



**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.

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Candidate Name:     **Jacques Leandre**     Age: **38**

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election:     **City Council District #: 31**    

Campaign Address:     **226-19 Merrick Blvd. Laurelton, NY 11413**    

Campaign Telephone Number:     **(718) 300-4178**     Fax: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

Party Affiliation(s):     **Democrat**     Campaign Manager Name:     **Mrs. Yvonne Mitchell**    

Website & Email:     **www.VoteJacques.com / jacquesfor31.pr@gmail.com**    

Education:     **JD, CUNY Law / B.A. in Finance, Morehouse College**    

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

    **Supervising Attorney at Civil Law Firm**    

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

    **President, Rosedale Jets Football Association (15 years)**    

    **Vice President, Concerned Citizens of Laurelton Civic Association (6 years)**    

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: \_\_\_\_\_

## 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          | Oppose <b>X</b> |
| 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 <b>X</b> | 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 <b>X</b> | 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 <b>X</b> | 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          | Oppose <b>X</b> |

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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 <b>X</b> | Oppose |
|---|------------------|--------|

- |   |         |                 |
|---|---------|-----------------|
| 7. What is your position on allowing campaign financing for ballot proposals? | Support | Oppose <b>X</b> |
|---|---------|-----------------|

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

**Term limits are put in place to ensure the purity of the Democratic process. They promote efficiency and eliminate complacency of candidates that take their positions for granted as incumbents. Even though expertise oftentimes increases with time and practice, term limits make room for fresh and innovative ideas that manifest themselves with the introduction of new blood into elected office. The recent term limit extension came into existence due to the fact that many of our current Council members faced the end of their term, were not eligible for re-election and wanted to keep their jobs. The voters and tax-payers are the real bosses of City Hall and they should have final say.**

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

**Remove the early retirement option and increase the age of retirement for Police, Fire Fighters. Also encourage pension & retirement education for all NYC constituents to inform them at an early age.**

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?

**Autonomy over raising revenue as needed, the need to ameliorate traffic congestion and lifting limitations on the City's debt-issuing authority. At the same time, I understand the need of the State to check the power of the City.**

- 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?

**In order to minimize the length of time that it takes to get resolutions passed, it is imperative that greater home rule be given to the City of New York, especially since we are a metropolis like no other, with over 8.3 million residents, which is just about half the number of residents in the entire State of New York. As one of most densely populated urban areas in the United States, we should be given more latitude and autonomy to decide upon and pass certain laws for ourselves, without asking for State approval. This applies to various issues, including traffic, congestion, parking, taxes, etc.**

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?

In terms of ensuring that the burden for funding the MTA is equally distributed among all stakeholders: It is my belief that congestion pricing unfairly places the majority of the burden on residents of the outer boroughs and those others that do business within Manhattan but do not live there. By charging individuals to enter the City during high-traffic periods, we will adversely affect those residents and may even turn them away from doing business within City borders, especially during these harsh economic times. Secondly, the MTA's plans to raise fares has accelerated with the need to acquire cash more quickly. Rising fares are not good for my constituents, who are mainly working-class individuals who, like most in the City, rely on mass transit for transportation to and from work and other daily activities. The Ravitch Commission's recommendations were harsh on the tax paying population, with a 35% payroll tax on top of high tolls and an 8% fare increase. These recommendations are unrealistic and out of touch with the realities of a working and middle-class city. At the same time, we cannot allow the projections of the MTA, which include extensive service cuts and high fare increases, to take place either. I much rather like the idea of using money that is slated for future MTA capital expansion to alleviate current monetary woes. Once the MTA is back on its feet, we can think about expansion again. Secondly, New Yorkers should have a stake in the betterment of the public transportation system that is the vein that carries the blood of the system. People should expect some sort of taxation and/or fare hike but nothing too excessive. Thirdly, faced with an operating deficit of over \$1.128 billion dollars, the MTA's current system of accounting is in dire need of public oversight. First of all, I would call for an immediate overhaul and revision of current and past MTA accounting processes, so that greater transparency is produced and so that such a fiscal crisis can be avoided in the future.

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

Since the Mayor submits the Preliminary Budget which serves as the outline in determining priorities for the coming fiscal year, perhaps committees could submit a list of thought out recommendations to the Mayor prior to his drafting of the Preliminary Budget.

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?

It is not a good position to be in this year, however the current economic climate has made a lot of undesirable actions necessary. Our job in the Council is to cushion the fall so that these actions are well thought out and the outcome isn't as rough, immediate or apparent.

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.

We need to eliminate waste, not City services. Cut overhead costs, eliminate ineffective and non-productive offices/agencies and keep the good programs that work. At the same time, as the people of New York City are already heavily taxed, I would only raise taxes in dire circumstances.

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 the recession goes on, you will see a further shift in the economy, with less of a reliance on white-collar work and the emergence of even more of a service economy. There are certain industries that will flourish despite lowered incomes and less cash flow for many families, i.e. food, trade, businesses that offer product/service combinations, etc. As a result, the service sector will both make and spend money, being the largest provider of jobs, however low the pay. As a result, the demand for skilled hands-on labor will increase. Thus, putting Keynesian deficit spending into effect, the City should put increased

emphasis on programs and agencies that train individuals in useful trades. At the same time, decreased tax revenues mean that the City will have to slim down the budget, cut excess ineffective programs and practice severe discretionary spending practices.

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?

Establish a mechanism for a parent/teacher joint review where education administrators are directly responsible to the parents and the parents are responsible for creating benchmarks for the success of their children. Also, create extra services for single / immigrant / non-English speaking /ESL parents to increase their accessibility and understanding of the education process as it relates to their children.

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?

Although antiquated, the current lever machines are safe secure and provide tried and tested results. The new computerized voting machines are still risky and despite high- priced publicity efforts, are still wrought with problems, proving that price does not always determine quality. Especially in this economy, New York City needs to be more responsible in where and on what we spend our money.

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?

City Council members should be asked to submit yearly reports on their financial and business activities to ensure transparency. In addition, funds exiting and entering the offices of Council members should be accounted for and strictly scrutinized.



Additional Comments:

#3 – Pay must change with the times and take into account cost of living, inflation, value of time away from work, etc.

#4 – Important to promote a fair and honest political process.

#6 – Too much Mayoral control promotes lobbying and favors to the detriment of democracy.

#8 – Committees should be given the proper latitude needed to make independent decisions for the public good. Speaker has too much power.

#8a – Too much bureaucracy, not enough transparency since those hired could be loyal to chairs, not political process.

#8b – Chairs may abuse their power. An independent scheduler should be appointed or dates should be decided by consensus.

#9a – Limiting council members' alternate sources of income prevents conflict of interest.

#9b – Council members' first priority is their duty to constituents.

#10 – This would ensure that council members would not pass legislation relating to member compensation for their own personal benefit.

#11 – There are many committees that could be grouped together under one heading with perhaps subcommittees. Would reduce cost and time, increase communication and transparency.

#12 – Term limits ensure proper democracy and efficiency of candidates while eliminating complacency by forcing candidates to work hard during the early years of their terms.

# 15 – The CCRB should work with the Commissioner and Police Department and share authority in prosecuting cases of police misconduct in order to ensure that justice is served behind the Blue Wall. The CCRB should have a majority vote over the PD, thereby holding them accountable for their actions.

# 16 – Perhaps increase the length of time for Community Board Review.

# 17 – Review is needed to eliminate excess overhead costs and bureaucracy for

# 18 – It is unfair to add on increased pay based on date of hire for new employees.

Tier 5 is unfair.



## 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. Jacques Leandre will fight for a living wage for our workers.
2. Jacques Leandre will secure funds to provide desperately needed Youth and Senior Centers.
3. Jacques Leandre will encourage smart development in areas that have either been over-developed or neglected.
4. Jacques Leandre will promote community involvement in our government with discussion rather than dictation.
5. Jacques Leandre will stimulate economic development by pushing for public and private partnerships.