



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: Karen Koslowitz Age: 68

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

Campaign Address: 72-50 Austin Street, 2nd Floor Forest Hills, NY 11375

Campaign Telephone Number: (347) 722-6923 Fax: (718) 268-7363

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat Campaign Manager Name: Greg Lavine

Website & Email: www.karenforcouncil09.com; kk4nyc@gmail.com

Education: James Monroe High School

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): Director of Community Boards, Office of the President of the Borough of Queens

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: NYC Council Member 1991-2001; PTA President; Reformed Temple of Forest Hills

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: Karen Koslowitz Date: 7/20/09

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 | <input type="checkbox"/> 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | Oppose |
|---|----------------------------------|--------|

- | | | |
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| 7. What is your position on allowing campaign financing for ballot proposals? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | Oppose |
| a. Should committee staff be hired by and report to committee chairs? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | Oppose |
| b. Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | Oppose |
| c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | Oppose |
| 9. What is your position on: | | |
| a. limiting councilmembers' ability to earn outside income? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | Oppose |
| b. making the job of councilmember a full-time position? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | Oppose |
| c. eliminating or limiting stipends for committee chairs and leadership positions? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | Oppose |
| 11. What is your position on consolidating the current City Council committee structure and reducing the number of overall committees? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | Oppose |
| 12. What is your position on term limits for elected officials? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | 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? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | 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

 Oppose

I was opposed to the extension of term limits for the simple fact that the Mayor and the Council did so over the express will of the voters. The extension of term limits was voted down twice by New York City voters. Our elected officials in the City Council should exercise the representative function of government with which they are entrusted once they are elected to office, and thus should have opposed the Mayor's push for term limits extension. Moreover, I was term limited from office in 2001 after having served in the City Council for 10 years. I proudly abided by the term limits rules, as they were the clear will of New York City voters.

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 Oppose
16. What is your position on changing the current land use process under ULURP to increase the role of community-based planning?
- Support 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?
- Support Oppose
18. What is your position on reforming the current pension funding structure to create multiple tiers for future city government employees?
- Support 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?

The growth in the cost of pensions and fringe benefits for City employees has become unsustainable. New York City and state government spending has to be reined in. A balance needs to be reached to ensure that the government budget is not balanced on the backs of hardworking City employees, while at the same time decreasing the burden on New York's taxpayers.

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

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

In light of the recent complete meltdown of the New York State Senate which held the crucial business of New York City hostage, and the ensuing question of who is in line to succeed the Governor if there is no Lieutenant Governor, one area that needs improvement, or at least clarification, is the issue of a clear line of succession, and whether or not the Governor has the authority to appoint a Lieutenant Governor. Secondly, New York City should be given more control over local issues, such as rent control and regulation and control over New York City public schools. Thirdly, to put an end to excessively high incumbency rate in the New York State Legislature, which breeds contempt for the concerns of voters, an independent redistricting commission should be established. Such commission should be non-partisan.

- 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. As stated above, I believe that New York City should be granted greater home rule, especially concerning housing and education. These issues are very local in nature. Representatives of citizens who live in a particular locality should be entrusted with setting specific localized policy on these issues, not elected officials who represent completely different constituencies hundreds of miles away.

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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 needs a steady revenue stream that promotes fairness to New York City residents. The reinstatement of the commuter tax is one example of a policy that would ensure fairness to New York City residents, while providing revenue for the MTA. More broadly, the MTA, as with most public authorities, needs to look for cheaper ways to finance its operations and capital budgets. Paying down debt is a huge budget item for the MTA.

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

This is an issue of home rule. New York City should have a greater role in determining its own budget. The City Council, in conjunction with the Mayor, should be able to pass fiscal legislation on its own, such as the sales tax.

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 believe it is generally smart fiscal planning to pay down future expenses now, when the money is available and cheaper, that is, without having to borrow in the future at interest. However, given the state of the economy, locally and nationally, it made sense to preserve what funds the City does have, for more immediate strategic economic planning.

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.

Albany continually shortchanges New York City by taking out much more money than it returns back to the City in the form of services and benefits. A fairer state-to-city funding formula should be written into law. It is bad policy to cut services that middle and working class New Yorkers depend upon the most in times of economic hardship. Due to this economic climate, we will have to work extra hard to root out waste and unnecessary government expenditures.

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?

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The economy of New York City, and State, needs to become much less reliant on Wall Street. It is poor economic security for our City and State's tax dollars to come from such a narrow part of our economy. The one major area for expansion in New York City is biotechnology. Like Wall Street, the biotechnology industry is high-paying, which will bring in educated workers and also additional tax revenue. The same potential in tax revenue growth can be said for the "green" industry, that is, the "greening" of buildings and our infrastructure. This industry encompasses both high and low paying jobs, but presents a huge potential for economic, and thus City revenue, expansion.

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?

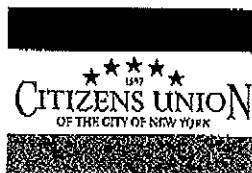
I am a proponent of Mayoral control of schools. However, I have not always been a proponent of how Mayoral control has been implemented in practice. As a former PTA President, I fully believe that a degree of local control of schools is beneficial. Individual school leaders need the necessary empowerment to make localized decisions that are either ignored, and misunderstood, by the larger school system, which, unfortunately, can become too bureaucratic. A possible solution is a revised region system, broken down more locally than it initially was, but with enough control from the administration to maintain mayoral control.

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?

New York City voters deserve to cast votes without any fear that their vote will be lost or manipulated. We need voting machines that leave paper trails. Additionally, Board of Elections workers, both full-time and temporary, need better training on handling high-turnout elections, such as the 2008 General Election.

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 more open and public City Council discretionary funding becomes, the less likely Council Members will abuse the system. Discretionary funding should be fully deliberated in the Council with immediate publication for public consumption. The Council Speaker should not have the opportunity to simply dole out money behind closed doors without thorough debate.



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. Strengthen and increase the accountability of our educational system.
2. Increase the stock of affordable housing and strengthen rent control and pro-tenant legislation.
3. Provide affordable health care for New York City's working families.
4. Protect vital services for senior citizens, including the full funding of senior centers and the protection of SCRIE.
5. Improve the quality of life of residents of the 29th Council District by focusing on issues as diverse as sanitation to crime to disabilities accessibility.