



**CITIZENS UNION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL ELECTION 2009**

Citizens Union would appreciate your response to the following questions related to Council and election reform policy issues facing the City of New York. We plan to make public your responses to this questionnaire on our website and in other appropriate venues.

Citizens Union will also be using your answers to guide the process of evaluating candidates for this office and to assist us in determining whether to issue a candidate "endorsement."

We thank you very much for your response.

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Candidate Name: Paul Saryian Age: 49

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 49

Campaign Address: 446 Bement Avenue – Staten Island, New York - 10310

Campaign Telephone Number: (718) 983-0075 Fax: (718) 983-0075 (same)

Party Affiliation: Independence Campaign Manager Name: Self

Website & Email:


Education: John Jay College, Bachelors Degree in Criminal Justice

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): Retired (2/28/08)

I am a former NYPD captain with 23 years of public service experience.

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: My affiliation with NYPD often created conflicts of interests limiting my political activity. However, over a period of 20 years, I wrote numerous news editorials.

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES  
*(Please note: Citizens Union can grant its "Preferred Candidate" and "Endorsed Candidate" rating only to candidates we have interviewed.)*

Signature of Candidate:  Date: 01/16/09

## 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.

### VOTING AND ELECTIONS REFORM

1. What is your position on allowing independents to vote in party primaries? Support

Comments: Open primaries support democracy.

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

Comments: It prevents a monopolization of the political system and gives the people more voice in government.

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

Comments: As the cost of living increases, so should compensation for election day poll workers.

4. What is your position on requiring that the Board of Elections in the City of New York be included in the preliminarily and final mayor's management report? Support

Comments: Transparency is necessary to ensure integrity and give monitors oversight of operations.

### CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

5. What is your position on establishing stricter requirement for the disbursement of campaign finance matching funds to candidates that face non-competitive challengers? Oppose

Comments: If contributions are raised legally, candidates should be entitled to campaign finance matching funds.

6. What is your position on banning the transfer of funds that were raised in a previous election cycle into a current account? Support

Comments: Contribution funds should be "campaign specific" because they are based on who are the opposing candidates and the current issues at hand.

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

Comments: There may be a tendency for bias and possible conflict of interests.

8. What is your position on lowering the campaign contribution limit for City Council candidates from the current \$2,750 for those who participate in the city's campaign finance program? Support

Comments: This reduction will make it easier for "grass root" candidates to compete.

9. What is your position on lowering the expenditure limit for City Council candidates who participate in the city's campaign finance program? Oppose

Comments: Although I support lowering the contribution limit, I feel candidates should be able increase campaign expenditure if they are able to raise more money, in lower denominations of donations. This is a difficult task and should be rewarded accordingly.

#### CITY COUNCIL REFORM

10. What is your position on allowing Council committees to function more independently of the speaker than is presently the case? Support

- Should committee staff be hired by and report to committee chairs? Support
- Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs? Support
- Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members? Support

Comments: I support all of these positions because they provide chairs an ability to gather a diverse, congenial and cooperative committee.

11. What is your position on eliminating or limiting stipends for committee chairs and leadership positions? Oppose

Comments: Extra responsibility deserves additional compensation.

12. What is your position on consolidating the current City Council committee structure and reducing the number of overall committees? Abstain

Comments: I need to learn more about the responsibilities of these committees before I take a position.

13. 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

Comments: On October 16, 2008 I gave testimony at City Council in support of term limits.  
\*Attached is a transcript of my testimony.

14. What is your position on modifying the City Charter to require that changes to term limits may only be approved by the voters? Support

Comments: \*See attached transcript of testimony given on October 16, 2008.

### **POLICY ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE**

15. What is your position on transferring prosecutorial power over substantiated claims of police misconduct to the Civilian Complaint Review Board? If oppose, what would you propose to ensure sufficient public oversight and effective adjudication in handling claims of alleged police misconduct? Support

Comments: CCRB should have the authority to impose disciplinary action in the event a member of the NYPD is found guilty of misconduct. However, if the findings and charges are criminal, only a special prosecutor or District Attorney should have prosecutorial powers.

16. Do you believe that the State Legislature should renew mayoral control of the city's public schools in its present form? If oppose, what specific changes to the current system would you recommend? Support

Comments: The mayor's control over the city's public schools eliminates much of the bureaucracy that would otherwise slow down progress.

17. What is your position on establishing mandatory inclusionary zoning standards and requirements for all new residential development projects? If so, what should be the minimum percentage set aside for low income households? Oppose

Comments: Ordinarily I would support this position. However, due to the current glut of unsold and foreclosed homes on Staten Island, I can not support this position. The law of supply and demand should dictate that increasing housing at moment in time would only slow down the recovery of the housing market which is suffering through a period of depression.

18. What is your position on changing the current land use process under ULURP to limit the role of community-based planning? Oppose

Comments: Community boards should maintain their role in oversight and review of land use process because they represent and understand local issues.

19. What is your position on the Ravitch Commission's recommendations for new revenue sources for funding the MTA and altering its governance? Please explain your answer, as well as your thoughts on how the experiences of the debate surrounding the city's efforts to implement congestion pricing can inform the current discussion.

Support

Comments: The revenue gained as a result of the Ravitch Commission' recommendations should be equitably and fairly distributed with the other boroughs, otherwise there is no reason for anyone outside of Manhattan to support these measures. I could support these recommendations, but the question remains, what's in it for the outer boroughs?

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

See attached testimonies:

- 1: 10/16/08 Testimony at City Council hearing on term limit.
- 2: 12/13/08 Speech given at rally to keep Fire Engine Co. 161 open 24/7.
- 3: 01/15/09 Statement given at Health Crisis on Staten Island seminar.

## TESTIMONY REGARDING TERM LIMITS

Thursday, October 16, 2008  
City Hall 8:40 PM

Good evening, members of the City Council.

I want to thank you for giving the people this opportunity to voice their opinion.

My name is Paul Saryian. I am a resident of Staten Island and recently retired from the New York City Police Department while in the rank of Captain. And, I am also considering running for the 49<sup>th</sup> District City Council seat in the event of a vacancy come this January.

The following is my testimony regarding term limits:

We the people of New York City, were twice subjected to a referendum and twice voted in favor of having term limits placed on our elected officials.

Anything other than the democratic will of the people would be unprecedented and tantamount to dictatorship and tyranny.

Disregarding and trivializing the results of an election would not only be unconstitutional - it would also set the stage for a much more dangerous turn of events in the future that will result in a total usurp of power on the part of an individual over the will of the people.

"It's nice to be king." But in New York City, we have no kings and we have no absolute leadership.

Term limits allows for new ideas to permeate within the political system. Eight years is more than enough time to implement plans and programs.

The old adage still rings true: "A new broom cleans best."

Paul Saryian

Speaker: Paul Saryian  
Venue: HHC Public Hearing  
Location: Staten Island Hotel  
Date: January 15, 2009 – 6:00 p.m.

Good evening everyone.

*(I congratulated the Dr. Victor Rodwin on his excellent presentation. I also agreed with the analysis and the need to have an integrated health facility/hospital where primary, speciality and preventive care could be provided)*

My name is Paul Saryian  
and I am a candidate for City Council.

I would like to thank the Richmond County Medical Society and everyone on this committee for this opportunity to speak today.

My concern is with the Health and Hospital's Corporation complacency and disregard for the looming health crisis that has begun on Staten Island.

Please ask yourselves, what is the mission of the Health and Hospitals Corporation and is the current health crisis a direct result of a lack of adequate health and hospital care?

Why does the HHC spend less than one half of one cent of each dollar from its budget on Staten Island?

We have five percent of New York's population and we pay the same taxes as everyone else.

Could you please tell me why a 5.4 billion dollar public service corporation refuses to build a city hospital in the only borough that does not have one?

Yet the HHC is able to find over 1.3 billion dollars to modernize and rebuild existing facilities with little being spent here on Staten Island?

While Rome is burning and Staten Islanders die at an alarming rate 17% above city average, the HHC is refusing to provide our fair share of needed funds.

Please don't cite the conciliation about how HHC is building health clinics or providing us with medical mobiles to serve our needs. We do not live in Iraq or Afghanistan where medical mobiles are used to treat patients.

The HHC should be ashamed because they are the experts, and they know their plans are not the answer to our ills.

Is this our fair representation as a result of an increase in taxation?

I wonder how many members of the HHC live on Staten Island?

Maybe the profound message will strike home when someone they know must be rushed to a hospital emergency room only to find an overcrowded waiting room with no beds available for the seriously ill or injured.

This degradation of Staten Islanders is not the fault of hospital staff, personnel or physicians, but rather the method of triage they are forced to adhere to in order to serve the overcrowded emergency rooms.

I don't know how crowded the city morgue is, but at that point it's too late for change, isn't it?



In 2006, our private hospitals on Staten Island served over 112 thousand underinsured patients – the financial burden to private hospitals is so bad, that recently, Richmond University Medical Center was on the verge of bankruptcy.

THIS, ladies and gentlemen, is unacceptable!

Ask yourself, is Staten Island getting what it deserves and are we equal partners with the other boroughs?

My name is Paul Saryian and I want to thank you again for your time.

-Paul Saryian

**Date:** December 13, 2008  
**Time:** 11:00 a.m.  
**Location:** McClean Avenue and Sand Lane

**The following is a transcript of a speech given by Paul Saryian at a rally to keep FDNY Engine Co. #161 open 24/7.**

I want to thank the South Beach Civic Association for having organized this rally.

My name is Paul Saryian. I served with the New York City Police Department for 23 years and I recently retired with the rank of captain.

My experience has taught me how vital uniformed services are in maintaining order and safety in our city. The fact is, even if we left our firehouses open, we are simply not prepared to deal with a major crisis given the reductions in the number of uniformed personnel.

Have we already forgotten "911"

*Crowd loudly responds: No!*

Have we already forgotten 343 firefighters who gave their lives on that fateful day?

*Again, the crowd responds: No!*

Are we ready for another terrorist attack?

*Crowd response: No!*

What will we do if another event of this magnitude or worse should occur?

Closing firehouses during evening hours is risky business and dangerous to everyone in our community.

Although I have lived on Staten Island for 40 years, I was born in the South Bronx and some of my earliest childhood memories are of witnessing entire neighborhoods being burned to the ground.

Is Staten Island going to be the next South Bronx?

*Crowd response: No!*

Do we have to wait for more homes to burn?

*Crowd response: No!*

...more people and firefighters to die?

*Crowd response: No!*

...before we realize we have made a grave mistake.

I am urging you Mayor Bloomberg to reconsider these closures, because the life the fire department saves may be yours!

- Paul Saryian

## **CAMPAIGN PROMISES BEING MADE TO VOTERS IN 2009**

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 a candidate who presently does not hold elected office, CU is interested in knowing 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 BEING MADE IN 2009**

1. Staten Island receives about 50% of its fair allocation of police officers and fire fighters.  
I will fight to get our fair share of police and fire personnel.
2. Staten Island has the highest foreclosure rate in New York City and many residents have been victimized by predatory lenders. We need to place a cap of real estate tax increases and help rescue homeowners by converting predatory adjustable mortgages into affordable fixed rate loans.
3. I will negotiate with the Health and Hospitals Corporation and ask them to build integrated health care facilities. Staten Island is suffering a health crisis. Our mortality rate is 17% above city average, yet HHC spends less than one cent of every dollar on Staten Island. This is outrageous, considering we have over 477,000 residents and have the highest median income in all of New York City.
4. I will fight for improved and energy efficient transportation systems, including a new North Shore Railroad.
5. Fight to reduce classroom sizes, build new schools and have computers available for every child – beginning with first grade students.

**Please return to: Citizens Union, Local Candidates Committee  
299 Broadway, Suite 700 New York, NY 10007  
or via fax to 212.227.0345**

See attached statements/testimony.