



**CITIZENS UNION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE  
COMPTROLLER  
ELECTION 2009**

Citizens Union would appreciate your response 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: John Liu Age: 42

Campaign Address: 35-06 Leavitt Street, Flushing, NY 11354

Campaign Telephone Number: ( 718 ) 360-9393 Fax: ( 718 ) 679-9570 \_\_\_\_\_  
(zip)

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat \_\_\_\_\_ Campaign Manager Name: Mei Hua Ru

Website & Email: www.liunewyork.com/john@liunewyork.com


Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): Serving 8 years as Councilmember representing District 20

Previous Offices and Campaigns: \_\_\_\_\_

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" or "Endorsed Candidate" rating only to candidates we have interviewed. We will make every effort to interview candidates in this race.)*

Signature of Candidate:  Date: 8/24/2009

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.

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|---|---------|
| 1. 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 |
| 2. What is your position on reforming the current pension funding structure to create multiple tiers for future city government employees?  | Oppose  |
| 3. In general, what is your position on term limits for elected officials?  | Oppose  |
| 4. What is your position on modifying the City Charter to require that changes to term limits may only be approved by the voters?   | Support |
| 5. 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  |

The eight million people of New York City have already rendered their decision on term limits twice through referendum. I did not believe that it was right that 52 people, the city council and the mayor, have the right to change that by fiat. I strongly opposed the vote and urged that voters be given another opportunity to voice their opinion on term limits.

6. What is your position regarding managing pension fund investments and the regulation of pension intermediaries, particularly given recent events surrounding the issue at the state level?

While my opponents have taken a "knee jerk" reaction to the recent scandals involving NYS pension funds, I want to review and implement a broad and comprehensive approach than just banning placement agents. We absolutely must restore integrity and a very high level of professionalism with our pension investments and root out corruption and abuse. But there are many qualified registered brokers who are licensed securities professionals at small to medium size investment companies who would be helpful to the Comptroller's office. I would conduct a top to bottom audit of the Comptroller's office to ensure efficiency and accountability.

I would ban contributions from placement managers and intermediaries and from anyone who does business with the Comptroller's office.

7. How would you utilize the Comptroller's auditing power to ensure that government agencies are efficiently delivering services, especially given fewer resources?

We must do more with less and there must be full accountability with the Comptroller's office. While I will use the full power of audits, including the review of the finances at MTA and DOE, but we must first take out any waste and bloating in the Comptroller office to ensure efficiency in delivering services. I have demonstrated my effectiveness as Chair of the Transportation Committee in my aggressive examination of the budget of the MTA to root out waste. I've also consistently denounced the no-bid contracts at the DOE that are prevalent in that department and other agencies and authorities. I was pleased that the recent reauthorization of mayoral control included my calls for more oversight of the DOE and the mayor's actions. As Comptroller, I will bring this tenacity and commitment to root out wasteful spending and fraud and will audit every agency within the first six months of my administration.

8. How would you maximize the power of the Comptroller's office to ensure the fiscal health and integrity of city spending?

An important role of the Comptroller's office is to examine and scrutinize the City's contracts and procurement. The procurement process currently is murky at best. We must be professionalized and based on merits and cost efficiency not political connections. Too often "no bid" contracts are doled out for vital city services and officials, fiscal watchdog groups and the public are not provided any information until the bidder is chosen. I am committed to making this one of my priorities in the Comptroller's office. In addition, I will expand the Office of the Comptroller's Bureaus of Contract Administration to work with city agencies to coordinate the use of cross-divisional departments that can achieve the necessary economies of scale to be cost-effective; promote transparency by making contracts available online and documenting the bidding process, to the extent that it doesn't hinder competitiveness; and increase opportunities for MWBEs to compete in the bidding process.

9. Do you believe there needs to be improvements to the Comptroller's role and practices? How would you manage the position?

These are extraordinary times in New York as the recession has hit hard and affected the middle class and hard working women and men in the City. The severity of New York City's

economic crisis cannot be understated. As Comptroller, I will establish short-term and long-term goals to help get the City's economy back on track. I am strongly committed to using the powers of the Comptroller's office to create good wage and sustainable jobs in neighborhoods around the City. We currently have a golden opportunity to maximize the federal stimulus dollars under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and I plan to take full advantage of the federal funds as part of his short-term solution to aid the City's economy.

I have announced my plans to invest in the City's infrastructure. From our transportation and communications networks, water and power plants, to structures that house public institutions like our schools and hospitals, maintaining the next generation of infrastructure is an essential part of the City's growth and prosperity. By investing in infrastructure projects, we can increase subway access to communities that currently have transportation needs but poor access to the mass transit system; facilitate fuller commuter rail access to the city's center, saving time for rail and road commuters while reducing congestion; address our aging bridge infrastructure, which currently includes many bridges that have deteriorated to the point that they require rebuilding or comprehensive repair; and modernize the aging system that is responsible for providing drinking water for over 9 million residents in the New York City area.

As the Chief Fiscal Officer of the City, I will work to ensure that the City's infrastructure projects take full advantage of the subsidy opportunity presented by the Build America Bond program.

By investing in Build America Bonds and by allocating direct pension fund dollars into infrastructure projects, we will create jobs, upgrade waning transportation systems and ensure New York City's recovery.

10. What do you believe is the appropriate role of the Comptroller's office in auditing the Department of Education?

I have called for a full audit of the Department of Education, particularly reviewing the "no-bid" contracts, and advocated for the Comptroller to have full auditing powers to root out waste and abuse from the bloated DOE budget. This is the only way to have appropriate check and balance. It is ludicrous for the Comptroller not to have audit authority over the single largest budget item in the City's budget.

11. 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 do you think should be done to address the MTA's fiscal solvency issues and ensure that the burden for funding the MTA are equitably distributed amongst all stakeholders?

To avert destructive cuts to the transit system, there was little choice but to support the Ravitch Commission recommendation for a bailout of the MTA. I supported the passage without the requirement of tolls on the East River Crossings as the revenue would only be used to improve bus service throughout the City and not to plug the MTA operating deficit.

I voted for congestion pricing as the economic and environment cost of not enacting it would continue to cost the City roughly \$13 billion a year in economic impact. It would be beneficial to our residents having clean air and improving our economy to have a steady revenue to fund the MTA.

And, I will continue to closely audit the MTA to make sure that every cent is spent wisely and we would ensure accountability and efficiency. Finally my plan to invest in the City's infrastructure will provide tremendous boost for job creation and economic stability with improved benefits to the quality of life for New Yorkers.

11. What would you propose to address some of the structural imbalances in the current budget process?

As Comptroller, I will push to get rid of mid-year budget modifications that mask these structural imbalances in the City's budget. These modifications mask hundreds of millions of dollars of allocation that happen in the dead of night without proper oversight or public review.

With recent slush fund scandal at the City Council, I strongly condemned the inexcusable practice of creating dummy recipients and spoke out against the Speaker's role. These discretionary funds whether they are from the Council or the Mayor amount to "no-bid" contracts that should be examined closely with checks and balance in place.

12. 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 usage of surplus revenues to pay down future health cost and pension obligations because we must pay down debt so that the burden is not passed to our children and grandchildren. While we must balance the budget with shared sacrifices made by every sector in our City, we must also provide and maintain the City's vital services. This is why we need an experienced Comptroller and watchdog who will root out any waste and fraud and make our

agencies efficient and productive.

13. 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 Board of Elections has had operating problems for many years. Even with increased budgets, the BOE has not delivered the results as expected, including the new voting machines and having translators for the various languages that the voters demand. I will require annual report on key budget items and to make this report public. Without accountability, the BOE has hindered the full participation of hundreds and thousands of voters who are disenfranchised because of inadequate communications and outreach. We must have the BOE working optimally to ensure the full participation of our voters.

14. What would you propose to further enhance transparency regarding the relationships between elected officials, their families, and nonprofits that receive funding from New York City?

We must have more transparency and accountability within the budget process and restore confidence that our government is watching every dollar that is spent is going to legitimate and worthy causes like Little Leagues, after school and cultural programs. I've called for more sunshine into the process by reforming the discretionary funds that are given out by the Council and the Mayor and rid of the mid-year budget modifications to the budget. We need to have a transparent process that clearly exposes the relationships of elected officials, families, and supporters

14. What would you propose to ensure that charter mandated elected offices receive equitable budget allocations?

The City's budget process has been used as political payback. As Comptroller, I will work to eliminate political influence in every part of the budget allocation process by instituting full disclosures and transparency to ensure accountability. Taxpayers must be provided timely information as how their hard earned money is spent.

15. 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?

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As Comptroller, I will provide objective analysis on the impact of pension and fringe benefits so that stakeholders can make an informed decision about the spending. We must invest pension funds wisely to maximize returns to reduce the likelihood of unanticipated drops in revenue.

17. 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 will make the taxes more explicit. No more back door taxes that are regressive like water and sewer fees that are not used to maintain the water and sewer system as the same goes with ticketing and fines which harm small businesses. I will make revenue collection more straightforward and transparent to City taxpayers.

18. 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?

The City should never have lost focus on the 5-borough economic development strategy. The unfortunate truth is that Wall Street was flushed in the past decade and the City relaxed its efforts to diversify the economy. We must push ahead on economic development in both good and bad economic times, including attracting new areas such as media, science and technology, as well as working to develop a green economy.

The City should leverage its status as financial capital of the world to foster greater exchange between NYC and places where so many New Yorkers and their families come from.