



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

Citizens Union would appreciate your responses 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: Ydanis Rodriguez Age: 44

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 10

Campaign Address: 681 W. 177 ST NY, NY 10033

Campaign Telephone Number: (347) 577-7713 Fax: (NA)

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat Campaign Manager Name: Carlos Rodriquez

Website & Email: ydanis.com ydanisrodriguez@hotmail.com

Education: City College of NY – B.A. in Political Science & M.A. in Bi-Lingual Education

Occupation/Employer: Teacher at Gregorio Luperon High School

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: Ran for City Council in District 10 in 2001 and 2003,

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES NO
Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings? YES NO
(Please note: Citizens Union can grant its "Preferred Candidate" and "Endorsed Candidate" rating only to candidates we have interviewed. We will make every effort to interview candidates in each race for City Council.)

Signature of Candidate: Ydanis Rodriguez Date: July 17, 2009

I. CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

Please state your position on the following issues by indicating 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 with respect to allowing voters who are registered as independents to vote in party primaries? | Support | <u>Oppose</u> |
| 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? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 3. What is your position on increasing the pay of Election Day poll workers above the current \$200 they are allotted per election event? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 4. What is your position on restructuring New York's current board of elections model to eliminate political party responsibility for overall election administration and replace it with a system that narrows political party involvement to certification of candidate petitions and the actual counting of votes? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 5. What is your position on having an election administration system where there is a local elections executive director appointed by the mayor upon recommendation by a new board that is chosen by the mayor and the city council? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

- | | | |
|---|----------------|--------|
| 6. What is your position on implementing "war chest" restrictions that would prohibit a candidate from transferring funds raised in a previous election cycle into a current campaign committee for a different office? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
|---|----------------|--------|

7. What is your position on allowing campaign financing for ballot proposals?	Support	<u>Oppose</u>
---	---------	---------------

CITY COUNCIL REFORM

8. What is your position on allowing Council committees to function more independently of the speaker than is presently the case?	<u>Support</u>	Oppose
---	----------------	--------

a. Should committee staff be hired by and report to committee chairs?	<u>Support</u>	Oppose
---	----------------	--------

b. Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs?	<u>Support</u>	Oppose
---	----------------	--------

c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members?	<u>Support</u>	Oppose
---	----------------	--------

9. What is your position on:		
a. limiting councilmembers' ability to earn outside income?	<u>Support</u>	Oppose

b. making the job of councilmember a full-time position?	<u>Support</u>	Oppose
--	----------------	--------

c. eliminating or limiting stipends for committee chairs and leadership positions?	<u>Support</u>	Oppose
--	----------------	--------

10. What is your position on requiring that any future increase in councilmember compensation not affect those serving in the current term of the council and only be applied prospectively to the following term?	<u>Support</u>	Oppose
--	----------------	--------

11. What is your position on consolidating the current City Council committee structure and reducing the number of overall committees?	Support	<u>Oppose</u>
--	---------	---------------

12. What is your position on term limits for elected officials?	<u>Support</u>	Oppose
---	----------------	--------

13. What is your position on modifying the City Charter to require that changes to term limits may only be approved by the voters?	<u>Support</u>	Oppose
--	----------------	--------

- | | | |
|---|---------|---------------|
| 14. 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. | Support | <u>Oppose</u> |
|---|---------|---------------|

An extension of term limits should not be considered under any circumstances without a referendum from the voters of New York City. If elected I would work to reinstate the original limit of two terms in office.

POLICY ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE

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.

- | | | |
|---|----------------|--------|
| 15. Knowing that the police department and commissioner retain ultimate authority for determining whether an officer is guilty and penalty, what is your position on transferring power to the Civilian Complaint Review Board to prosecute cases of police misconduct, such as force, abuse of authority, discourtesy, and offensive language? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 16. What is your position on changing the current land use process under ULURP to increase the role of community-based planning? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 17. 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? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 18. What is your position on reforming the current pension funding structure to create multiple tiers for future city government employees? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
- a. 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?

To ensure that the government maintains a strong work force, City employees must receive reasonable salaries and benefits in order to compete with the level of compensation that is expected in the private sector. I would work to make the system more effective in maintaining and rewarding good employees based on merit and not seniority.

19. What is your position with respect to the City Council passing a resolution calling upon the State Legislature to establish a State Constitutional Convention? Support Oppose

a. If support, what are the three most important areas that need improvement?

The three most important issues are ending the excessive amount of power given to leadership in the State Legislature, addressing the MTA budget problem and establishing minimum requirements for creating affordable housing.

b. Do you believe that greater home rule should be granted to the City of New York? If so, in what areas should further sovereignty be given?

New York City should be granted more home rule which would allow the city to balance the budget and establish a progressive agenda, as local leaders have the most knowledge of the issues facing the City's constituents.

20. 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 would you propose to address the MTA's fiscal solvency issues and ensure that the burden for funding the MTA is equitably distributed among all stakeholders?

The MTA financial solvency issue cannot be solved with a solitary proposal or by placing the burden on a single group of constituents. It will take a variety of smaller propositions working in conjunction to fix the problem. Fare increases for local mass transit users as well as increased commuter taxes for out-of-city train riders will likely be part of the solution. The MTA budget shortfall is a major issue facing New York and will be a top priority of mine; I look forward to working with everyone from everyday New Yorkers to mass transit experts to find a solution that addresses the needs of the MTA and its riders.

21. What would you propose in terms of creating a greater role for the city council in determining and deciding the city budget?

The City Council should have more home rule to assess taxation levels and create a responsible budget. An overwhelming majority of the State's revenue comes from New York City. The City Council is primarily involved with local needs and issues, therefore it should have more control over its finances.

22. 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?

Using tax revenue surplus to lower the future cost of health insurance and pensions for the City's employees is a responsible way to plan ahead and save the City money. This year, given the large deficits that face the City and the State, it is necessary to use additional tax revenue to fund basic social programs.

23. 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.

Increasing taxes for the middle and lower classes would stifle economic development and growth. The richest people in the city are, in fact, under-taxed, and this is a problem that should be rectified. Overall, the problem with the city services is not that they are underfunded, but that they are inefficient at using the resources they have. I believe that with proper management changes and more research into how city services operate, efficiency of service can be increased.

-
24. 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?

I would support a plan that seeks to diversify our economy. We need to create an environment that fosters the growth of small business, promotes entrepreneurship and creates jobs in the social, arts, and culture sectors. An economy that is built through investment in local communities and local small businesses will result in a stronger and more diversified economy. Additionally, I will promote portable benefits and repeal of the Unincorporated Business Tax, so that entrepreneurs and free lancers have the ability to pursue innovative small businesses.

25. What would you propose the Department of Education do to increase the ability for parents and teachers to become more meaningfully involved in the education system? What other positives changes can be made to the New York City public school system?

First, the power of the Mayor's office in the education system must be reduced. As it is, parents have almost no influence over the kind of education their children receive, when they should be the first group we look to for advice on education. We also need more after school programs that engage children and create an enjoyable learning environment. If children are involved in programs which are fun and valuable, they will be more likely to be successful students and citizens.

26. 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 is already fairly transparent, with much of the information available online. One area in which more transparency is essential is campaign finance laws, so that all donations to candidates running for New York office are thoroughly screened. Ultimately, though, what is needed is not greater transparency in the Board of Elections, but voter participation. If I am elected to the City Council, I will make it a priority to introduce initiatives to raise voter interest in New York politics.

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

I propose to establish more oversight and transparency with regards to taxpayer dollars that are given to nonprofits. Groups that receive funds from the government should have to divulge how the money is being spent. In particular, organizations whose members or directors have family or close personal ties to Council Members need to be looked at very carefully.

Additional Comments:



CANDIDATE ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Citizens Union is adding a new element to its evaluation of candidates running for office. As a candidate who presently does not hold elected office, CU is interested in knowing your top five campaign promises you are making to the voters during this campaign for this position.

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.

We thank you very much for your response. Please feel free to use additional paper if the space provided is not sufficient.

TOP FIVE 2009 CAMPAIGN PROMISES