proposed making New York City's personal income tax structure more progressive, but when New York State subsequently made a similar change, we were forced to look at increasing the sales tax instead. We tried to maintain a measure of progressivity by preserving the sales tax exemption on clothing less than \$110, and we also successfully stopped the mayor's proposal for a plastic bag tax on the same grounds.

While we have been forced to raise some taxes, there is one tax we are working to eliminate. Since I became Speaker, we've been fighting the unreasonable double taxation of freelancers and sole proprietors. Two years ago, when our finances were a little better, we were able to reduce the Unincorporated Business Tax for many small businesses.

This year we successfully proposed a further expansion of the UBT in Albany, making sole proprietors and freelancers with net incomes of \$100,000 or less exempt from the tax altogether.

The package also contained business tax reforms, including conforming City business taxes to the State's single sales factor basis, so we can finally stop penalizing those who increase employment or invest in their infrastructure and expand business growth in the City.

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?

For far too long, we have been reliant on Wall Street. There was so much revenue coming in during the financial boom, we didn't really have to look any farther. But now, we're being forced to look closer at what we do have and find creative ways to make it go further. I am currently working to foster growth in several key sectors of our economy.

First, I have developed an “open for business” plan that focuses on supporting the small business sector. Our 220,000 small businesses account for 50 % of all private sector employment and this percentage is growing. In 1985, 80% of full-time employees held traditional jobs at medium and large corporations. By 2005, that number was less than 40%. My plan includes initiatives for helping new businesses to open by streamlining the permit process, coordinating initial inspections by various agencies, and waiving permit fees for the next year. It also includes making it easier for businesses to stay open in this current fiscal climate by driving tourism business to some of our neighborhood gems, called 9 in '09, a partnership with NYC and Co, and to create a penalty forgiveness program to allow businesses that owe past fines to come forward in the fall and be able to pay the base fine but have the penalties and interest waived. Then to get government out of the way to let businesses thrive, we have created a Small Business Regulatory Task force to root out unnecessary regulations, streamline some multi-agency regulatory processes, and look to create a process where the impacts on small businesses can be evaluated as part of considering new regulations.

We also identified the biotechnology sector as an area where New York City has some natural advantages to build on. For example, New York is already a leader when it comes to the world of medicine. We train more of the nation’s doctors than anyone else, and we’re home to the best hospitals in the world. We’re also a center of cutting edge research for the biotech industry, creating advances in medicine our parents could never have imagined. But when it comes time to turn that new discovery into a new drug, New York loses out. Instead of creating jobs and economic activity here, biotech companies leave our city for places like Boston or San Diego. We need to do more to keep them in New York where they started. We’ve already started by creating more work space. Thanks to the Mayor’s leadership we’re building the new East River Science Park, and creating labs in the renovated Brooklyn Army Terminal – over a million square feet in all. Next we need to create strong incentives to encourage firms to locate, and stay, right here. That’s why today I have proposed a City Biotech Tax Credit. This will help dozens of biotech companies equip their facilities and train their staff.

The prepared food industry is also a thriving sector that ,with assistance, can grow even larger. Many small entrepreneurs in this field the tens of thousands of dollars it can take to outfit their own commercial kitchen. We can help these entrepreneurs by creating a collaborative workspace. With the help of the city’s Economic Development Corporation, this shared kitchen will allow 60 small food manufacturers to get started.

I agree that all other sectors pay far less in comparison to the finance industry, and long term our revenues might be lower as the finance sector shrinks as a proportion of our economy. To prepare for this, we need to be thinking about how to make our services most cost effective and efficient, and need to be prepared to make difficult decisions.

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?

Over the last 4 years I have worked with the Administration, advocates, educators and parents on improving our education system - with a particular focus on middle schools and early childhood education. In recent years we have begun to see some real gains and I believe this is in large part due to the change in school governance to Mayoral Control of our City's schools. Mayoral Control has brought about real accountability, with a single elected official in charge of all 1500 plus schools. But despite great gains by our City's schools due to this increased accountability, the system could be improved by creating better functioning parental engagement structures and empowering School Leadership Teams and Community Superintendents. In my testimony to the State Assembly on School Governance, I outlined a number of strategies that I believe could improve our current system of Mayoral Control while maintaining accountability, including granting greater municipal control on school governance issues to the Council instead of Albany, greater financial transparency, and setting up an independent school data system. Additionally, I suggested that DOE strengthen the role of parent coordinators and have them serve as true parent advocates and organizers. Currently the parent coordinators work for and are only accountable to the principals. By making them accountable to parents and having their success be measured by the level of parental involvement their role as conduits to parental involvement would be greatly enhanced.

Beyond improving the school governance and parental involvement, I believe we need to continue to strengthen our Middle Schools. It was one of my main focuses when I became Speaker. We formed a Middle School Task Force, and presented a number of recommendations to improve the middle schools. Some of those recommendations have been implemented and I am happy to say that this year we saw some significant gains in Math and ELA scores in the schools that are participating in our Middle School Initiative. Despite these gains we need to continue to work to improve our middle schools and implement the recommendations of the Task Force throughout the system.

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?

I think one thing we might want to consider is having the Board of Elections, even though it is an independent agency, report certain key data about operations and performance in the Mayor's Management Report and Preliminary Mayor's Management Report, which would

foster greater transparency and accountability. I would be very open to hearing other proposals and working together with advocates and good government groups to accomplish this goal.

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?

With the support of Councilmembers and the help of Citizens Union During my term as speaker, I have promoted transparency and integrity in the use of discretionary funds. Our recent reforms that we enacted after certain practices were uncovered include (a) full reporting on the use of all Council discretionary funds in Schedule C and transparency resolutions. Every dollar of Council discretionary funding is now publicly accounted for in Schedule C and in periodic transparency resolutions; (b) a thorough process of reviewing the integrity and qualifications of every organization with the assistance of the Mayor's Office of Contract Services (MOCS); and (c) for the first time, requiring signed conflict of interest disclosures and working with the Conflict of Interest Board to develop clear guidance on what activities constitute conflicts of interest. That said, we will continue to review our practices and strengthen where needed, as we aim to have the most transparent, accountable practices of any legislative body in the country.

**Additional Comments:**

Question 6: I'm open to considering options regarding war chest restrictions, however, I would be opposed to allowing a candidate to transfer funds from a less restrictive campaign financing structure to a more a restrictive one.

Question 8: Committee rules currently allow committees to function independently of the Speaker. There is a rules reform committee that can take up any proposed rule changes.

Question 8b: This is currently the system. Chairs have that power.

Question 8c: This is currently the system. Committees have that power.

Question 16: I am open to considering expansion of community based planning, but the proposal would need to be reviewed before I can fully support or oppose.



## CANDIDATE ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Citizens Union is adding a new element to its evaluation of incumbents running for re-election. In addition to evaluating their stances on the issues above, Citizens Union will assess incumbents on how well they kept the promises they made to voters during the previous election.

As an elected official who is seeking re-election,

- a. what were the top five promises you made to your constituents when you ran for your current position and what progress have you made to keep those promises, and why and why not have you met them?
- b. what are your top five campaign promises you are making to the voters during this campaign for this position?

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

### TOP FIVE CAMPAIGN PROMISES FROM 2005 AND ACTION ON THEM

1. **Protect Affordable Housing.** We passed landmark tenant legislation including the Tenant Protection act , which is an umbrella fo protections for tenants who are being harassed by their landlords. Also we passed the Tanant Fair Chance Act, legislation designed to assist renters in ensuring their tenant history is accurately reflected in reports that landlords use to determine whether or not an applicant is accepted. We also passed the Safe housing Act. This is historic because it gives New York city the authority to enact lasting improvements on its worst buildings, and because of the collaborative process of housing advocates, landlords, the Administration, and the Council that brought it about.
2. **Preserve the character of our neighborhoods.** Passed a number of landmark zonings to protect the character of our neighborhoods and oppose inappropriate development.
3. **Improve the Environment.** A strong supporter of PLANYC. Chris supported congestion pricing, passed landmark municipal building legislation that would green our buildings, and legislation to encourage the recycling of plastic bags to promote a greener environment.

4. **Campaign Finance Reform.** Enacted a series of landmark changes to the campaign finance laws including limiting the amount of money people with business before the city can give, creating an online data base of those doing business with the city and several changes to limit the role of lobbyists in the cities elections
5. **Improve neighborhood schools.** Fought to make pre-kindergarten more available , created a Middle School Task Force whose recommendations are now being implemented by the Department of Education. Worked to find solutions to school overcrowding in her district, helping to create a new elementary school in her district, and find space for displace pre-k classrooms.

#### **TOP FIVE 2009 CAMPAIGN PROMISES**

1. Neighborhood preservation.
2. Preserving and expanding affordable housing.
3. Improve our schools.
4. Keep our streets safe and address quality of life complaints.
5. Protect vital services from budget cuts.