



2012 QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CANDIDATES FOR NEW YORK STATE LEGISLATURE

Citizens Union would appreciate your response to the following questionnaire related to policy issues facing New York State and our interest in reforming state government. 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 September 13th Primary Election, and our "Endorsed Candidates" for the November 6th General Election.

If you seek our support, we would also need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process. We will not automatically schedule an interview with you if you return this questionnaire, as we prioritize competitive races and resources constrain us from evaluating all races. Please contact us if you wish to be interviewed.

We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, Voters Directory and other appropriate venues. We thank you very much for your response.

Candidate Name: Nelson L. Castro Age: 40

Campaign Address: 2289 Jerome Avenue

Campaign Telephone Number: (917) 790-8742 Fax: (917) 790-8740

Party Affiliation(s): Democratic Party Campaign Manager Name: Miguel Santana

Website & Email: www.castro2012.com / nelsonlcastro@gmail.com

Education: Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): Assembly Member of the 86th Assembly District since 2008

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: _____

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES NO
(Please note: Citizens Union can grant its "Endorsed Candidate" rating only to candidates we have interviewed.)

Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings? YES NO

Signature of Candidate: _____ Date: 07/09/2012

I. CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

Please state your position on the following reform measures. Specify whether you support or oppose each. You may elaborate in the space provided at the end or on additional paper.

ELECTION REFORM

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| 1. What is your position on second passage of the constitutional amendment (S.6698/A.9526 of 2012) creating an independent redistricting commission with appointees split evenly between the majority and minority parties? | Support |
| 2. What is your position on restructuring the state Board of Elections and changing the administration of elections by amending the constitution to abolish the two-party system of governance and operation? | Support |
| 3. What is your position on making it easier for candidates to appear on the ballot by, for example, lowering signature requirements and utilizing less burdensome witness signature requirements? | Support |
| 4. What is your position on amending the Municipal Home Rule law to limit the ability of a mayor-appointed charter revision commission to "bump" other local charter amendments from appearing on the ballot? | Support |
| 5. What is your position on automatically granting New Yorkers on parole the ability to vote? | Support |
| 6. What is your position on amending the constitution to allow for Election Day Registration? | Support |
| 7. What is your position on amending the constitution to allow for no-excuse absentee voting? | Support |
| 8. What is your position on instituting early voting in New York State to allow voters to cast their votes at more convenient times? | Support |
| 9. What is your position on redesigning the ballot to ensure that voters are able to clearly read candidates' names, titles of offices, designations and ballot questions; that instructions are clear and accurate; that bilingual ballots are required; and that the ballot is able to split races between multiple pages? | Support |
| 10. What is your position on reforming the special election process, creating a nonpartisan special election for state legislative vacancies, as proposed by A.1369/S.26? | Support |
| 11. What is your position regarding automatic voter registration in which voter registration information of individuals who consent to be registered is provided electronically to the Board of Elections, and address information is automatically updated? | Support |

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

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| 12. What is your position on establishing a matching public financing system for state legislative and statewide races similar to the New York City model? | Support |
| 13. What is your position on lowering campaign contribution limits for legislative and statewide candidates for public office? | Support |
| 14. What is your position on restricting campaign contributions from registered lobbyists, placement agents and those who do business with the state? | Support |
| 15. What is your position on limiting or banning campaign contributions from corporations, LLCs, and LLPs? (Note: such entities would be able to form separate political action committees due to constitutional issues regarding freedom of speech.) | Support |
| 16. What is your position on closing "soft money" loopholes such as limiting transfers from party committees to candidates or other committees to twice the limit set on individual contributors and limiting contributions to party committees, including housekeeping accounts, to the same ceiling placed on candidates? | Support |
| 17. What is your position on requiring candidates to include full name, home address, and employer/business name for each contribution and bundler? | Support |

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM (CONTINUED)

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| 18. What is your position on requiring that two periodic campaign finance reports be filed during the legislative session to reflect contributions given during the session? | Support |
| 19. What is your position on stricter requirements on the use of campaign contributions for non-campaign related activity, such as personal use? | Support |
| 20. What is your position on improving disclosure of independent expenditures such as requiring disclosure of electioneering activities and linking expenditures to candidates targeted? | Support |
| 21. What is your position on limiting the ability of candidates to accumulate "war chests" and then transferring funds raised in one race to another? | Support |
| 22. What is your position on creating an enforcement entity independent of the State Board of Elections to oversee campaign finance laws? | Support |

JUDICIAL REFORM

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| 23. What is your position on a merit-based appointment system through creation of a commission for the selection of judges in all of New York's trial courts? | Support |
| 24. What is your position simplifying and modernizing the state's court system by consolidating the nine trial courts into a two-tiered system? | Support |

ETHICS REFORM

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| 25. What is your position on empowering the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute cases involving public corruption, including serious election law malfeasance? | Support |
| 26. What is your position on amending the State Constitution to extend pension forfeiture, subject to due process safeguards, to all public officers and legislators who have been convicted of felonies, building on the 2011 ethics reforms which only apply to future state employees? | Support |

BUDGET REFORM

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| 27. What is your position on requiring the governor's budget submission to present the full scope of the state's financial obligations, including its public authorities? | Support |
| 28. What is your position on establishing an independent, nonpartisan budget office to provide revenue projections, display economic and policy analysis and require that the state engage in long term, multi-year budget planning? | Support |
| 29. What is your position on the use of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) rather than cash accounting for the state budget? | Support |
| 30. What is your position on distributing member item allocations equally among all legislators and requiring for greater accountability as expressed in S. 7007/A10116? | Support |
| 31. What is your position on incorporating the use of performance budgeting and outcome measurement to promote the more rational appropriation of state funds? | Support |
| 32. What is your position on instituting a later start date for the state fiscal year? | Support |
| 33. What is your position on limiting the ability of the governor to enact policy changes governing the use of resources in appropriation bills by requiring that such bills be consistent with existing law or proposed changes in separate legislation? | Support |

ADDITIONAL REFORM

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| 34. What is your position on increasing public access to information by reforming the Freedom of Information and Open Meetings Laws to enhance transparency, as well as the creation of tools such as open data portals to ease public access to information? | Support |
| 35. What is your position on enactment of legislative rules reform to strengthen rank-and-file members' roles in the legislative process and create more equity between members? | Support |

Please use the space provided or a separate sheet of paper to elaborate on your positions on the issues contained in the previous pages. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.

Election Reform

I stand fully in support of efforts to make our election process more accountable, transparent and secure. To ensure that we remove barriers to citizens who wish to cast their ballot, thus ensuring that every vote counts; I support policies such as “No Excuse Absentee Voting”, allowing same-day registration and weekend voting along with other necessary election reform policies. I plan to work with the Legislature to take steps to implement voter-friendly election reforms to ensure that all citizens are provided an opportunity to cast their vote. I also sponsored legislation A4349 to allow New Yorkers on parole the ability to vote.

Campaign Finance Reform

Over the past decade the cost of running for office has dramatically increased. Money has unfortunately become a major factor in elections; thus leading candidates to rely heavily on donors and special interest groups seeking influence to help get them elected.

When I was elected in 2008, I pledged to always put the people of my community before politics or special interest. For these reasons, I fully support the enactment of a matching public system for statewide and legislative races. I believe that by regulating contributions, tightening enforcement and requiring greater disclosure and reporting of campaign contributions and expenditures as well as independent expenditures, we will be able to reduce the influence of money in the election process.

Ethics Reform

Ethics reform is needed now more than ever. We need to restore the people’s trust in government. This year, I supported the “Public Integrity Reform Act” which establishes penalties and regulations to improve ethics enforcement. Although we have made much progress, there is still much more to do. It is imperative that we create a stronger ethics enforcement commission, which would have jurisdiction over lobbying violations, legislative ethics violations, and campaign finance enforcement. This change would allow the commission to fully monitor all intersections of money in politics. I will continue to support any legislation that helps us accomplish these goals.

Budget Reform

In the Legislature, we need to pass reform that restores integrity, increases transparency, and fosters efficiency in the budget process. The process should allow for substantive public debate on budget decisions, especially during these fiscally challenging times. As I seek re-election, I am committed to working with my colleagues in the Assembly to ensure that we work towards meaningful budget reform. In 2010, I sponsored legislation A10116 that requires member items to be equally distributed among all legislators.

II. CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS (PAST AND CURRENT)

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 seat and what progress has been made in keeping those promises, and
- b. what are the top five promises you are making to the voters during this campaign?

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 2010 AND ACTION ON THEM

1. Economy and job creation: This year, I supported legislation to provide a tax relief on clothing and the creation of new jobs. The 2012-13 State budget provided funding for the Empire State Economic Development Fund (\$50.4 million), the Jobs Now Program (\$16.2 million), the Urban and Community Development Program (\$7.4 million) and the Military-base retention efforts (\$5 million). I also supported and voted in favor of the minimum wage increase in the State.
2. Quality affordable housing: I recently introduced legislation A10170 to require the State Division of Housing and Community Renewal to verify that there are no more than A, no B, and C housing code violations on the property prior to authorizing a rent increase based on major capital improvement in rent controlled and rent stabilized apartments. The 2012-13 budget increases funding for essential preservation programs by \$2.2 million. A total of \$14.3 million will be dedicated to the construction and rehabilitation of quality, affordable housing. More than \$10 million is earmarked for the Neighborhood Preservation Program and \$4.2 million for the Rural Preservation Program. Last year, the programs were funded at \$8.48 million and \$3.54 million, respectively.
3. Public Safety: public safety and crime reduction are one of the most important issues affecting New Yorkers. For this reason, I introduced legislation A8198 "Safe Street Security Camera Registry Act" to create a registry of cameras located in public spaces for the purpose of public safety enforcement. I also voted in favor of legislation A10712 to prohibit bullying and cyberbullying in public schools.
4. Education: This year, I supported the passage of the 2012-13 State Budget which increased school aid by \$805 million statewide and \$292 millions for New York City schools. It also increased community college base aid for the first time in five years (A.9057-D).
5. Senior Citizens: I also voted to pass a restoration of co-payment assistance for the EPIC enrollees in the 2012-13 state budget ([A.9056-D](#)). New Yorkers, including seniors in my district, continue to struggle in these tough economic times. It was important to restore EPIC funding in the 2012-13 state budget to make sure that many seniors can pay for their medications and that they receive assistance during the hard times they are facing.

TOP FIVE 2012 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS

1. Help create programs and support legislation that provide more affordable housing for New Yorkers
2. Support legislation that enforce ethical behavior and increase accountability and transparency
3. Support more educational and after school programs and increase funding
4. Continue to support and propose legislation for public safety improvement
5. Ensure New Yorkers have access to the best health care possible by supporting and/or proposing legislation to improve our health care system

Please return to: Citizens Union, Local Candidates Committee
 299 Broadway, Suite 700 New York, NY 10007
 via fax to 212.227.0345 or via email to policy@citizensunion.org
 Call us at 212-227-0342 with any questions.