



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: Heidi Harrison Chain Age: 55

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 29

Campaign Address: 118-20 Queens Blvd Forest Hills, NY 11375

Campaign Telephone Number: (718) 5440460 Fax: (718) 5440164

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat Campaign Manager Name: Glenn DiResto

Website & Email: www.heidichain.com email: heidichain@yahoo.com

Education: JD Villanova Univ. School of Law, attended George Washington University the National Law Center, University of Rochester BA

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): New York City Department of Finance - director in the Office of Legal Affairs

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: 112th precinct community council president; Chief community emergency response team, Community Board 6 (past officer) committee chair youth committee, economic development, Vice President forest hills civic association, past president citizens police academy alumni association

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: Heidi Harrison Chain Date: July 18, 2009

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

## 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.

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### 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<br>X | 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?  | Support<br>X | 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?   | Support<br>X | 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? | Support<br>X | 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?  | Support<br>X | Oppose |

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### 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? | Support<br>X | Oppose |
|---|--------------|--------|

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

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**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	Oppose
	X	
a. Should committee staff be hired by and report to committee chairs?	Support	Oppose
	X	
b. Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs?	Support	Oppose
	X	
c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members?	Support	Oppose
	X	
9. What is your position on:		
a. limiting councilmembers' ability to earn outside income?	Support	Oppose
	X	
b. making the job of councilmember a full-time position?	Support	Oppose
	X	
c. eliminating or limiting stipends for committee chairs and leadership positions?	Support	Oppose
	X	
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	Oppose
	X	
11. What is your position on consolidating the current City Council committee structure and reducing the number of overall committees?	Support	Oppose
	X	
12. What is your position on term limits for elected officials?	Support	Oppose
	X	
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	Oppose
	X	

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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? Please explain your answer. | Support | Oppose<br>x |
|---|---------|-------------|

The question regarding term limits should have been brought to the voters. It should not have been voted on by city council members who then benefited from the extension of the law. If there were to be a change in the law – it should not have been able to be applied to the people who were passing the law.

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

I support revisions in the current process. I am aware that the NYPD and the CCRB have a pilot project in which CCRB attorneys will *second seat* NYPD prosecutors in disciplinary trials of CCRB cases. Under the pilot project, a CCRB attorney acts as supporting counsel to the assigned Department prosecutor. The results of this pilot project should be reviewed by the city council in formulating a new process.

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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? | Support<br>X | 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? | Support<br>X | 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  
X                      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?

For city workers, who took lower paying public jobs with the knowledge that they had certain pension benefits, it is inequitable after years of service to change these benefits. The city workers also contribute a portion of their own money to their pensions. These benefits are protected by the law. The issue of new employee benefits should be the subject of union negotiations between the City and the unions that are affected.

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  
X                      Oppose

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

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- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. State government succession issues
  - 2. Term limits for state legislators
  - 3. Home rule for the city on housing, liquor licenses

a. 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

- 1. Liquor licenses for bars located within the city should be a city function. Now if there are complaints against an establishment the state still issues the establishment their liquor license.
- 2. The City should have home rule regarding traffic enforcement issues, red light cameras congestion pricing.
- 3. The City should have home rule regarding city housing.

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 support the plan to charge registration fees based upon the vehicle weight and then use these funds to help modernize the mass transit system should be supported. The weight-based fee would encourage fuel efficiency by providing incentives to purchase lighter, more fuel efficient vehicles. The money generated from this program could help fund a modern mass transit system.

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

There should be agency feedback to the council. There should be the ability to have access to City government records, and open data standards for all records. The role of City Council committees in budget decision-making should have greater responsibility in the council's review and approval of the city budget to ensure that the needs of New Yorkers are being addressed equitably and efficiently.

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 using surplus tax revenues to pay down the fixed expense of pension obligations.

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 there is value for the taxes received in regard to services delivered to the City. The conversation should not only be about raising taxes or lowering services. The business of running city government should be improved. There are cost saving measures that can and should be implemented. The costs of doing the business of government should be reduced. There should not be outside contractors providing services that can be performed by city employees. The billions of dollars that are owed to the City should be collected.

### **IMPLEMENT COST SAVINGS MEASURES**

1. There are cost savings that can be implemented at the same time that services can be delivered in a more environmentally friendly manner. Specifically there should be an increase in use of the internet for required city filings, and less paper. This also would cut down on errors.

2. The City does not need the outside consultants in every agency. City workers should be doing the jobs the work should not be contracted out .

**TAXES THAT ARE OWED SHOULD BE COLLECTED**

I believe that the taxes that are owed should be collected. The tax law should be changed so that corporations can not go out of business owing the city revenue and the same individuals who formed these corporations should then not be allowed to form a new corporation which will also then not pay taxes. The law for New York State – does not allow a corporation to go out of business owing the state taxes. The City does not have the same protection. I have drafted the legislation to have this change implemented in the law.

**LOWER CERTAIN TAXES**

I believe that certain taxes should be lowered ( For example the UBT – should not apply to all unincorporated businesses- businesses earning below a certain amount should be exempt. New Businesses should be exempt).

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 support a plan to diversify the economy.

I support the use of the \$32 million of federal stimulus funding received under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to provide additional job training and placement services for 10,000 New Yorkers over the next two years. The funding will be directed to new and existing programs offered through New York City's Workforce1 Career Centers in all five boroughs.

I also believe that we should encourage small businesses in the outer boroughs. The city should give tax incentives to encourage small businesses in the outer boroughs.

**ADJUSTMENT IN SPENDING**

The City should stop using outside contractors to perform the jobs and have city employees do the work. The city should also review all of the contracts for outside consultants in every city agency. These adjustments in spending can save money and not decrease the services provided to the residents.

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 positive changes can be made to the New York City public school system?

Parents should have a voice. There should be public notice of proposed changes and the opportunity for public input. Community Education Councils should be reformed and empowered by modeling them after New York City Community Boards in two important respects: First, CECs should be given greater independence from the Department of Education by giving the city's five borough presidents a stronger role training, supporting and promoting the CECs in their boroughs, as they currently do for the Community Boards in their borough. Second, State law should establish a formal process for CEC review and input into educational decisions - the Uniform Parental Engagement Procedure (UPEP).

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 agree with the positions on your website to increase the transparency of the Board of Elections:

- **Ensure that the current Board of Elections in the City of New York is more accountable and transparent** by advocating for timely release of required annual post-election reports; inclusion in the preliminary and final versions of the Mayor's Management Report; and providing additional public disclosure of City Board meetings, including webcasting of city board meetings, operations, and election statistics.
- Urge the City Board to **increase access to voting information through the execution of an expansive public outreach and education campaign**, and innovative use of their existing website and phone hotline.
- Work to **establish a new governance structure for administering local elections** that is more accountable and transparent in its obligations and operations

26. 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?

There should be public disclosure of any relationships.



## 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. Establish a 24 hour 7 day a week phone so that people can call the council office for help with their concerns.
  2. \_Have someone in the office dedicated to our residents' problems \_
  3. Provide education to our residents so that if there are any programs that they should be applying for , or deadlines that they need – they should have the information available at the council office.
  4. Work with the NYPD and the Department of Transportation to improve the traffic issues within our community, the ability for pedestrians to cross the street and improve the safety in our community.
  5. Work to reduce waste in government by encouraging the more efficient functioning of city agencies.
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