

## Citizens Union Questionnaire

### Zellnor Myrie, Democratic candidate for NY State Senate District 20

*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.*

It's no secret that our state government has deeply rooted problems with accountability and transparency. Many voters feel that Albany is beyond repair. I share this frustration, but I also believe that reform is possible - when we elect representatives who aren't beholden to entrenched special interests that benefit from a broken status quo.

One of my top reform priorities will be the State Senate passage of the Assembly's April 2018 legislative package on voting rights, which includes: a seven-day early voting period before any primary, special or general election; no-excuse absentee voting; and the establishment of an online, streamlined voter registration process. I will also fight to pass automatic voter registration and same-day registration. With New York ranking 41st in the country in turnout in 2016, it is imperative to implement these common-sense reforms. This year, New York was the only state in the country to separate its federal and state primary elections - we must end this policy that suppresses turnout and does a disservice to our democracy.

I am also committed to criminal justice reform, including the repeal of Civil Rights Law, Sec. 50-a, which conceals the disciplinary records of police officers. Repeal is especially important in light of the NYPD's recent refusal to disclose precinct-level data on use-of force data - force that disproportionately harms communities of color. Sealing these records is a backward policy from 1976. We must restore justice and due process for victims of police misconduct. I have [publicly called](#) for this repeal and will champion it as a legislator if elected. I also support authorizing and funding the State Attorney General's office to investigate police departments for unconstitutional policing.

The way we finance elections is also badly in need of reform. Individual contributions should be lowered, and the LLC loophole should be closed immediately. LLC contributions should have the same \$5,000 aggregate limit as corporations, and both direct and indirect owners of the LLC should be publicly disclosed. Each year Albany allows this loophole to remain open, dark money from anonymous special interests continues to distort our electoral process. The state should also adopt public financing of elections, using a small donor matching system like that of New York City.

I support ending the rampant use of slush funds - murky appropriations made without any transparency. The FY 2019 budget included over \$11 billion in such outlays. The specific use of discretionary funds should be itemized and publicly reported.

Albany's anti-corruption laws also need serious strengthening in order to empower local prosecutors to hold our public officials accountable. The abuse of public trust should be a criminal charge, matching the federal analog. Bribery, currently defined very narrowly, should be broadened, particularly in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in

*McDonnell* that has led to the overturning of several corruption cases here in New York and across the country. I would support a measure to limit outside income earned by state legislators to 25% of their salaries, and would go even further by supporting a ban on outside income. Salaries should simultaneously be increased (above the current base pay levels set in 1999!) to remove the incentives that currently exist for misuse of influence.

The success of improved ethics laws will depend on robust enforcement. We should increase the transparency of JCOPE activities and votes, increase the independence of the commissioners, and eliminate the partisan veto power.

### III. CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS

*In addition to evaluating stances on the issues above, Citizens Union also considers the campaign goals articulated to voters. What are the top five promises you are making to the voters during this campaign?*

#### TOP FIVE 2018 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS

1. **Expand affordable housing:** I support an end to vacancy decontrol, which gives landlords an incentive to push out long-term residents and then hike up the rent; closure of the 'preferential rent' loophole, which has forced too many tenants to face unexpected and sudden rent increases; a repeal of the Urstadt Law, so that after decades of landlord-friendly policies, New York City can finally strengthen its own rent regulations and tenant protections; and a dedication of more public land to 100% affordable housing developments.
2. **Protect immigrant rights:** I will work to pass the Liberty Act to make New York a true sanctuary state, and the DREAM Act to give undocumented immigrants access to financial assistance for public universities. I will also fight to allow undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses.
3. **Fully fund public education:** Our district's schools are owed millions of dollars in Foundation Aid funding. I will fight to include the full, court-mandated level of funding in the state budget.
4. **Advance criminal justice reform:** I will push for ending a cash bail system that criminalizes poverty; reforming our speedy trial statutes to ensure due process in a timely fashion; divesting all NY state assets in for-profit prisons; dedicating state funding to prison education programs; increasing funding for the monitoring of inmate abuse; and legalizing recreational marijuana use.
5. **Increase election turnout and transparency:** I will fiercely support passage of the New York Votes Act to institute automatic and same-day voter registration, early voting, no-excuse absentee voting, pre-registration of sixteen and seventeen year-olds, consolidated primaries, and shortened party registration deadlines - and I will push for statewide public financing of elections and closure of the LLC loophole so that the voters' choice is not distorted by anonymous and unaccountable influences.

#### IV. ETHICAL REPRESENTATION OF CONSTITUENTS

*Citizens Union believes that all New Yorkers deserve to be represented by officials who work for the public interest and honor the public trust. With the corruption conviction of recent legislative leaders, we seek to endorse a candidate who will demonstrate that she/he will honor the full commitment of the oath of office, and always represent the public interest above all else. Please tell us how you have and would continue to conduct the political affairs of this office in an upright manner, and maintain the public trust.*

I am running to bring integrity and accountability to the 20th District's State Senate seat. I will not seek any outside income while in office, and I will work to increase the transparency of how our state government uses taxpayer money. I will take it upon myself, and all my staff, to vigilantly avoid conflicts of interest of any kind.

During this campaign and throughout the duration of my public service, I have pledged to take no contributions from the fossil fuel or real estate industries. I am committed to running a transparent, inclusive campaign powered by individual, small-dollar donors. I will dedicate myself to passing critical campaign finance reform, so that no state legislators can abuse the LLC loophole.

I am publicly seeking the Democratic nomination, and if elected, I will not betray my constituents' trust by abandoning the Democratic caucus, as my opponent did in 2016.

I pledge to represent the public interest above all else. I will communicate honestly and frequently with my constituents, by having staff in attendance at community meetings and ensuring robust constituents services, even during non-traditional hours (nights and weekends). I look forward to working with organizations like Citizens Union to continually improve my efforts to restore and maintain our community's faith in the political process and government.