



**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: __Leroy G Comrie_____ Age: __51_____

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #:
__27_____

Campaign Address: ____PO Box 640698_____

Campaign Telephone Number: (718) 229 4201 _____ Fax: (718)279 2456 _____

Party Affiliation(s): __Democratic__ Campaign Manager Name: __Lois Marbach_____

Website & Email:
__comleroy@aol.com_____

Education: __College Grad – BA Liberal Arts –University of Bridgeport_____

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office):__7
years _____

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU’s Local Candidates Committee? YES __X__
NO __

Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings?

YES_X__

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: _____

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? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 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

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

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

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| 14. What is your position on the recent extension of term limits for the city's elected officials to three consecutive four-year terms? | Support | <u>Oppose</u> |
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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.

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| 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 |
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| 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 |
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| 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 |
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| 18. What is your position on reforming the current pension funding structure to create multiple tiers for future city government employees? | Support | <u>Oppose</u> |
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- 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 think it has been clear on both a state and city level that our pension and fringe benefits have began to increase and will continue to increase dramatically over the next few years. I do not support any change to those currently receiving pension benefits or for any current New York City employees. I do agree with the proposal to create tiers for pension funding for future city government employees. We as elected officials must consistently be good stewards of public

dollars and given the current economic climate, we can no longer continue to fund the pension rates the way we do.

- 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?**

Although I do believe that a State Constitutional Convention may be helpful and that I support the idea in principle, I do believe that the idea must be debated much more than some of the recent op-eds we have seen in the paper. Obviously one issue that should be discussed at a potential State Constitutional Convention is the appointment of a Lieutenant Governor. Given the debacle in Albany, it is becoming more apparent that the Governor should have the clear legal authority to appoint a Lieutenant Governor, if and when the position is vacant. There are far too many laws and decisions that must be approved by the State Legislature for New York City to function at its best.

- 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?**

I do agree that greater home rule should be granted to New York City. More specifically, I believe that New York City should have the authority to set its own sales tax modifications without approval from the State Legislature. Given the fact that New York City contributes much more than what it receives in New York State government services, we should be permitted to set modest increases without prior approval.

- 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 would work with state and federal legislators to fight for more federal funding for mass transit. I would also work to insure that the MTA created higher levels of trust by being more transparent in their fiscal policies and contracting of all items not just capital but all levels of expense. I would also work to create a equitable plan to insure that all who benefit from mass transit equally share responsibility to fund the MTA or support it by making shared sacrifices such as even odd transport days and increased mandatory carpooling.

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

This year more than ever every member of the council had the opportunity to be briefed by the finance staff about every line item in the budget done by agency. Also the delegations had the first option deciding the budget priorities for the council this year. The problem is

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 agree with the position that the City took in using surplus tax revenues to pay for future health cost and pension obligations. For a number of years tax revenues were at the highest they had ever been due to the performance of the market. As a result, New York City was in a position of having greater revenues than expenditures. Although some may advocate that those surpluses should have been spent immediately, I firmly believe in fiscal responsibility. New York City's decision to use surplus tax revenues to pay down future costs were essential in not having to make more drastic cuts than what had already been conducted this year.

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 firmly agree that New York City residents contributed much more to the state in revenue, however, we receive significantly less in funds. The Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) was a prime example of this issue and especially the inequity in education. I believe that the current economic climate sent a message to the New York State government that they cannot continue to ride on the backs of New York City and Wall Street, and that true equity in government spending should be a priority.

I believe that taxes should be lowered as much as possible, but not to the detriment of effective and efficient delivery of city services and not on the backs of our middle to low income classes. I believe other revenues are not being discussed properly such as reinstating the stock transfer tax for any company trading more than 1 million shares per day.

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 firmly agree with the creation of a more diversified economy to ensure that we are not as reliant on Wall Street as we once were. In May, I sponsored a bill that would extend the boundaries of the Chinatown/Lower East Side empire zone. I did this in conjunction with the Mayor to allow for East River Science Park to be included within the zone. The bioscience industry is a promising industry that is expected to bring thousands of jobs into New York City. Given our need to diversify our economy, I felt that we must do all we can

to support the bioscience industry knowing that any tax benefits we provide to them now would pay for itself in the long-run.

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?

I believe that the Community Education Councils (CECs) are currently the best avenue for parents to voice their concerns about Department of Education practices and policies. However, although New York State requires that the CECs be consulted prior to various decisions, there is no clear avenue on how this should occur. Furthermore, there is a major conflict of interest given the fact that CECs are overseen, financed, and given resources by the Dept. of Education, yet the Dept. of Education still maintains that are receptive to the criticism given to them by the CECs. I agree with prior policy proposals that would move the jurisdiction of the CECs from the Dept. of Ed to another governing body.

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?

Every year the Mayor puts out the Mayor's Management Report which tracks the performance of all city agencies that report to him. I would propose that the New York City Board of Elections be included within the report so that elected officials and the general public can review, in detail, the progress of the Board of Elections including voter complaints, fiscal accountability and overall performance.

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 firmly believe that the New York City Council has made excellent strides in improving transparency throughout the budget process over the past two years. Disclosure and conflict of interest forms are required to be signed by all Council Members prior to passing the budget and making additional modifications to the budget. We are required to note whether our families or staff members are members/affiliated with non-profits that receive funding to avoid potential conflicts and misspending of public dollars. I believe that the various city agencies that are involved in administering these funds should be strengthened to continue investigations into potential conflicts that may not have been fully reported.



CANDIDATE ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Citizens Union is adding a new element to its evaluation of incumbents running for re-election. In addition to evaluating their stances on the issues above, Citizens Union will assess incumbents on how well they kept the promises they made to voters during the previous election.

As an elected official who is seeking re-election,

- a. what were the top five promises you made to your constituents when you ran for your current position and what progress have you made to keep those promises, and why and why not have you met them?
- b. what are your top five campaign promises you are making to the voters during this campaign for this position?

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

TOP FIVE CAMPAIGN PROMISES FROM 2005 AND ACTION ON THEM

NONE

TOP FIVE 2009 CAMPAIGN PROMISES

In 2005 and again this year, I will not make any campaign promises. During the City Council campaign season, both elected officials and candidates succumb to pressure and will try to say or do anything to be elected.

The easiest thing I can do as an elected official is to tell people what they want to hear. But I won't. Instead, I will promise one thing and one thing only: That I will continue to work unfailingly hard to address those issues that affect my constituents, deliver vital government services, and provide the best representation I can for the 27th Council District.

