



Candidate Questionnaire
Local Candidates Committee
NYC Public Advocate Special Election 2019

Citizens Union appreciates your response to the following questionnaire related to policy issues facing New York City and our interest in reforming city and state government. **Please return the questionnaire to us as soon as possible, and no later than January 3rd.** Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for New York City Public Advocate, and to issue our endorsement in the Special Election. Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.

If you seek our support, we will also need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process. **Please contact us if you wish to be interviewed.**

We plan to publish returned questionnaires on our website, in printed voters directory, and in other appropriate venues. We thank you very much for your response.

Biographical Information

Candidate Name:Melissa Mark-Viverito

Party Affiliation(s):Fix the MTA

Age: 49

Education:Columbia University, Baruch College

Office Sought: New York City Public Advocate

Occupation/Employer:Candidate for Public Advocate

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:Speaker of the City Council, Council Member from the 8th Council District 2006-2017, VP Strategic Engagement of Latino Victory, Organizer - SEIU 1199

Candidate Cell Phone:646 - 538 - 4303

(Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.)

Campaign Contact Information

Campaign Manager Name: Sara Valenzuela

Additional Staff Contact:

Colin Snyder

Address: N/A

Telephone: 240-994-7879

Fax:

Website: mmv.nyc

Email:

sara@viveritonymc.com

Twitter: @MMViverito

Facebook: Melissa
Mark-Viverito

Affirmations

Have you completed required campaign finance filings? YES

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU’s Local Candidates Committee? YES

(Please note: interviews are prerequisites of being considered for Citizens Union’s endorsement.)

Date: 1/3/19

Signature of Candidate: 

I. POLICY QUESTIONS

Please state whether you support or oppose the following reform measures, and feel free to elaborate in the space provided at the end or on additional paper.

CITIZEN UNION ISSUES

1. What is your position with respect to eliminating party primaries and establishing a nonpartisan election system in which all candidates participate in the first round and the top two candidates advance to the second round? All registered voters regardless of party would be eligible to vote in both rounds.	<p>Oppose</p>
2. What is your position on instituting ranked choice voting in all elections for citywide office, including all special elections?	<p>Support</p>
3. What is your position on modifying the City Charter to require that laws enacted by referendum only be changed through approval by the voters?	<p>Support</p>
4. What is your position on establishing independent budgeting for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. borough presidents? b. The Conflicts of Interest Board? c. The Public Advocate? d. community boards? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support b. Support c. Support d. Support

ISSUES OF CITYWIDE IMPORTANCE

5. How would you use the office of the Public Advocate to impact public policy to serve the broad public interest?
 The Office of Public Advocate should be the tribune of the people. It should focus on being independent of the Mayor, Comptroller and City Council and focus on truly focused on listening to the concerns of the residents of New Yorkers and use the Office’s powers to address these concerns. It should focus on rooting out corruption, finding ways to make our government more efficient and work toward supporting good public policy that will benefit the public at large.

6. What would be your most important legislative and non-legislative priorities as Public Advocate?

My main legislative focus as Public Advocate will be to find solutions to our crisis in the MTA and our housing crisis at both NYCHA and the lack of affordable housing in New York City. My non-legislative focus will be to root out corruption and ineffective governance from our City and State.

7. What do you consider to be the three most important oversight functions of the Public Advocate?

The Public Advocate has a powerful voice in our City. Among the Office's powers, is the authority to conduct investigations on City agencies, conduct oversight hearings and the fact that the Public Advocate has appointments on the following boards: [NYCERS Pension Fund](#), [NYC Independent Budget Office](#), [Audit Committee for the City of New York](#), [Voter Assistance Advisory Committee](#), [The Queens Borough Public Library](#), and [NYC Department of Youth and Community Development Community Action Board](#). The appointment power provides a real opportunity to hold important government agencies accountable to do what is the best interest of the City.

8. The most recent Public Advocate has used litigation extensively, with mixed results, at least with regard to the Public Advocate's standing to bring a lawsuit. What is your view on the Public Advocate's use of litigation to attempt to force policy changes?

This is an important function of the office. As Public Advocate, I will work to expand our litigation bureau. I will work with the leading public interest law firms to establish strategies to advance policy initiatives that I believe in are the best interests of the City.

9. What discrepancies, if any, do you see between services promised to New Yorkers and services rendered? For those listed please indicate your proposals for bringing policy closer to practice.

As Public Officials we owe a duty to our constituents to try our best to govern in a manner that best advances the interests of the public at large. We are not always successful and sometimes we have to make compromises to bring parties together to advance our ideas which is the basis of Madisonian democracy. Our constituent deserve the very best. As Public Advocate, I pledge to do my best to provide them with the services that they deserve and will be honest with them and collaborate with community leaders to advance our goals. Right now the most glaring discrepancy between services promised and services rendered is the MTA. We are promised, and pay for, a reliable public transit system, that has been failing New Yorkers at every level. In order to close this gap, I have already laid out a proposal for legalizing marijuana at the state level, and since the state has control over the MTA, tax the revenue and use it to fund the plethora of repairs needed on our subways. Another source of funding that I have been working on over the past year is congestion pricing. Between these two sources of funding, we will be much closer to delivering a safe and reliable MTA.

10. How would you approach the responsibilities of the Public Advocate regarding access to public information in monitoring the implementation of the city's Open Data Law?

I believe in transparency. As Speaker of the Council, I worked to make the Council more transparent and inclusive. As Public Advocate, I will continue to work toward supporting a transparent government and hold my government partners accountable if they fail to properly implement the City's Open Data law. My office will make this a priority.

11. What specifically will you do as Public Advocate to ensure New York achieves a full and complete Census count in 2020?

I plan to work with community leaders, government partners, census officials to make the census account successful. I believe that this year, we have to focus on an education campaign in immigrant communities to explain to them that New York City is a sanctuary city and we have laws to protect them from immigration officials. It is critical that we do not let the Trump administration hurt participation for these New Yorkers. We have to engage all communities and educate them on the importance of the census.

12. How would you leverage the office of Public Advocate to address any of the following issues, if not discussed in answering previous questions:

- a. **Affordable Housing** - This is the issue that is hurting the most New Yorkers. As Public Advocate, I will work to advocate for legislation that addresses the issue of affordable housing and work toward building affordable housing in a manner that really is affordable. I will also work to improve the safety and conditions of our city's affordable housing stock.
- b. **Public Safety** - My record as Speaker in the area of Public Safety was very strong. I will continue to work toward continuing to focus on Public Safety and use my platform to advance reform and protect all New Yorkers.
- c. **Public Transportation** - I have proposed a plan to help fund our MTA by using some of the proceeds of the legalization of Marijuana. I plan to use the office of Public Advocate to obtain the funding necessary to fix public transportation and will use my oversight authority to hold our government partners accountable.
- d. **Health and Environment** - As Public Advocate, I will work with our state and federal partners to pass a single-payer health plan law. I will also work toward expanding access to healthcare for all New Yorkers regardless of their immigration status.
- e. **Economic Development** - I support economic development but it has to be done in a responsible manner. I do not favor providing large, wealthy corporations such as Amazon with large subsidies. Given all of the needs of our City, it is immoral to provide large corporations with tax money that could be used to deal with our transportation needs and affordable housing crisis. As Public Advocate, I will be vigilant toward protecting our City from corporate welfare and will support economic growth that takes into account the impact on communities to prevent the displacement and over-burden of transportation and other infrastructure needs.
- f. **Education** - As Public Advocate, I will continue to advocate for more educational funding to fully realize the CFE ruling. I will also work to ensure that our educational dollars are spent on our children and not on expensive, wasteful contractors and will work toward providing each NYC child with a quality education.

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.

II. CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS

What are the top five promises or goals you are making to voters during this campaign?

If elected, Citizens Union will use these promises to evaluate your performance while in office, as well as to evaluate your candidacy in the future.

Please feel free to use additional paper if the space provided is not sufficient, and to affix additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements. We thank you very much for your response.

TOP FIVE 2017 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS

1. As Public Advocate, I will be an independent voice of New York City government that will work to forward the interest of the City as a whole. I will work toward making the City more equitable and accessible for its residents. Under my leadership the Office of Public Advocate will be the tribune for the people. Throughout my career I have promoted diversity and gender equality in government, and will continue to do so as Public Advocate.
2. I will use my platform as Public Advocate to address our affordable housing crisis. We will focus on improving the deplorable living conditions at NYCHA and other units in the City. Focus our efforts to improve our City's renting laws so that we can finally make the City more affordable.
3. As Public Advocate, I will focus on improving our transportation system. The MTA desperately needs funding. I will work to advocate for congestion pricing and implementing my plan to use a portion of the Marijuana proceeds to fund the MTA. I will also work to ensure that the communities that were hurt by the war on drugs, receive an opportunity to benefit economically from marijuana legalization.
4. I would like to also create an Office of Community Engagement that will be comprised of community organizers from all five boroughs who will work with the Public Advocate to engage directly with residents across New York City.
5. The Office of Legal Aid will create pro bono legal partnerships with the City's best law firms to address the legal needs of our residents, individually and collectively.

III. 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 public trust. With the corruption conviction of recent state 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 will always represent the public interest above all else.

Please tell us how you would continue to conduct the political affairs of this office in an upright manner.

I served as a member of the City Council for 12 years. I served as Speaker of the City Council. I held myself and the people that worked under me to the highest possible ethical standards because as public servants we have a duty to our constituents to work for their best interests. My entire career, I have worked against the entrenched special interests and political establishment that have often sought to damage me politically because I did not acquiesce to their whims and I

was able to overcome their opposition to make our City more equitable and fair as the leader of the most productive City Council in New York City's history. As Public Advocate, I will continue to abide by the highest ethical standards and be an independent voice for our City.

Please return to: Citizens Union, Local Candidates Committee, 299 Broadway, Suite 700 New York, NY 10007;
Via email to candidates@citizensunion.org or fax to 212-227-0345 • Call us at 212-227-0342 with questions.