



**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: Brad Lander Age: 40

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 39

Campaign Address: 454 Fifth Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11215

Campaign Telephone Number: (718) 499-1090 Fax: (718) 499-1090 (call first)

Party Affiliation(s): Democratic, Working Families Campaign Manager Name: Nancy Leeds

Website & Email: www.bradlander.com, brad@bradlander.com

Education: BA, University of Chicago; MS in Social Anthropology, University College London; MS in City & Regional Planning, Pratt Institute

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): Senior Fellow, Pratt Center for Community Development, Pratt Institute (served as director, 2003 – 2009)

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: Former Executive Director, Fifth Avenue Committee (1993 – 2003); Brooklyn Community Board 6 member & housing/community development committee chair (2007 – present); NYC Neighborhood Investment Advisory Panel (2002 – 2005); 78th Precinct Youth Council Little League coach

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES 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: 7/15/09

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? | <input type="checkbox"/> Support | 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 |
| <u>I support increasing the base pay as part of broader BOE reform, so that this money is spent impartially, and not at the discretion of local party officials.</u> | | |
| 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

- | | | |
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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? | <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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NOTE: I am not accepting contributions from PACs, corporate lobbyists or developers.

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 |

I believe that term limits should be modified through referendum (since Council members have a deep self-interest); however, I am concerned with decreasing the

power of the City Council as an effective check-and-balance to the Mayor, so any modification to the Charter would need to be tightly conscribed.

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 strongly and actively opposed the extension of term limits by the City Council and Mayor Bloomberg without a public vote. My firm position was, and remains, that changes to the term limits law should be made by a public referendum – since the two-term limit had been twice approved by public referendum, and especially given the direct self-interest of City Council members and the mayor.

I personally support term limits for the City Council; I see an argument for three terms for Council members (more than for the Mayor and citywide positions), as legislative knowledge and experience are necessary for the Council to function meaningfully as a check on the Mayor. However, the broader issue here is the referenda should have been respected. As the process played out, at record speed, with backroom deals, and decisions made by a small group of self-interested people, I believe it was corrosive to our local democracy. I attended numerous rallies, circulated e-blasts with online actions, submitted testimony, and lobbied City Council members as part of the opposition to the extension.

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

In my role as director of the Pratt Center for Community Development, I was substantially involved in the development of several community-based 197-a plans,

so I have first-hand knowledge of the need to give community-based planning more teeth. As one of the authors of One City, One Future, I helped develop a comprehensive proposal for a more proactive, more community-based, more fair-share-based system (see www.onecityonefuture.org).

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

I am open to the possibility of reforming the pension system, but need to see more details before taking a position.

- 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 am firmly committed to offering strong fringe benefits and retirement security to public sector employees, who are the backbone of the city. However, with pension costs projected to grow exponentially, we must explore a wide range of options. I am open to reviewing options to reduce these costs.

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

I would like to see substantial reform of State Government, and am therefore supportive of a Constitutional Convention. However, I am concerned that such a Convention, if not well-organized, could avoid genuine reform issues, and instead focus solely on a property tax cap or other inequitable proposals. I would therefore like to see the specific language of the resolution focus on government, electoral, and campaign finance reforms.

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

- Independent/non-partisan redistricting
- Greater home rule powers for cities
- Campaign finance reform

- 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, I believe that the City of New York should have the power to set our own laws on:

- Rent regulations
- Income & property taxes
- Wage standards
- Transportation initiatives (e.g. congestion pricing, red light cameras, 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?

I was a supporter of congestion pricing (and had the honor of presenting to Citizens Union on this topic, in favor of congestion pricing with a special emphasis on improving commuting options for underserved neighborhoods), and the Ravitch Commission (and testified before the MTA board on this topic). I believe that we must adopt a proposal of this type that establishes appropriate congestion charges, and commits these resources to the MTA. I would like to see the New York City Council get a seat on the MTA board, so that we can work to hold the MTA accountable to spend this money wisely.

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

I support a process more akin to the Congressional process, in which City Council committees would work on particular pieces of the budget separately, and have meaningful committee hearings with real mark-up powers. I would also like to make proposed budgets available online in a timely and user-friendly manner so New Yorkers can see how the issues they care about would be affected.

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 was wise to use surplus tax revenues to pay down future obligations. While I would have liked to see the City do so this year, it is critical to maintain core public services (public schools, police, fire, etc), so this may be something that has to be put on hiatus for a 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.

The City of New York provides very strong and essential public services – education, police, fire, transportation, social services, etc – and the provision of these essential services is worth our tax dollars. In a survey we conducted for the campaign, more than 80% of people indicated they would prefer increasing taxes on wealthy New Yorkers to cutting essential services. I was pleased to see the State of New York adopt a progressive income tax surcharge on households earning over \$300,000 per year, to address this issue. Three taxes I would support, in order to pay for essential services, are:

- Make the NYC income tax more progressive, increasing the rate on the wealthiest New Yorkers, and eliminating income taxes for the lowest-income families.
- Re-establish a commuter tax, so that suburban commuters who utilize the City's police, fire, public transit, and other public systems help to pay for them.
- Increase the tax rate on vacant, unutilized land (especially where speculators purchased properties, demolished existing buildings, and are now leaving them boarded and vacant).

I was **not** pleased that the City chose to focus on a sales tax increase, which is a particularly regressive tax. I would also like to exempt freelancers from the unincorporated business tax (UBT), which I believe is an unfair and counterproductive double-taxation.

Finally, I believe that the essential core services of classroom funding, police, and fire should not be cut. I strongly support the alternative revenue strategies outlined above. If these cannot be achieved, I am open to across-the-board reductions in other areas.

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 strongly support this type of diversification. This is the core position set out in the One City, One Future (www.onecityonefuture) document, which I co-authored. We need to invest in other sectors of the economy that have the opportunity to thrive in NYC, pay decent wages, and grow our tax base -- sectors including green jobs/building retrofits, manufacturing, film/TV, biotech and related fields, small businesses, freelancers, etc. I would adjust revenue and spending as outlined above – with a progressive income tax, an increased tax on vacant land, and a commuter tax. In addition, I would like bring the EDC budget under City Council control, to end unaccountable corporate tax breaks that cost the city almost a billion dollars a year.

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 public school parent (the only one in the Democratic primary), and my wife serves on the School Leadership Team at PS 107 in Park Slope, which our children attend. We are lucky to be in a school where most things are going right: a great principal, small classes, and excellent teachers. Parent involved is welcomed, and the principal, parents, and teachers work effectively together in a range of areas (enriching the curriculum, arts and creative education, after-school programming, etc). Unfortunately, this type of collaboration between principals, parents, and teachers is not the norm in the NYC public school system, and is too little valued by the DOE. The role of parents has been too much diminished by the current system, and there is an over-emphasis on high-stakes testing. While I support mayoral appointment of the schools chancellor, I would like to see the following changes:

- A school governance system with a better system of checks-and-balances, and a more independent Panel for Educational Policy, with fixed terms.
- An enhanced system of parent involvement, including Community Education Councils with meaningful input into superintendent selection, zoning, and evaluation systems (which requires more authority vested at the District level); and School Leadership Teams with meaningful input in principal selection and education plans for the school. This input might be structured like that of the current community boards – always advisory, but with fixed processes for public input.
- A system of school evaluation that puts less emphasis on high-stakes testing. Schools should be reviewed on a range of accountability measures – testing, parent feedback, cultural programming, teacher development, etc – so that schools, principals, teachers, and students are all evaluated and helped to improve, with a range of approaches that support diverse learning needs.

If elected, I commit to build upon my experience as a not-for-profit director and public school parent, to work closely to help each school set and achieve learning goals, identify and raise resources, function as community centers, and bridge the achievement gap.

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?

I support the establishment of an independent, nonpartisan governing body for the Board of Elections, most likely appointed by the mayor and the City Council. With this body in place, the BOE would be overseen by independent professionals, and not by party officials. I also support more timely release of post-election reports,

better training and recruitment of poll worker, and increased base pay (so long as the other changes are adopted) for pollworkers.

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?

In the City Council, I would work to:

- Require that recipients of all City Council member items legally certify that they do not have conflicts-of-interest with the lawmaker who directed the grant to them, and require full disclosure of the information to document this.
- Treat larger City Council grants like a good philanthropic foundation treats its grants: with clear and transparent benchmarks, regular reporting, a grant officer to provide assistance and insure compliance – and with renewal only if goals are met.
- Insure that full information about member items is publicly available, including the group, amount, goals, and results. These grants should not be something hidden from view, but instead something we can all be proud of – critical support for vital community-based not-for-profits who achieve results.

Additional Comments:

Experience on Reform Issues

- I am not accepting contributions from PACs, corporate lobbyists or developers.
- I strongly support, and filed a joint amicus brief in support of, strict new restrictions on the campaign contributions of those “doing business with” the City, to make sure government decisions do not go to the highest bidder. The amicus brief is available at <http://bradlander.org/files/AmicusBriefofBradLanderandMarkWinstonGriffith.pdf>
- I led the successful effort to end a multi-million dollar annual giveaway to luxury developers by reforming the City’s 421-a tax exemption program.
- I exposed irregularities at the Pataki-era NYS Housing Finance Agency (e.g. award of subsidies to campaign contributors), and helped bring about an overhaul of the agency.

Additional Positions: In the City Council, I would work to:

- Reduce overall contribution limits to levels at or below those for candidates for federal races, and candidates who face little opposition should receive reduced levels of public funding.
- Amend Local Law 11, so that NYC will truly lead the nation “in using information technologies to improve the efficiency and accessibility of municipal government” –

- by establishing data quality standards, requiring user-friendly formats, and including quasi-government agencies like EDC. We should also crack down on agency non-compliance by empowering citizen watchdogs, requiring an annual report of complaints, and reporting on agency compliance in the Mayor's Management Report.
- Provide the public with timely, user-friendly, reports of quality of life and public safety information from 311 and CompStat.
 - Provide greater access to City Council hearings, testimony, and briefing papers, as well as Community Board meetings, through easily available transcripts and webcasts.
 - Give the Independent Budget Office clear authority, responsibility, and resources to conduct oversight of the Department of Education.
 - Push for a City Council seat on the MTA board, to demand and provide clear information to the public, work for reform of MTA management practices, and insure that the allocation of costs for public transportation are equitably distributed among all stakeholders.
 - Demand a full and public accounting on all publicly-subsidized, large-scale, local projects.
 - Establish standards for City-supported projects (including those receiving assistance from the NYC Economic Development Corporation, or the Department of Housing Preservation and Development) to ensure that contracts and project funds don't go to entities that have violated campaign public laws or finance rules.



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. **I will respect the will of the voters on term limits, and will not vote for any future changes unless they are approved by public referendum.**
2. **I will insure that full information about any member items I support is publicly available, including the group, amount, goals, and results. These grants should not be something hidden from view, but instead something we can all be proud of – critical support for vital community-based not-for-profits who achieve results. In addition, I will work to require that recipients of all City Council member items legally certify that they do not have conflicts-of-interest with the lawmaker who directed the grant to them, and require full disclosure of the information to document this.**
3. I will hold regular town hall meetings throughout the district, make effective use of technology (e.g. open telephone conference calls, online issue and question prioritizing), work closely with local civic organizations, and promote student internships and other creation strategies to **strengthen citizen input and participation.** As part of this commitment to strengthening civic participation, I will work to make the 39th Council District, and New York City in general, a leader in public and community service, by establishing an expectation that citizens contribute to their community, and by valuing and investing in opportunities for service for people of all ages, interests, and talents.
4. **I will work to introduce “smart development” legislation that requires planning for infrastructure before significant new development occurs, addresses the problem of stalled development and its blighting impacts, supports small businesses and affordable housing, requires responsible contracting, and enhances the sustainability of the city.**
5. **I will support collaboration between parents, teachers, and principals to improve public schools, reduce class size, support quality teaching, and bridge the achievement gap. This will include work at the citywide level to push for system reform, support for**

individual schools, and the creation of a network of leaders from across the district to work together for positive educational change.