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: MELVIN BROWN Age: 56

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 37

Campaign Address: 1168 MADISON STREET BROOKLYN NY 11221

Campaign Telephone Number: (718) 400-3276 Fax: ( )

Party Affiliation(s): INDEPENDENCE Campaign Manager Name: B. J. WILLIAMS

Website & Email: www.melvinbrownforcitycouncil.org

Education: JOHN MADISON HIGH SCHOOL, CREDE CURRICULUM, ENGLISH, SCIENCE, ARTS

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

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:-work on Hon. Mayor David Dinkins Mayoral Campaign and District Leader Hon. Carmen Quinones (former member NY Assembly)

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: 7/22/09

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Peter J.W. Sherwin, Chair • Dick Daday, 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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<tr>
<th>VOTING AND ELECTIONS REFORM</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. What is your position with respect to allowing voters who are registered as independents to vote in party primaries? Support</td>
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<td>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</td>
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<td>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</td>
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<td>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</td>
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<td>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</td>
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<th>CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM</th>
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<td>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</td>
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7. What is your position on allowing campaign financing for ballot proposals? Support: Oppose

8. What is your position on allowing Council committees to function more independently of the speaker than is presently the case?
   a. Should committee staff be hired by and report to committee chairs? Support: Oppose
   b. Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs? Support: Oppose
   c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members? Support: Oppose

9. What is your position on:
   a. limiting councilmembers' ability to earn outside income? Support: Oppose
   b. making the job of councilmember a full-time position? Support: Oppose
   c. eliminating or limiting stipends for committee chairs and leadership positions? 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? Support: Oppose

11. What is your position on consolidating the current City Council committee structure and reducing the number of overall committees? Support: Oppose UNDECIDED

12. What is your position on term limits for elected officials? 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? 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

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 taxpayers?

20. An audit of the pension fund and look for cost savings by reducing redundant jobs and areas of waste that would reduce costs to the taxpayer and the city.

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?

      I support the City Council resolution because it's a waste of time and effort that the State Assembly and Senate would not listen. However, I do support a State Constitutional Convention as well and want strongly to get the State Legislature to take the State Constitution into consideration.

   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.

      (1) Prime example is the Mayor should be able to say what should be buying going on in our city without the State.

      (2) More control over our tax structure without involvement.

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?

   Do an audit of the entire MTA structure from top to bottom and figure costs including redundant jobs and give buy outs or early retirement packages to MTA employees. Then is too much people on the payroll that are not needed and the cost should not be on tax payers back.
21. What would you propose in terms of creating a greater role for the city council in determining and deciding the city budget?

1) Before each agency submits their budget to the Mayor, the Mayor must submit to the City and County to the council their budget first.

2) City Council in conjunction with the Controller Office, should have more oversight of the city agencies budgets to include projects for the public works costs and any changes for the current year. For example, are they spending $500,000 on a bridge that will last 75 years.

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?

With the current economic climate, it makes good fiscal sense and provides the wisdom not to do so at this time. The previous was good economic sense.

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.

Because we generate more income in my city than any other city, the value of services received would never equal taxes paid. However, the portion that does come to New York City must be spent in New York more efficiently with greater results. There is a strong link to wasteful mismanagement that is attributed to all government agencies.

Taxes should be lowered on small businesses as the economic times have caused many that provide jobs for the city to go out of business. The real estate taxes should be lowered that are passed on from the landlord to commercial tenants and incentives given for small businesses to hire workers. Also, the UBT that cripples small businesses should be eliminated to avoid double taxation of small businesses who are unincorporated.
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?

- We need to attract different types of businesses including our lost industrial base jobs.
- Need to attract new and innovative industries such as biotech and other research-based industries. We should be able to attract these industries by emphasizing our great universities and colleges throughout the city of New York. Because this shift is new into high tech and research, we have to do something.

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?

The council needs to have more home rule regarding education so that good ideas such as charter schools can be implemented without state intervention. Parents and teachers should be involved in deciding or be involved in more (in some cases together so ideas can be exchanged to make the educational system work.

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?

- Make it a Civil Service job and not political appointees.
- NYC bug must be fixed by Council to computerize NYC Campaign Finance files

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?

- a database of all non-profits from NYC, New York State, and Federal must be posted on a website.
- All relatives employed by a non-profit must be fully disclosed including salaries and job titles
These are not enough voice for the ordinary person, small business, our young people and our elderly and the poor. That's why I'm the "average guy running" to be the greater public servant in the history of my District 37.
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. Foster Care Reform
2. Tackling Poverty and Hunger
3. Job Creation and Neighborhood Entrepreneurship
4. Youth Development
5. Caring for Our Elderly