



**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: Jimmy Van Bramer _____ Age: 39 _____

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 26 _____

Campaign Address: 45-18 Skillman Ave. Sunnyside, NY 11104 _____

Campaign Telephone Number: (718) 313-0569 _____ Fax: (718) 701-2765 _____

Party Affiliation(s): Democratic party, Working Families Party _____

Campaign Manager Name: Brian Fritsch _____

Website & Email: www.jimmyvanbramer.com _____ jimmyvanbramer@gmail.com _____

Education: B.S. in Criminal Justice from St. John's University _____

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office):

Chief External Affairs Officer for the Queens Libraries _____

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

Land Use Committee of Community Board 2, Democratic State Committee Member,

Candidate for City Council in District 25 in 2001, President of the West Queens

Independent Democratic Club, Member of the Board of Directors of the Ridgewood

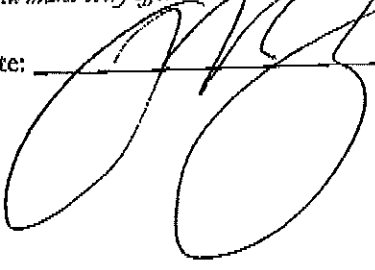
Democratic Club, Former Deputy Field Director for the Clean Money, Clean Elections

Campaign

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Peter J.W. Sherwin, Chair • Dick Dadey, Executive Director

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:  _____ Date: 7/20/09



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Campaign

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

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

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? Support

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

The citizens of New York City voted twice in favor of term limits. It is unacceptable that the City Council did not respect their choice.

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? Support
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?

I would advocate for a detailed review of the New York City Pension System so that we can fully address and understand the growing burden being placed on the tax payers and the city. I would be open to the possibility of reform, but need to see more details.

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?

1. *Dissolving the current two-party structure of the board of elections.*
2. *Independent redistricting*
3. *A meaningful way of public financing*

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?

Yes. I strongly support the appeal of the Urstadt Law. Eliminating its restrictions is critically important for empowering the city government to handle city problems.

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 is in its current financial dilemma because the state government dramatically cut its support for the authority in the 1990s. As a result, a large portion of the MTA's operating budget is spent on debt service for bonds that paid for capital improvements. I am a proponent of restoring the state's previous level of support, and I support greater mass transit funding in the federal transportation bill that will come up for authorization this year. I do also support congestion pricing and the Regional Mobility Tax in areas

where it will not place too large of a burden on the lower and middle class. We need to find ways to better service outer parts of the city without raising rates or cutting current lines, and I would seriously consider congestion pricing as means to that end after additional state and federal sources have been completely exhausted. There also needs to be greater transparency in the MTA's budget to allow for excess waste to be identified and removed. Greater efficiency from the MTA must also be achieved.

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

To continue to ensure transparency and responsible governance, the City Council needs to take a more active role in the budget review process. I also feel strongly that it is important that the public plays a role in the budget review process as well and that their input in deciding and determining the city budget is taken into account. The resources of the City Council need to be distributed in a more equitable and effective way so that the council members can make the best possible suggestions and decisions on the budget review process.

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?

I support the City's past practice of using surplus tax revenue to pay down future health care costs and pension obligations to maintain the services provided to the citizens. However, in these tough economic times and financial crisis on Wall Street, I understand that it may be necessary not to do this year so that the City of New York can maintain funding for other vital services and 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.

I think that in general, New Yorkers receive fairly good services for the taxes they pay. There are a lot of dysfunctional programs and waste in need of reform, which have a strong negative impact on our budget. That said, and even in this time of economic uncertainty, it is important not to cut vital services, even when faced with the prospect of rising taxes. I would only support progressive taxes on New Yorkers, except in specific cases.

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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?

As we have seen with the current state of our economy and our financial crisis, it is essential to the long term prosperity of New York City, and the rest of the country, to diversify our economy. It is crucial to build an economy that is not reliant on Wall Street alone, but incorporates a wide range of skills, trades and talents into the economy. By doing this, not only does it diversify the scope of our economy, but it also allows for a widening of the variety of people that are integrated in and benefiting from our economy. I believe that in order to diversify our economy and to remove the sole focus away from Wall Street, we need to diversify our work place. I believe that it would be important to train citizens to fill these new positions as we made it more accessible for them to become integrated into our economy.

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?

We must allow teachers and parents a greater voice by creating a system with effective checks and balances. We must strengthen the CEC's, giving them broader powers including the right to hold public hearings to inform parents and teachers. We must fully implement and empower School Leadership Teams. There must be greater collaboration at all levels of the system and we should alter the Panel for Education Policy to include a majority of members appointed by elected officials other than the Mayor, such as the City Council, Borough Presidents and the Public Advocate. In addition, the City Council's oversight role should be strengthened – as a check and a balance against the Mayor and the Chancellor. Communication between all these groups must also be improved.

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?

It is vital to our democracy that all citizens have equal access to voting and that each and every valid vote that is cast is counted in our elections. Therefore, increasing the transparency of the Board of Elections is integral to the City's reputation and its' accountability to its voters. I believe that in order to increase transparency in the Board of Elections the process needs to be streamlined and the power needs to be taken out of the hands of the elections lawyers and placed back into the hands of the voters themselves. When it comes to increasing transparency, I believe that more public input is needed, especially when it comes to the voting machines. It is extremely important that the public is comfortable with the type of system that is being used and that no one is left at any kind of disadvantage when it comes to exercising their right to vote. I would advocate for the timely release of required annual post-election reports and increase the public's access to the board, especially by web-casting and recording all city board meetings.

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?



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

1. Build stronger schools and libraries through smaller class sizes, more after-school programs, and increased parent and community involvement.
2. Keep New York City's government as accountable and transparent as possible.
3. Resist overdevelopment by improving parks and existing buildings that retain the character of the community.
4. Invest in public transportation that makes the city more accessible while reducing pollution.
5. Improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods by improving sanitation, removing graffiti and reducing truck noise.