



Page 1 of 9

**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: Ashok G. Chandra Age: 30

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 4

Campaign Address: 146 E 49th St 5B

Campaign Telephone Number: (646) 841-2152 Fax: ()

Party Affiliation(s): Republican Campaign Manager Name: Jay Golub

Website & Email: www.chandraforenewyork.com; achandra@chandraforenewyork.com

Education: J.D., 2006 Fordham University School of Law; B.S., Biochemistry, 2001 B.A., English, 2001 - University of Texas at Austin

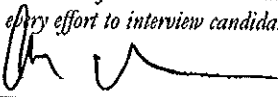
Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): attorney, Bloomberg, LLP,
one year

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

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

Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings? YESx 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: 8/15/09

Citizens Union • 299 Broadway New York, NY 10007
phone 212-227-0342 • fax 212-227-0345 • citizens@citizensunion.org • www.citizensunion.org
Peter J.W. Sherwin, Chair • Dick Dadey, Executive Director—

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? Oppose

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? 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

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? Oppose

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? Oppose

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? Oppose
- c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members? Oppose
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

Term limits were affirmed by the voters on two separate occasions. As a supporter of the referendum process and ballot proposal, I oppose the extension of terms. If there were a desperate need for the terms of our city's officials to be extended, at a minimum, the question should have been presented to the people, not the already elected politicians – who all had an interest in extending their terms.

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? Oppose

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?

The municipal worker pension system in New York is a threat to our state's fiscal future. City Budget experts have predicted that unless taxpayers get concessions on future municipal hires, NYC will soon be unable to service the pension commitments made to the city's past workforce. I support the creation of a fifth-tier for the City's municipal pension program, something that will help put pension benefits back in line with what taxpayers can afford. Predictions state that nearly \$200 million could have been saved this year alone if a fifth-tier was created and billions could be saved in the years to come.

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?

1. Special Election if a vacancy exists in the Lieutenant Governor's position to ensure that there is always a vote to break a tie in the State Senate.

2. Property tax caps need to be put in place to control the rate of local government growth

3. As legislative efforts will likely fall short, the Pension system for the state and city both need to be overhauled, starting with the addition of a new fifth-tier for new hires

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?

The most critical "home rule" that could be passed would be to ensure that the tax system of NY State does not disfavor NYC and downstate as much as it does today. Estimates are that more than \$15 billion is redirected from downstate to upstate New York through the state's tax system. This system leads to reckless and wasteful government spending. Proposals to adjust all tax brackets by the cost of living would be a good start to correcting this important problem.

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 present management structure of the MTA has proven to be ineffective, to say the least. Yet, in many ways, its performance is no better or worse than most activities

monopolized by government – where bureaucracy creation is often more important than managerial results. The first goal of public transportation reform would be to increase public oversight of the Authority. Secondly, I would propose to remove some of the monopolistic aspects of the MTA and work to privatize portions of the city’s public transportation services. Small bus lines would be a perfect place to start that process – enabling ingenuity and creativity to fill the transportation needs of a very diverse NYC.

Regarding the “burden of funding,” I would suggest that funding the MTA with sales tax and real-estate transfer tax revenues hides the true cost of the system to the end user, thus inappropriately decreasing the expectations of straphangers. Although I would not propose increasing the fare at this time, I would support making the MTA pass all increases in revenue collections in a more transparent fashion.

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

I would propose creating a greater role for the City Council by increasing their role in spending transparency. They, like every agency and the Mayor, should not be allow to “direct” funding for any project. Every spending item should be voted on in a transparent manner by the full council. Making Councilmembers more responsible for guaranteeing transparency in government spending is the best role that can be enhanced.

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?

I do not support these practices as they have been implemented for the past few years. New York, and NYC especially, has boom and bust budget cycles. This is largely due to the fact that Wall Street and a large part of the financial industry contribute significantly to our overall economy.

I would propose that NYC creates a “rainy day fund” to save the “extra” resources that build up during the boom economic times so that we have enough money to pay for the deficits of during the bust economic times. NYC, unlike almost every other city in America, is prone to these budget fluctuations. If we just pay down next year’s expenses with surplus tax revenue, we may find ourselves in a cash-poor financial position when times are tougher. If we had been saving resources over the last 8 years, instead of spending every dime that came in, we may not have had to enact increases in taxes across the board in NYC, especially the average-family punitive 6% increase in sales taxes.

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.

Tax collections are too high in relation to the services we receive. I strongly support a reduction in taxes. We should focus on reversing the recent sales tax increase and we should significantly reduce the City's unincorporated business tax. Both of these taxes are regressive and both limit the growth of the city's economy.

Regarding paying for the tax cuts, a quick review of the budget of the City of New York would reveal that, over the last 8 years, our budget analysts have underestimated tax collection significantly, leading politicians to raise collections from taxpayers when they were ultimately not necessary. The first budget passed by Mayor Bloomberg is a perfect example of how we raised taxes often when we didn't need to. That year the City raised taxes by about \$4 billion, yet the City also increased spending about \$4 billion. Although sold to the public as a necessary tax increase to balance the 9-11 ravaged budget of NYC, those tax increases rather went to a nearly 10% increase in overall city spending

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?

NYC should work to have a diversified economy. Years of neglect and increases in the cost of doing business in New York have forced millions of jobs to leave our borders. Reinvigorating the manufacturing sector of NYC would not only diversify our local economy, but make it more stable and enable the broadening of our dangerously shrinking tax base. I don't believe that spending would have to decrease if we passed policies that would bring in a more diversified employment environment. Instead, we would enable many residents who are now in lower paying service industry jobs to move up into higher paying and more rewarding employment. Although Council District 4 may not be a good place to try to physically bring these types of jobs, District 4 residents would benefit if increased economic activity were brought to a place like Long Island City, Queens. This area was previously a manufacturing giant and contributed mightily to the overall city economy and if a business-improvement-district was created there, the economic activity would flow quickly across the East River

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?

I believe that the school system under Mayor Bloomberg's leadership has done exceptionally well and would support the progress made in this area by continuing to support

Mayoral Control of the schools and Mr. Klein's leadership of the Department of Education.

Increasing levels of parental involvement is always an important cause and, although there are mechanisms being discussed such as altering the parent organization's formal role in the education process, I believe that the best way to get parents involved in the education of their children is to give them a choice. The most obvious and effective way to do that is to increase the number and reach of Charter Schools. These creative public-private partnerships have done more to improve education results and to engage parents as any reform in the history of public education. As parents have to actively review and "choose" to send their children to these dynamic public schools, they are the best tool to increase parental involvement.

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 critical aspect of reform needed at the Board of Elections is in ballot access. The rules of petitioning are beyond archaic and have been clearly designed to limit competition to both of the major political parties, both from inside and outside their ranks. Incumbent protection is a better way of describing the process of getting on the ballot in New York State.

I would propose to reduce the requirements for getting on the ballot in City elections at least to the state standard. There is little justification for a Council Candidate in my district to get 900 so-called "valid" signatures to demonstrate "local support." Nine hundred valid signatures would required collecting upwards of 1500 signatures – about 20% of the voters in District 4 who voted in the 2008 election and primary.

Although some may argue that reducing standards makes the election process "messy," I would say that democracy is not always such a clear method of governance, but limiting access to the ballot is a bar to citizens who wish to run for office.

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?

There should be a strict ban on this type of relationship. All too often family members and former council staff run and operate these non-profits. One could argue that the funding of these entities constitutes a direct payment to the related Councilmember.

If a strict ban on this type of funding can't be passed, I would support eliminating member item allocations, voting for every budget item taxpayers are responsible for and a more accurate and extensive questioning process by the Conflicts of Interest Board in this area of non-profit activities.



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 promise to first and foremost work on establishing new charter schools in my district_
2. _As we are almost a decade into the 21st century, I will work to ensure that the children of New York City receive a 21st century education to better prepare them for the changing workplace ahead.
3. _ To promote expansion of small business and reduce the number of "for rent" signs in windows by incentivizing owners to use the space efficiently
4. _ To read through everything that comes across my desk to ensure that we are not wasting taxpayer money_
5. __ I will not take any "lulu's" _