



**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: Inez E. Dickens Age: _____

Office to Which You Seek (Re) Election: Council District #: District 9

Campaign Address: 2155 Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Blvd.

Campaign Telephone Number: (212) 662-0694 Fax: (212) 662-0698

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat Campaign Manager Name: Lamon Bland

Website & Email: www.inezdickens2009.com & lamon.bland@gmail.com

Education: High School: Julia Richman High School; College: Howard University, Major: Business; Graduate/Professional: Univ. of Chicago and Univ. of Atlanta

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): Ending first term in City Council; have been in office since January 1, 2006

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: Inez E. Dickens Date: 7/21/09

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

- | | | |
|---|---------|--------|
| 1. What is your position with respect to allowing voters who are registered as independents to vote in party primaries? | 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? | 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? | 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? | 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? | 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? | Support | Oppose |
|---|---------|--------|

7. What is your position on allowing campaign financing for ballot proposals?	Support	Oppose
---	---------	--------

CITY COUNCIL REFORM

8. What is your position on allowing Council committees to function more independently of the speaker than is presently the case?	Support	Oppose
---	---------	--------

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
--	---------	--------

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? Support Oppose
 Please explain your answer.

I voted in favor of the term limits extension for a number of reasons. First, as a private citizen, I voted twice against the referendums, which installed and reaffirmed term limits. Term limits penalize elected official communities of color by preventing them from accumulating seniority needed to affect change that will benefit their districts. Second, while I did NOT agree with the methods by which term limits came before the City Council, those circumstances were beyond my control. The vote I cast was my only opportunity to vote my conscience and do what I thought was best for my constituents in the long term. Moreover, since I am currently seeking your endorsement for my run for a second term, I gained nothing by this vote, especially if the Charter Review Commission the Administration promised to convene repeals this decision.

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?

I am committed to controlling government spending in order to reduce the tax burden on New Yorkers as much as possible. I will continue to fight against wasteful spending in New York, thereby decreasing the impact of pension costs on our citizens. I do not believe in cutting benefits for City employees who serve New Yorkers faithfully, but we must find other ways to keep spending under control.

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?

- 1. Even though I already believe that the Governor has the power to fill vacancies, a convention could amend the State Constitution to explicitly state that the Governor has the power to fill the post of Lieutenant Governor and other elected posts if vacant.**
- 2. Remove redistricting authority from majority leaders in the two houses of the legislature, and give that power to an independent redistricting commission, in order to keep elections fair and free.**
- 3. Giving New York City control over their public schools and rent controls, especially in light of the recent events in Albany.**

- a. 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?

Absolutely. I voted in favor of SLR 1 at the City Council which was a Home Rule message about this important subject. The most important areas where the City should have more sovereignty are land use and housing decisions, especially over rent control and rent stabilization. New York City, as illustrated by the recent State Senate crisis, should also have control over their own taxation policies and the ultimate control over the public education system.

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 first action that should be taken is that the commuter tax should be reinstated to ensure that all users of the New York City transit system bear the appropriate costs to keep the world-class system running. In addition, the MTA should make their financial records more transparent and open their books for wide review.

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

The City Council must guarantee that public services are maintained for New Yorkers, even in times of hardship. However, the City Council does not have complete authority over its own finances, and is often held hostage by events in Albany. Therefore, I propose that New York City should have greater authority over its own taxation. Only this way can we raise the revenue needed to continue vital services, such as schools, fire stations, and public hospitals. Depending on Albany for our financial solvency has hurt us before, and the City Council should have control over our own finances.

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?

We faced an extremely difficult budget year in FY10 due to the economic downturn. I support Mayor Bloomberg's decision to maintain current vital City services at the expense of future health cost and pension obligations, in the hopes that New York City's economic prospects improve over the course of FY10 and FY11.

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.

During the current economic crisis, maintaining public services is paramount, and taxes on the very wealthy may be raised if needed in order to cover the operating costs of the subway system, police stations, and health care. Hardworking New Yorkers

already pay their fair share of taxes, and they cannot afford any additional burden. Making the tax structure more progressive, though, will ensure increased revenue for public services. Therefore, taxes should be raised to avoid a lapse or cut in public services, or a raise in fares for subway, buses, and tolls.

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?

The first area is the development of biotechnology-based firms and economy, where NYC reasserts itself as a research & development center respected around the world. Second, the City must do more to cultivate the green economy, especially the retrofitting of buildings to update and improve energy efficiency citywide.

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 wholly support and am a co-signor of the proposal from the City Council's Working Group on Mayoral Control and the recommendations they made for reforms to the City's public education system.

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?

There must be machines used in the City that have a proper paper trail. We must also have an open and transparent bidding process for the purchase of new machines & technology, especially with respect to training for voters and workers, implementation, maintenance and record-keeping.

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?

I believe that the changes that Speaker Christine Quinn has implemented have adequately addressed the transparency of the Council funding process.



CANDIDATE ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Citizens Union is adding a new element to its evaluation of incumbents running for re-election. In addition to evaluating their stances on the issues above, Citizens Union will assess incumbents on how well they kept the promises they made to voters during the previous election.

As an elected official who is seeking re-election,

- a. what were the top five promises you made to your constituents when you ran for your current position and what progress have you made to keep those promises, and why and why not have you met them?
- b. what are your top five campaign promises you are making to the voters during this campaign for this position?

We thank you very much for your response. Please feel free to use additional paper if the space provided is not sufficient.

TOP FIVE CAMPAIGN PROMISES FROM 2005 AND ACTION ON THEM

- 1. Improve healthcare for New Yorkers: guaranteed health benefits to all City employees who sustained injuries or lingering adverse health effects while in service to New York in the aftermath of September 11; brought City funding to the district to start several public health programs in conjunction with community groups.**
- 2. Improve public education: kept P.S. 241 and P.S. 194 open in the district; introduced the Inez Dickens Kuumba Literacy Initiative to promote literacy in our schools.**
- 3. Keep housing affordable for all New Yorkers: Secured over \$2.5 million to improve security at NYCHA developments in the district; prevented the closure of three NYCHA community centers in the district; Secured \$18 million to keep NYCHA developments away from private developers.**

4. Clean up our environment: passed a landmark clean air law, which restricted engine idling to no more than three minutes, drastically cutting down on pollution.
5. Advocate for women's issues: Spearheaded Project Greenhope, which provides transitional housing for women leaving prison so they can reclaim their lives, reunite with their families and rebuild their communities.

TOP FIVE 2009 CAMPAIGN PROMISES

1. Provide access to high-quality, affordable healthcare to all New Yorkers, regardless of income. Healthcare is a basic human right, and I will work to ensure that everyone has necessary coverage.
2. Maintain high-quality, affordable public services such as MTA, public hospitals, and fire departments
3. Keep housing affordable in New York City and protecting tenants from landlord abuse.
4. Improve public education throughout the City by decreasing class sizes, adding computers, and raising teachers' salaries.
5. Preserve our quality of life by eliminating pollution, creating parks, keeping our streets safe, and making New York a great place to do business.