



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: James S. Oddo Age: 43

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 50

Campaign Address: 131 Old Town Road, Staten Island, NY 10304

Campaign Telephone Number: (917) 622-1572 Fax: ()

Party Affiliation(s): Republican Campaign Manager Name: Christopher DeCicco

Website & Email:

Education: BA Fordham University, JD New York Law School

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): 10 years
7 years as Minority Leader

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES [checked] NO
Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings? YES [checked] 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: James S. Oddo Date: 7/13/09

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 | 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? | <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 | Oppose |
- What??*

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

Understanding that the current situation arising from the term limits vote is unique and folks had to "freeze" funds.

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

NOT SURE WHAT YOU ARE SUGGESTING. WILL DISCUSS DURING INTERVIEW

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 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? Support Oppose

- b. making the job of councilmember a full-time position? Support Oppose

- c. eliminating or limiting stipends for committee chairs and leadership positions? Support 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? Support Oppose

- 11. What is your position on consolidating the current City Council committee structure and reducing the number of overall committees? Support Oppose

- 12. What is your position on term limits for elected officials? 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? 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

Please see attached

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?

Please see attached

- 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?

Please see attached

- 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?

Please see attached

- 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?

Please see attached

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

Please see attached

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?

Please see attached

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.

Please see attached

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?

Please see attached.

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 positive changes can be made to the New York City public school system?

Please see attached.

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?

Please 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?

Please see attached.



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. Please see attached
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

TOP FIVE 2009 CAMPAIGN PROMISES

1. Please see attached
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Council Member James S. Oddo Citizens Union Questionnaire

14. I voted against the term limits extension law in October 2008. Although, as a general rule, I believe a 12 year term limit for Council Members is a better policy than 8 years, I opposed the manner in which the Council changed the law through the legislative process. I believe the law should have been changed through a voter referendum because the underlying term limits law was enacted into law in that way.

18a. To address the growing pension costs I would encourage the city to negotiate with the municipal unions to determine, through the collective bargaining process, what steps could be taken to reduce some of the pension costs borne by the city. The negotiating table is the proper forum to consider health insurance costs and the Tier V issue.

19a. I support former Mayor Giuliani's call for a State Constitutional Convention. The three most important areas are: (1) Addressing the succession issue with respect to the office of Lieutenant Governor; (2) exploring the idea of requiring a supermajority for tax increases; and (3) examining the state budget process.

19b. As a general rule, greater home rule should not be granted at this time because of the current makeup of the City Council. Since the body generally has a progressive bent and there is not a great diversity of political opinion, further home rule would most likely make it easier to raise taxes and spend more tax payer money.

20. I represent part of Staten Island and a portion of Brooklyn. My district is separated by the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, a span whose toll was just raised to an incredible \$11. The people of my district understand the inequitable distribution of resources. I believe we should examine different options such as the commuter tax and treating the people of all boroughs equally by examining the tolling of the East River Bridges. This seems more equitable than the efforts to continually raise the Verrazano Bridge toll to astronomical levels.

21. Better and truer oversight of agencies and an even more thorough analysis of OMB's work can only come through a more balanced playing field. Currently, Council staff is asked, in effect, to go "toe to toe" with OMB despite being outgunned badly in terms of personnel and resources. That should change to give the Council a greater role in the budget process.

22. I support efforts to prepare for the future during the years of surpluses with the caveat that there should be a means of accessing those funds during fiscal crises. Unfortunately, those years with surpluses will not be repeated any time soon.

23. My constituents do not receive sufficient services when compared to the taxes they currently pay. In the wake of 2003's historic 18.5% property tax increase and the rapid increase in assessed values, some of my constituents are paying 50, 60, 70% or more in higher property taxes than they were a few years ago. Middle-class New Yorkers pay too much in property taxes and they should be lowered. Billed as a "temporary war time tax" when first proposed, they have been anything but temporary. We should find savings by helping to tame the Medicaid monster and cutting down on the fraud that still exists.

24. Many respected pundits believe that the Wall Street we once knew will never come back. Thus, I support the idea of diversifying our economy. We must particularly examine ways of becoming friendlier to small businesses by loosening the regulatory chokehold that stifles so many of our small businesses. That is why I worked with the Bloomberg Administration and introduced and was the lead sponsor of legislation creating a Regulatory Review Panel to review the labyrinth of regulations that our small businesses must deal with on a daily basis. This panel will help diversify our economy by making New York City a more small business friendly place. I also supported Speaker Christine Quinn's proposal to switch to a single sales factor, which will encourage business to create jobs in New York.

25. I support Mayoral control of our school system. I would like to see the system continued. To answer the question in a word: superintendents. Empower them. In a somewhat related matter, I believe the DOE, through its 5 year capital plan, punishes those schools and boroughs that do not allow their schools to enter into a state of disrepair by sending fewer resources to those areas. I have seen it in Staten Island where we are, in effect, punished with fewer resources for not letting our schools deteriorate. DOE should ensure that a minimum amount of resources are expended in all 5 boroughs to ensure some level of equity.

26. Take the politics out. The Mayor has talked about for a while now, but it finally needs to be done. A system based on competence and talent, not patronage. What a concept. In the interim, if the current system stays in place, I would be amenable to opening up the Board of Elections to members of parties other than Democrats and Republicans. The reality is that many New Yorkers are affiliated with third parties or not affiliated with any party.

27. More work need to be done.

Candidate Accountability Questionnaire

Top five campaign promises from 2005 and action on them

1. Promise: Pass legislation to institute a system of licensing for one, two, and three family home builders. Progress: This legislation was passed by the City Council and signed into law by the Mayor in the summer of 2007.
2. Promise: Bring quality and affordable senior housing to Staten Island. Progress: Secured \$6 million for Park Lane at Sea View senior housing project, which rehabilitated the old Nurse's Residence on the Sea View Hospital campus for desperately needed affordable senior housing on Staten Island. The ribbon cutting and grand opening was held in June 2009.
3. Promise: Work with DOT to identify and improve Staten Island intersections as a way of improving traffic flow, one intersection at a time. Progress: This approach was adopted by the Mayor's Staten Island Transportation Task Force. The DOT has not been as proactive in identifying and making engineering changes at as many intersections as I hoped. I continue to work with DOT identifying and making suggestions as to intersections that can be improved.
4. Promise: Help bring about better health care services on Staten Island. Progress: Allocated almost \$3 million in capital funding to help Staten Island University Hospital build its new state of the art Emergency Room. The new Emergency Room opened its doors in June 2009. We still have work to do to get the Bloomberg Administration to live up to the city's health care responsibility to this borough.
5. Promise: Continue progress on the New Creek and Richmond Creek Bluebelts to help alleviate certain flooding conditions in various Staten Island neighborhoods. Progress: Necessary property acquisitions continue and the appropriate site stabilization work is ongoing. I recently allocated \$500,000 to allow for the dredging of the West Branch of New Creek, which will provide a modicum of immediate flood relief and will be part of the long term Bluebelt system.

I think it is refreshing to indicate a promise that, to date, we have not brought to fruition, and that is the transformation of the Farm Colony property into something that will make us all proud. We came so close to having a proprietary secondary educational institution take the entire campus, only for that deal to collapse. Our work with Dr. Michael Tomlan of Cornell University, with former LPC Chair Jennifer Raab, with noted preservationist and architect Paige Cowley, has proven that this endeavor, although far from complete, is indeed worth the struggle. We will continue to work at finding an acceptable use for the property.

Top 5 2009 Campaign Promises

1. Bring additional affordable senior housing units to fruition Staten Island
2. Ensure that the Department of Education purchases the old Doctor's Hospital site for use as a school to alleviate overcrowding at PS 48 and other local schools.
3. Work to bring city agency operations and more businesses to Staten Island as a means of improving our local economy.
4. Work with the local medical community on Staten Island to convince the Bloomberg Administration to help provide capital for our medical institutions.
5. Ensure that DOT has the necessary resources to resurface our crumbling roads.