



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: Robert Jackson Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 7

Campaign Address: Robert Jackson 4NY, PO Box 765, New York, NY 10033

Campaign Telephone Number: ( 917 ) 733-0439 Fax: ( ) n/a

Party Affiliation(s): Democratic Campaign Manager Name: Sarah Morgridge

Website & Email: robertjackson4ny@gmail.com no web site

Education: NYC public schools, SUNY New Paltz

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): 7 1/2 years


Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: 16 years on Community

School Board 6 (7 as President), basketball coach, Parents' Association President PS/IS 187, lead plaintiff Campaign for Fiscal Equity school funding lawsuit

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:  Date: 7/20/09

## 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?   | 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?   | Support |
| 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? Support

---

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? Support
- c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members? Support
9. What is your position on:
- a. limiting councilmembers' ability to earn outside income? Oppose
- b. making the job of councilmember a full-time position? Support
- c. eliminating or limiting stipends for committee chairs and leadership positions? 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
11. What is your position on consolidating the current City Council committee structure and reducing the number of overall committees? Oppose
12. What is your position on term limits for elected officials? 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

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. PDF of article from City Hall News will be sent separately.
- Support
- I oppose term limits and see 12 years as less restrictive than 8 years.
- 

## 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
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?

Encourage the Executive and labor unions to explore options , including establishing an additional tier, support initiatives that encourage or reward better health practices with an eye to reducing healthcare expenditures.

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) recall, referendum & initiative 2) redistricting 3) address chokehold on NYC local matters

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?

1) education, 2) housing regulations, 3) taxing authority

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 make a truly accurate assessment of needs, the MTA needs to restore its credibility in the bookkeeping department by maintaining open records. I support the provisions in the Perkins/Brodsky Public Authority Reform legislation for an independent authority budget office. I also believe increased funding from all levels of government –including increased vehicle registration fees – will be needed.

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

Currently central Council staff is directly under the Speaker with a very limited number of policy analysts per topic/committee. For example, one attorney and one analyst staff the Education Committee. Often those analysts are engaged in responding to correspondence from individuals. I would prefer to see the development of a central correspondence unit for the Council and utilize the policy analysts, under Committee Chairs, and in tandem with finance staff that would continue under Speaker supervision, to make substantive assessments of program effectiveness in order to make budget recommendations based on real analysis. I believe this staff change would lead to better Council initiatives, negotiating strength and priorities for city resources.

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 support the concept of using surplus to pay down debt and future debt. However, you cannot do that when the money is not there, as in this year's budget with decreased revenue projections.

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.

I believe New York City residents get good value for their tax dollars by many measurements. We accomplish a lot over a broad spectrum of issues that many cities and municipalities do not have to deal with at either the "high" end or the "low" end. Taxes should be raised, in a progressive manner, when necessary to sustain basic safety and security standards, ensure clean streets and environmentally sound sanitation practices and maintain those institutions that can be said to characterize civilization – cultural organizations and our park system. Without parks and cultural institutions, New York ceases to be a great 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?

I favor efforts to diversify the city's economy. I would support initiatives and incentives to create more manufacturing jobs, healthcare research, education research and policy analysis, high tech research (can Manhattan Valley be synonymous with Silicon Valley?). New York City has the potential to branch in many directions. While losing the revenue from Wall Street will continue to have impact, the Mayor's Plan NYC projects a large population gain; sheer numbers will to some extent offset the revenue loss. Further, I do not accept the premise that the population will age as dramatically as the Mayor projects and require associated services. Many will, by choice or necessity, move to areas where their retirement income will stretch further than in NYC.

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 Commission on School Governance laid out a strong platform that I support. A critical first step is for an independent parent involvement structure as well as for independent assessment, independent data and independent grievance procedures. The Executive branch of government must learn to negotiate, rather than “control”. Many problems of involvement and advocacy trace back to the ambiguous status of the recently lapsed Department of Education: is this a city agency (subject to city standards and city law and city agency requirements, such as procurement protocol) or does it answer solely to the State? Parent issues go unresolved under the latter construct and additional problems arise when a city agency does not have to comply with city regulations or be subject to city law. There is also a huge perception of paternalistic attitude that radiates from DOE. For example, a July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009 announcement trumpets a link between academic achievement and physical exercise, heralds a partnership between DOE and DOHH and admonishes parents to encourage certain healthy habits. Nowhere is there any mention of the fact that schools do not meet the state standards for physical education. In a survey\* that I commissioned, 47% of the respondents (the principals who answered the survey represented 41% of total NYC public school enrollment) indicated that students in their schools get less than one hour of gym per week. A positive change would be to drop the hypocrisy and develop a full statement of needs. (\*The survey is posted at [http://www.classsizematters.org/principal\\_survey\\_report\\_10.08\\_final.pdf](http://www.classsizematters.org/principal_survey_report_10.08_final.pdf))

The press release from DOE/DOHH is found at:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/pr2009/pr047-09.shtml>

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 support improvement to its data base of registered voters and efforts to contact lapsed or inactive registrants. Increased training for poll workers. I work with “Wheresthepaper.org” to improve compliance with HAVA and establish the need not only for auditable voting equipment but assurances that audits will take place.

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?

And staff members! Actually current increased disclosure requirements seem adequate as members and staff are now required to certify their links to or interest in any organization. I do believe that disclosure is the key factor and that adequate assessment filters can determine whether ties to a particular group go beyond supporting worthwhile programs in the community. Steering a group’s

program, altering its mission or in other ways bending its purpose to benefit an individual in office or seeking office obviously fall outside permissible activities.







## 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. To provide free notary services – all three of my offices are staffed with a notary.
2. To provide a public access computer in my community offices – both of my community offices have a computer dedicated to constituent use.
3. To make myself accessible to my constituents – I have instituted monthly constituent conversations, a dedicated time for first come-first served, one on one discussion or meetings with groups that have concerns or proposals. These take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday afternoon of each month, legislative & budget calendar permitting. I also hold Town Hall meetings and attend meetings for the 3 Community Boards, 5 precinct councils and 2 community education councils in my council district. While I do not make each and every community meeting, I send staff representation and am available by phone or email to their members.

4. To advocate for education – I do this continually but perhaps most dramatically by walking 150 miles from the courthouse where the Campaign for Fiscal Equity appeal trial to place, 25<sup>th</sup> & Madison, to the site of the final Court of Appeals trial in Albany. Most recently I voted against the DOE’s new Five Year Capital Plan. See my letter to my colleagues explaining my action.
5. To support measures that will ensure the safety and security of my constituents – I have consistently worked on public safety issues from both a budget advocacy position and from working with the Commanding Officers in the police precincts in my district.

TOP FIVE 2009 CAMPAIGN PROMISES

1. To continue fighting for public education and parental/community participation in this key arena of government, fight to sustain the promise of CFE.
2. To work with advocates to promote and expand affordable housing opportunities.
3. To devise more employment and job training programs, particularly in low income neighborhoods.
4. To cultivate an economic climate that allows small businesses and entrepreneurial efforts to flourish - I am the lead sponsor of the Small Business Survival Act.
5. To fund and participate in community activities that will strengthen neighborhood connections with the goal of encouraging community involvement and promoting neighborhood cohesiveness.