



**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: Yetta G. Kurland Age: 41

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: 3

Campaign Address: 130 7th Avenue, #240, New York, NY 10011

Campaign Telephone Number: (646) 435- 9800 Fax: (

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat

Website & Email: www.yettakurland.com, www.myyetta.com, yetta@yettakurland.com

Education: BA – Women's Studies, SUNY Buffalo

MA – US-Asian Studies, SUNY Buffalo

JD – Brooklyn Law School

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

Founder & Executive Director – Hello World Language Center

Founder & Senior Partner – Kurland, Bonica & Associates, P.C.

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

I have been a community activist for over 20 years. I currently hold the following positions:

Board of Marriage Equality New York, Executive Committee, National Lawyers Guild, NYC

Chapter, and Vice President Stonewall Democratic Club of New York City.

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES NO

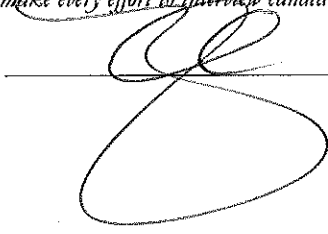
NO

Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings? YES NO

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: _____

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

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 | Oppose |
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If the Independent Party wanted to have their own Primary they should be allowed to do so, one Party should not be allowed to vote in another Party's Primary.

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| 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 | Oppose |
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It would depend on a number of things.

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| 3. What is your position on increasing the pay of Election Day poll workers above the current \$200 they are allotted per election event? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
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| 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? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
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| 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 |
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It would really depend on how that happened but I definitely favor a system which creates more accountability, greater transparency and a level playing field for all.



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?

Support

Oppose

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| 7. What is your position on allowing campaign financing for ballot proposals? | Support | Oppose |
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It would depend on the details.

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

*Look at next page

I understand the arguments for and against term limits. However, I think given that a law in New York City was created through a public referendum of the citizens of New York about the way they want to govern themselves and this law was upheld through a public referendum of the people, it should be respected by the elected officials who are supposed to be representing those people.

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

An elected official has a fundamental obligation to adhere to the interests of the public they are entrusted to represent. This obligation becomes more critical when it comes to a law about how we choose to govern ourselves. When a law about the democratic process of government is created through public referendum of the people, upheld through public referendum of the people and when 89% of the people are saying they only want this law changed through referendum it is an absolute breach of public trust to overturn that for the self interest of a few who have been empowered to be the voice of the people.

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 |
|---|---------|--------|

But also this is not enough. I have called for a Committee on Police Oversight because many times there are systematic problems that an individual officer has little control over.

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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 | Oppose |
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There must be disclosure and advance notice to the community. If we are not careful, ULURP can become a thing that takes away the opportunity for community involvement rather than giving it.

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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? | <u>Support</u> | 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 | Oppose |
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I would need more information on what type of reform.

- 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 would work with the Comptroller's office to make sure we understood how these monies were being used. If there was misuse or waste of any kind I would work actively to hold those agencies responsible and also ensure that could not happen in the future so that we can ensure proper use of our budget and also ensure that our City employees are well cared for and properly compensated for their hard work fairly and effectively.

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?

There is too much self interest in our local government. We need to increase involvement of our citizens and community in the democratic and electoral process, and we need to ensure that real diversity exists to make our government truly representative.

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?

I think perhaps one of the most urgent is URSTADT.

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?

What we aren't talking about enough is the use or misuse and waste of funds in the MTA. While congestion pricing may generate significant income, there was no promise that it would go into the MTA and once there, there is no guarantee it would be used properly. We must have better oversight and accountability or we will keep finding ourselves in the same problem over and over again. We should not have to pay fare hikes because our agencies our misusing our money.

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

There currently seems to be an unnecessary 'mystification' of the budget process at City Hall, both for the public and the elected officials. Let's set the City Council up for success, utilizing technology, accessibility and transparency so that we all easily and readily know what is going on.

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 think the working men and women in this City depend on their pensions and their health insurance and they should have a right to them. It is literally an issue of life and death for many. This is not how we solve the financial hardship of New York City, by taking away pensions or health insurance of our workers.

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.

My opponent in her State of the City Address echoed the call of many for a progressive tax scheme that would raise billions of dollars to solve our financial difficulties. This scheme would only impact a small number of New Yorkers with a very small increase of less than a percent, who made \$300,000.00 per year or more. She also assured us that she would not support an increase in sales tax, stating it would unfairly burden small businesses and all New Yorkers. I agreed. Unfortunately, when Mayor Bloomberg rejected these ideas, saying it would be unfair to the "rich" my opponent changed her position. My opponent flipped her position, refusing to offer us a progressive tax scheme that would raise billions and help solve our financial crisis, and instead in concert with Mayor Bloomberg did exactly what she called against and increased sales tax, thereby creating more of a problem for our City financially but giving a break to the wealthiest New Yorkers. I would stand up to Mayor Bloomberg and to the wealthiest. I would honor my commitment to fight for progressive tax schemes and in doing so solve our financial crisis.

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?

First, as I stated earlier, I do have a plan that would avoid this tax shift. Moreover, I believe that the way we got ourselves out of the economic problems created over the past decade, is with new leadership that creates living wage and union wage jobs. We need to create work and jobs by supporting our unions and supporting small businesses. This ensures we have more people working at living wage jobs that will add to those contributing to the tax revenues.

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?

Here is a statement released from me last week on the current crisis in education:

YETTA KURLAND
SUPPORTS EFFORTS TO HELP PARENTS HELP SCHOOLS,
RENEWS CALL FOR EMERGENCY EDUCATION TASK FORCE

"Let's learn from Bloomberg's mistakes. We have an incredible chance right now to learn from past mistakes and create an effective model for our City's schools that includes community and parental involvement as a central force for solving past problems. We want our Mayor to stay responsible and accountable but we need educators to solve the problems of education and we need feedback from our community

and our parents to guide our vision. Let's set up an Emergency Education Task Force to come up with new ideas to solve these old problems;

Poor planning -- *“There are not enough kindergarten seats for children entering the public school system. The Community Education Council of School District 2 estimates that hundreds of children are on waiting lists for kindergarten.*

Poor administration -- *“In 2009 the high school drop out rate is way too high. Only 53% of New York City children graduate from high school within four years -- only a 1% increase in graduation rates since mayoral control went into effect seven years ago.*

Poor curriculum -- *“In 2009 our children do not receive a well rounded education. Science, history, geography, the arts, music, and drama are neglected. In New York City, a beacon for the arts and sciences, our children should be given comprehensive educational opportunities.*

Poor facilities -- *“Our New Yoek City children need education facilities that will make them productive in our 21st century community. Our children need up-to-date science labs, libraries, technology facilities, art and music studios, and gymnasiums.*

“Overcrowded schools, high drop out rates, neglect of music and art, out-dated facilities – we need an “EMERGENCY EDUCATION TASK FORCE” now – in 2009 – to deal with this year’s problems.

Mr. Mayor, City Council, are you listening to the people?”

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 would work with my community and good government groups like Citizens Action to come up with a system that was non-partisan, that gave everyone an equal opportunity and in so doing was committed to raising the standards and creating the best candidates, and therefore the best elected officials.

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?

As I said in earlier questions, we must increase knowledge, access and transparency and ensure that all our held accountable for their actions.

28. Additional Comments:

This will be an historic election that will measure our ability as citizens of this City to realign democracy when it has been compromised by our elected officials. This election will also determine to a large degree whose interests this government represents and whether it will continue to be motivated by self interest or can truly rise to its calling for public service. The term limits issue typifies this but there are many other important issues at play that are impacted, development, education, affordable housing, etc.

I am running to restore our voice to local government and integrity in our democratic process. I have worked closely with Citizens Union last Fall in our shared efforts to stop the extension of term limits without a referendum. We did not win that victory through the legislature or in the judiciary. We now have an opportunity on September 15th to win that fight when we head to the polls to let our elected officials know that they work for us and that no elected official is indispensable, rather it is the process of democracy that is indispensable.

I would love the continued support of the Citizens Union in this effort, and it would be an honor to receive your endorsement and have the opportunity to work with you towards this shared goal.



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 promise to listen to my community.
2. I promise to bring the voice and the needs of my community to City Hall.
3. I promise to continue to be a champion for the under-represented.
4. I promise to continue to unapologetically fight for all of us to be able to be ourselves, to express ourselves, and have a seat at the table and a level playing field.
5. I promise to use this to create opportunities for problem solving, coalition building and coming up with creative ideas that can only be reached from a sum greater than our parts to solve our community's challenges.