



**2012 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR  
CANDIDATES FOR NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE**

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Citizens Union would appreciate your response to the following questionnaire related to policy issues facing New York State and our interest in reforming state government. 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 September 13<sup>th</sup> Primary Election, and our “Endorsed Candidates” for the November 6<sup>th</sup> General Election.

If you seek our support, we would also need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process. We will not automatically schedule an interview with you if you return this questionnaire, as we prioritize competitive races and resources constrain us from evaluating all races. Please contact us if you wish to be interviewed.

We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, Voters Directory and other appropriate venues. We thank you very much for your response.

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Candidate Name: Gustavo Rivera Age: 36

Campaign Address: TBD

Campaign Telephone Number: (347) 450-7136 Fax: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Party Affiliation(s):(D) Campaign Manager Name: Maryann Rosa

Website & Email: <http://www.gustavoforstatesenate.com/> & mrosa1210@gmail.com

Education: B.A., University of Puerto Rico; Doctoral Program in Political Science, CUNY Graduate Center (in progress).

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): First elected November 2010.

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

- Director of Outreach, Office of US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, New York, NY April 2009 – May 2010
- Constituency Director, Florida, Obama for America, Tampa, FL, July 2008 – December 2008
- Consultant, SEIU Local 1199, New York, NY, February 2008 – June 2008
- Chief of Staff, Office of New York State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Yonkers, NY, January 2007 – September 2007
- Regional Director, Office of State Senate Democratic Leader, David A. Paterson, New York, NY, December 2003 – December 2006
- Deputy Field Director, Friends of Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Yonkers, NY, October 2006 – November 2006

- Deputy Field Director, John Sabini for State Senate, Queens, NY, August 2006 – September 2006
- Part Time Adjunct Lecturer, PACE University, New York, NY, September 2005 – Present
- Field Director, Bronx, New Yorkers for Ferrer 2005, Bronx, NY, October 2005 – November 2005
- Campaign Manager, People for Melissa Mark-Viverito 2005, New York, NY, August 2005 – September 2005
- Deputy Field Director, Friends of Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Yonkers, NY, October 2004 – November 2004
- Deputy Field Director, Serrano for State Senate, New York, NY, July 2004 – September 2004
- VP, Campaign Services, The PoliProd Group, Brooklyn, NY, May 2003 – January 2004
- Conference Consultant, PACE University, New York, NY, September 2003 – January 2004.
- Campaign Manager, Friends of Philip Reed, New York, NY, June 2003 – November 2003

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

(Please note: Citizens Union can grant its “Endorsed Candidate” rating only to candidates we have interviewed.)

Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings? YES  NO



Signature of Candidate:

Date: 6/30/12

**I. CANDIDATE QUESTIONS**

Please state your position on the following reform measures. Specify whether you support or oppose each. You may elaborate in the space provided at the end or on additional paper.

**ELECTION REFORM**

1. What is your position on second passage of the constitutional amendment (S.6698/A.9526 of 2012) creating an independent redistricting commission with appointees split evenly between the majority and minority parties?	Support/Oppose
2. What is your position on restructuring the state Board of Elections and changing the administration of elections by amending the constitution to abolish the two-party system of governance and operation?	Support/Oppose
3. What is your position on making it easier for candidates to appear on the ballot by, for example, lowering signature requirements and utilizing less burdensome witness signature requirements?	Support/Oppose
4. What is your position on amending the Municipal Home Rule law to limit the ability of a mayor-appointed charter revision commission to “bump” other local charter amendments from appearing on the ballot?	Support/Oppose
5. What is your position on automatically granting New Yorkers on parole the ability to vote?	Support/Oppose
6. What is your position on amending the constitution to allow for Election Day Registration?	Support/Oppose
7. What is your position on amending the constitution to allow for no-excuse absentee voting?	Support/Oppose
8. What is your position on instituting early voting in New York State to allow voters to cast their votes at more convenient times?	Support/Oppose
9. What is your position on redesigning the ballot to ensure that voters are able to clearly read candidates’ names, titles of offices, designations and ballot questions; that instructions are clear and accurate; that bilingual ballots are required; and that the ballot is able to split races between multiple pages?	Support/Oppose
10. What is your position on reforming the special election process, creating a nonpartisan special election for state legislative vacancies, as proposed by A.1369/S.26?	Support/Oppose
11. What is your position regarding automatic voter registration in which voter registration	Support/Oppose

information of individuals who consent to be registered is provided electronically to the Board of Elections, and address information is automatically updated?	
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**CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM**

12. What is your position on establishing a matching public financing system for state legislative and statewide races similar to the New York City model?	Support/Oppose
13. What is your position on lowering campaign contribution limits for legislative and statewide candidates for public office?	Support/Oppose
14. What is your position on restricting campaign contributions from registered lobbyists, placement agents and those who do business with the state?	Support/Oppose
15. What is your position on limiting or banning campaign contributions from corporations, LLCs, and LLPs? (Note: such entities would be able to form separate political action committees due to constitutional issues regarding freedom of speech.)	Support/Oppose
16. What is your position on closing "soft money" loopholes such as limiting transfers from party committees to candidates or other committees to twice the limit set on individual contributors and limiting contributions to party committees, including housekeeping accounts, to the same ceiling placed on candidates?	Support/Oppose
17. What is your position on requiring candidates to include full name, home address, and employer/business name for each contribution and bundler?	Support/Oppose

**CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM (CONTINUED)**

18. What is your position on requiring that two periodic campaign finance reports be filed during the legislative session to reflect contributions given during the session?	Support/Oppose
19. What is your position on stricter requirements on the use of campaign contributions for non-campaign related activity, such as personal use?	Support/Oppose
20. What is your position on improving disclosure of independent expenditures such as requiring disclosure of electioneering activities and linking expenditures to candidates targeted?	Support/Oppose
21. What is your position on limiting the ability of candidates to accumulate "war chests" and then transferring funds raised in one race to another?	Support/Oppose
22. What is your position on creating an enforcement entity independent of the State Board of Elections to oversee campaign finance laws?	Support/Oppose

**JUDICIAL REFORM**

23. What is your position on a merit-based appointment system through creation of a commission for the selection of judges in all of New York's trial courts?	Support/Oppose
24. What is your position simplifying and modernizing the state's court system by consolidating the nine trial courts into a two-tiered system?	Support/Oppose

**ETHICS REFORM**

25. What is your position on empowering the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute cases involving public corruption, including serious election law malfeasance?	Support/Oppose
26. What is your position on amending the State Constitution to extend pension forfeiture, subject to due process safeguards, to all public officers and legislators who have been convicted of felonies, building on the 2011 ethics reforms which only apply to future state employees?	Support/Oppose

**BUDGET REFORM**

27. What is your position on requiring the governor's budget submission to present the full scope	Support/Oppose
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of the state’s financial obligations, including its public authorities?	
28. What is your position on establishing an independent, nonpartisan budget office to provide revenue projections, display economic and policy analysis and require that the state engage in long term, multi-year budget planning?	Support/Oppose
29. What is your position on the use of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) rather than cash accounting for the state budget?	Support/Oppose
30. What is your position on distributing member item allocations equally among all legislators and requiring for greater accountability as expressed in S. 7007/A10116?	Support/Oppose
31. What is your position on incorporating the use of performance budgeting and outcome measurement to promote the more rational appropriation of state funds?	Support/Oppose
32. What is your position on instituting a later start date for the state fiscal year?	Support/Oppose
33. What is your position on limiting the ability of the governor to enact policy changes governing the use of resources in appropriation bills by requiring that such bills be consistent with existing law or proposed changes in separate legislation?	Support/Oppose

**ADDITIONAL REFORM**

34. What is your position on increasing public access to information by reforming the Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Laws to enhance transparency, as well as the creation of tools such as open data portals to ease public access to information?	Support/Oppose
35. What is your position on enactment of legislative rules reform to strengthen rank-and-file members’ roles in the legislative process and create more equity between members?	Support/Oppose

Please use the space provided or a separate sheet of paper to elaborate on your positions on the issues contained in the previous pages. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.

As it relates to question 2 under campaign reform, I understand the concerns with the two-party system and agree with many of the goals of Citizens Union to ensure that the “duopolistic” nature of the party system is dismantled. This is one of the reasons why I proudly sought and received the endorsement of the Working Families Party, and why I have supported candidates running on the WFP line. It has inserted “competition” into the party system in New York, and I think it has given progressive candidates such as myself the opportunity to win elections.

The problem I have with doing away with partisan elections is that, for better or for worse, is that right now, political parties are the only way to mobilize voters who do not have the resources to mobilize themselves. The citizens I represent in the Bronx, who do not have the time or money to become involved in politics, would be hurt by nonpartisan elections. Absent campaign finance reform and the FULL public financing of campaigns, it would further lead to wealthy individuals influencing campaigns. It is unconscionable to me, for instance, that an individual can spend nearly a quarter billion dollars of his own money to win election for mayor three times. Non partisan elections would do nothing to curb that problem, and would do nothing to mobilize the poorest voters to exercise their constitutional right to vote.

**II. CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS (PAST AND CURRENT)**

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 seat and what progress has been made in keeping those promises, and
- b. what are the top five promises you are making to the voters during this campaign?

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 2010 AND ACTION ON THEM**

**In 2010, I made five “commitments” rather than promises, which I have upheld to the best of my ability. They are in order, and ways I have upheld them.**

1. Commitment to my constituents – the first commitment I made is to serve my constituents to the best of my ability. That begins with living in the district, as I have done for the last ten years in a rent stabilized apartment. I am committed to providing the best constituent service to my community through my legislative and district offices by helping them navigate the red tape of city, state and national government. I've done this work as the Chief of Staff for State Senator Andrea Stewart Cousins and as the State Director of Outreach for US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand.

I have upheld this commitment by serving the residents of the 33<sup>rd</sup> District with a tireless staff that has provided the highest quality constituent service. We have been successful in cutting through the red tape of government bureaucracy to assist Bronxites and provide them with solutions to problems. I did move after being elected, but I moved to an apartment across the hall in the same rent stabilized building. I continue to walk to my District Office, which is 10 minutes away. Walking around the district and interacting with folks on the street is an important way for them to know they have access to me.

2. Commitment to be a full-time legislator – I believe that the NY State legislature should be a full-time job, and I will make a commitment to treat it as such until the laws are changed. Taking employment elsewhere can give the appearance of serving two masters, when the only master a legislator should serve is his constituency.

The only “outside” job I've taken is one I've held for years – as an adjunct professor at Pace University. I teach one class in the fall semester, which meets one night a week. I am compensated roughly \$3,000 for my teaching. All of my time outside of that 1 course is dedicated to serving the residents of the 33<sup>rd</sup> district and the State of New York. Regardless of whether I am in legislative session or in the district, I work for my constituents every day of the week.

3. Commitment to good government – I will uphold the principles outlined here because I believe firmly that good government means sound public policy. This is what I've taught to my students for the last 11 years, and the last 10 as a faculty member for Somos El Futuro – the Model State Senate sponsored by CUNY and the Latino Task Force. Accountability, transparency, and reform will be hallmarks of my Senate career.

The first bill I introduced was part of an ethics package that mandated full disclosure of all outside sources of income for legislators. I have sponsored and co-sponsored other legislation committed to good government including many of the issues mentioned above like public campaign financing and banning lobbyists convicted of a felony from lobbying legislators for a period of time.

4. Commitment to civic literacy, participation and engagement amongst our youth - as an educator, I believe elected officials need to do all they can to educate the public. I've done this for more than a decade through programs I've been part of at Hunter College, Pace, and through the Justice Resource Center at MLK High school. I am committed to using my office to foster civic competency amongst our youth by bringing innovative programs to the schools in my district and throughout the city.

One of the initiatives we launched in the fall of 2011 was a series of civic literacy courses I taught at a few public libraries in my district, which were free and open to the public. The program consisted of four lectures on the American and New York government including: the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, Voting and Elections, and NY State government. The classes were offered in English and Spanish, and I am proud to say hundreds of community members and young people attended the lectures.

In 2011, I worked with community partners to launch the Bronx CAN Health Initiative (Changing Attitudes Now) which sought to assist individuals – especially youth – in taking ownership of their health. We held health fairs and exercise classes for our residents, as well as educational programs on how to live healthy. I am currently in year two of the Bronx CAN Health Initiative and have introduced several pieces of legislation that came out of conversations with community members and health organizations on issues of health. I am particularly proud to have passed legislation this year through both the State Senate and Assembly to ban smoking within 100 feet of school entrances and exits.

5. Commitment to sound public policy – After years of corruption, my Bronx community needs a Senator dedicated to creating opportunities for them that allows them to fulfill their potential. This means: job creation and responsible economic development; tenants rights and affordable housing through the reform of our housing laws; education reform that gives all of our children stellar educational experience; and promoting healthcare so individuals can be productive members of society. I am committed to enacting all of these progressive policies.

I have made good on my commitment to these policies. I supported the continuation and strengthening of rent regulation laws; the creation of regional economic development councils which have already assisted the Bronx; the creation of the statewide health exchange; as well as more funding for education – to name a few.

#### **TOP FIVE 2012 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS**

1. Public Safety in the 33<sup>rd</sup> District - we have to do all we can to get illegal guns off the street and stop the gun violence, while also ensuring that community members feel the police is there to protect them and their families. That means doing away with programs like Stop and Frisk, which I believe is unconstitutional, and it means ensuring that immigrants in the Bronx are not afraid to approach law enforcement for fear of getting caught up in deportation proceedings.
2. Criminal Justice Reform – as the Ranking Member on the Crimes, Crime Victims, and Corrections Committee, it is my job to help oversee the corrections system, to ensure victims are protected, help those who have been wrongfully accused, and to give those returning from prison the opportunities they need to be productive citizens.
3. Community and Economic Development – While unemployment has decreased in the Bronx, it is still the highest in the city and near the highest in the state. We need to do more to promote responsible economic and community development. I support the governor's efforts to invest hundreds of millions of

dollars in the Regional Economic Councils and think we can do more. At the center of that effort in my district is the redevelopment of the Kingsbridge Armory, which has the potential to revitalize my neighborhood and provide hundreds of living wage jobs for my neighbors.

4. Health Care – the Bronx continues to be the unhealthiest county in the State. This is why I launched the Bronx CAN health initiative and will continue to work with community partners like Montefiore Medical Center and Bronx Health Reach to ensure that my community gets access to healthy foods, preventative care, and the best possible health coverage we can provide. As a member of the Health Committee in the State Senate, I will continue to propose legislation that will improve the health of the Bronxites I serve.
5. Education – I continue to be an educator and believe it is still the Great Equalizer in our society. It is the main engine of upward mobility, especially in a District such as mine which has higher levels of poverty and lower high school graduation rates than just about anywhere in the state. Education is important for everyone – but it is more vital in my community than ever. I will continue to work on educating our youth, reforming the education system in terms of curriculum, and providing our teachers the resources they need to do their jobs to the best of their abilities.

**Please return to: Citizens Union, Local Candidates Committee  
299 Broadway, Suite 700 New York, NY 10007  
via fax to 212.227.0345 or via email to [policy@citizensunion.org](mailto:policy@citizensunion.org)  
Call us at 212-227-0342 with any questions.**