



**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: **Debra Markell** Age: **49**

Office to Which You Seek: **New York City Council: Council District #: 19**

Campaign Address: **PO Box 575006, Whitestone, NY 11357**

Campaign Telephone Number: **347.838.1088**

Party Affiliation(s): **Democratic Party**

Campaign Manager Name: **James McClelland**

Website & Email: **Friendsfordebramarkell@gmail.com**

WEBSITE: **WWW:DEBRAMARKELL.COM**

Education: **CUNY System**

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): **DISTRICT MANAGER
CB2 QUEENS -3 YEARS, QUEENS DIRECTOR FOR MAYOR'S OFFICE**

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: **RAN 1997 IN THE
20TH COUNCIL DISTRICT, WORKED FOR MAYOR GIULIANI AND MAYOR
BLOOMBERG FOR 8 8YEARS**

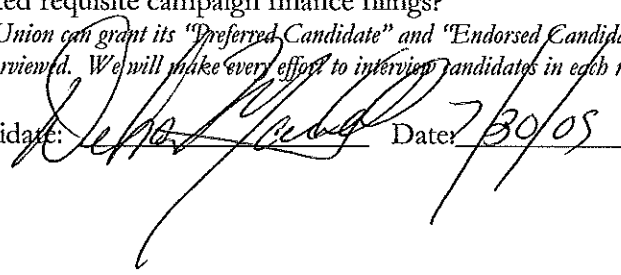
**PRESIDENT 109TH PRECINCT COUNCIL PRESIDENT 1995-1998
PRESIDENT WATERSIDE HOMEOWNERS IN WHITESTONE 2008-2009
SIT ON FLUSHING HOSPITAL ADVISORY BOARD**

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

Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings? **YES**

(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:



Date:

7/30/05

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 |
| 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 |
| 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 |
| 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? | Support |
| 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? | 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? | Support |
|---|----------------|

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

CITY COUNCIL REFORM

8. What is your position on allowing Council committees to function more independently of the speaker than is presently the case? **Support**
- a. Should committee staff be hired by and report to committee chairs? **Support**
- b. Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs? **Support**
- c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members? **Support**
9. What is your position on:
- a. limiting councilmembers' ability to earn outside income? **Support**
- b. making the job of councilmember a full-time position? **Support**
- c. eliminating or limiting stipends for committee chairs and leadership positions? **Support**
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? **Support**
11. What is your position on consolidating the current City Council committee structure and reducing the number of overall committees? **Support**
12. What is your position on term limits for elected officials? **Support**
13. What is your position on modifying the City Charter to require that changes to term limits may only be approved by the voters? **Support**

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.

Oppose

I support term limits and disagree in the manner in which it was overturned.

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?

Oppose

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

Support

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?

Support

18. What is your position on reforming the current pension funding structure to create multiple tiers for future city government employees?

Support

- 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 fix the New York City pension problem, I believe we need to adopt a Defined-contribution retirement plan. This type of plan consists of individual accounts

supported by employer contributions, typically matched partly by the employees' own savings. Funds in the accounts are managed by private firms and invested in a combination of stocks and bonds. The most common example of a defined-contribution plan is the 401(k), which has become the foundation of retirement planning in the private sector. In the past when budget surplus occurred the city put it toward a pension and health care fund, this should be a common practice when surpluses exist.

A defined contribution plan consisting of individual accounts supported by employer contributions would slowly ensure that pension costs are controlled and do not exceed the current payroll. New York City employees need benefits that are comparable to those offered by most private-sector retirement plans.

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**

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

New Yorkers should pursue amending or rewriting the state's constitution to create a more efficient government. The Albany debacle is disgraceful and an affront to all New Yorkers that a full-scale constitutional convention to overhaul New York State's ineffective document is in order. Issues regarding leadership, succession and transfer of power must clearly defined.

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?

If home rule messages were expanded the result may be a good government initiative by limiting the amount of unfunded mandates the State could unilaterally impose. Home rule allows us to depend on ourselves and city representatives and provide us the best opportunity for transparency and good government. However, if we continually depend on Albany to decide on issues that impact our city, than our welfare and quality of life will be secondary to the demands and needs of the party in power in the State Capital.

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?

I believe that a proficient, dependable, and safe public transportation system is crucial to the success and operation of New York City's economy and the preservation of our quality of life. The MTA is facing large budget deficit gaps and we must work together on the State and Local level to find new revenue streams, find solutions, and make sacrifices to ensure that no one contributes an excessive amount of the funding to resolve the MTA's financial problems. Before instituting any additional fare increases or bridge tolls, the public trust must be restored. There must be a mechanism in place to provide greater accountability and transparency in the MTA's budget.

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

The role of the City Council is limited in the budget process. In order for there to be some fairness and equity, the role for the City Council in the budgeting process should be expanded. While the City Council has the ability and authority under the law to adopt its own budget, it is futile in which to do since the Mayor has the sole authority to determine where money is spent. That puts the City Council at a disadvantage and causes it to be ineffective during the budget process. The Council has adopted the role of preserving pet projects in the budget and agreeing to do a "budget dance" with the Mayor that has the Mayor reducing essential services only for the Council to restore. Time would be much better spent on two negotiations, elimination of waste and streamlining spending. Instead of spending two months behind closed doors in a "budget process", only to determine which powerful non-for-profit or lobbyist gets City funding, empowering the Council may allow for more transparency and making the body more effective in representing the people.

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?

In the past, the City used surplus tax revenue to pay down future health costs and to pay down future pension obligations. In this fiscal year, we are faced with significant budget deficit, a substantial reduction in income from Wall Street and witnessing the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression. Clearly, given the nature of the economy and the economic climate, it is not reasonable or practical to pay down future health care costs at a time that the City experiences surplus tax revenue. It is highly appropriate to not spend and pay down future debt.

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.

I believe that the City provides important and vital services to its residences. I also believe that taxes are extraordinarily high in the City and it is costly to be a City resident. I firmly believe that taxes should be lowered rather than be raised. Elizabeth Holtzman once issued a report that made a correlation between taxes increased and the resulting in private sector jobs. I have long believed that reducing taxes stimulates the economy. I firmly believe that targeting tax cuts can be instruments to the positive change in the economy, ie. the hotel tax cuts by Rudolph Giuliani in the 90's. I don't necessarily subscribe to the belief that if you reduce taxes, you must reduce or cut services. I also believe that this question should include ways that candidates believe that the budget could be reduced by eliminating wasteful spending and failed or duplicative programs, so therefore, I don't believe it is necessary to cut services based on my proposal, so I will not list any as part of my answer.

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?

A more diversified economy and one that would be best relied upon Wall Street sounds like a good idea. Clearly, Wall Street has been an economic engine that has powered both the city and the state. Substantial job loss, unemployment rate and the resulting reduction in tax revenues have led us to significant budget deficits that we will have to overcome in the next few fiscal years. Wall Street may rebound and tax revenues may yet increase, but until such time, government must be creative, strong willed and bold. It must analyze the budget and find ways to reduce the tax burden on middle class and working families. It must identify and eliminate wasteful spending and we must force government to be fiscally responsible which has not been the case throughout recent years. New York City has a balanced budget and operates under the possibility that if they do not come in with an on time balanced budget, then a financial control board will come in and make these decisions. Over-taxation clearly eliminates private sector jobs in order to create, stimulate economic growth and to encourage people to live, stay and raise their families here in New York City. We must create more opportunities by reducing the tax burden.

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?

During my numerous conversations with parents, the most pervasive issue is that they feel that their voices are not being heard. Too often they are consulted after important decisions are already made and in the process of being implemented. Parents should have an active voice in their child's education and important decisions made at the school level and in the Chancellor's office. In addition, I feel that good teachers should be given more latitude in the classroom. I have heard too often that teachers are forced to focus on standardized test preparation or limited by the "workshop" model of

teaching in the classroom. Children need innovation, creativity and care when in the classroom. The corporate cookie cutter approach to education should be stopped.

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?

I would certainly be open to reviewing a comprehensive plan that would restructure the Board of Elections. Clearly, the current system of operation has shown to have many failures and flaws and the partisan nature tends to create unnecessary adversarial system of operation which is not efficient or effective. I also believe the process for hiring inspectors needs to allow and encourage unaffiliated voters.

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?

The New York City Council slush fund scandal is cause for great concern and every effort should be made to prevent the use of tax-payer money for personal profit or political gains. To remedy the situation, the Council has adopted new vetting procedures to try to eliminate fraud and prevent abuses. However, more needs to be done to enhance transparency, eliminate fraud, prevent abuses and punish all who violate the public trust.



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

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2. _____
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3. _____
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4. _____
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