



**CITIZENS UNION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
COMPTROLLER
ELECTION 2009**

Citizens Union would appreciate your response 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: Melinda Katz

Age: 43

Campaign Address: 321 Broadway 6th Floor
New York City, NY 10007

Campaign Telephone Number: (646) 506 - 9540

Fax: (646) 360 - 5035

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat

Campaign Manager Name: Jonathan Trichter

Website & Email: www.melindakatzforny.com

Education: Graduated from the University of Massachusetts in 1987.
Received law degree from St. John's School of Law in 1990.

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): I have been a New York City Councilmember for almost eight years

Previous Offices and Campaigns: New York State Assembly -- 1994 special election, 1994, 1996,
United States House of Representatives -- 1998
New York City Council -- 2001, 2001

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES NO
Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings? YES NO

Signature of Candidate: Melinda Katz Date: 8 - 24 - 09

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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| 1. 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 |
| 2. What is your position on reforming the current pension funding structure to create multiple tiers for future city government employees? | Support | <u>Oppose</u> |
| 3. In general, what is your position on term limits for elected officials? | Support | <u>Oppose</u> |
| 4. What is your position on modifying the City Charter to require that changes to term limits may only be approved by the voters? | Support | <u>Oppose</u> |
| 5. 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. | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |

I have never been in favor of term limits; I have always felt they imply that voters are ill-equipped to make their own informed choices.

I have been elected to public office five times and every time I have run as a candidate on the record for being against term limits. I felt it would have been dishonest for me to vote in favor of term limits.

6. What is your position regarding managing pension fund investments and the regulation of pension intermediaries, particularly given recent events surrounding the issue at the state level?

I support the recent ban on placement agents instituted by New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli and New York City Comptroller Bill Thompson.

Also, I do not believe that major public pension funds should ever operate under a sole trustee. I support the system in place in New York City where pension boards invest the City's pension funds with the assistance of the New York City Comptroller, but we must pursue reforms that address the inefficiencies associated with current operations.

7. How would you utilize the Comptroller's auditing power to ensure that government agencies are efficiently delivering services, especially given fewer resources?

As New York City Comptroller, I will increase the budget of the Comptroller's Audit Bureau, which will allow my office to identify more government waste and save New York

City money. My audit bureau's first responsibility will be to identify, and establish methods to correct, enough government waste to pay for itself and its increase in funding. My experience as both an Assemblywoman and a City Councilwoman has given me the experience needed to understand how and where to best utilize the office's audit power.

My time in public service has also given me the insights required to correct wasteful spending quickly. When elected City Comptroller, I will also utilize the Comptroller's newly acquired power to audit the Department of Education to identify wasteful spending and make sure our tax dollars are being spent in the classroom educating our children. The New York City Department of Education has an almost \$20 billion a year budget and currently awards more no-bid contracts than any other City agency.

8. What do you believe is the appropriate role of the Comptroller's office in auditing the Department of Education?

I applaud the State Senate, State Assembly and Governor for including many necessary reforms in the recently passed legislation that reauthorizes mayoral control of the Department of Education. I have also been in favor of granting the New York City Comptroller the power to audit the Department of Education for several years now. I have written letters, spoken out publicly and even worked to introduce a resolution in the City Council that called on Albany to grant the New York City Comptroller the power to audit the Department of Education.

The New York City Department of Education awards more no-bid contracts than any other City agency. The appropriate role of the City Comptroller is to use her audit power to identify waste and mismanagement in the Department of Education. It is her job to make sure our tax dollars actually make it to the classroom and are used efficiently to educate New York City's public school children. I believe that the New York City Comptroller must also use the office's audit power to review the statistics kept by the Department of Education regarding school, teacher and student performance. Given the weight these performance statistics are given in determining the future of the city's schools, it is essential that there is independent oversight and it is the role of the City Comptroller to provide that independent scrutiny.

9. 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 do you think should be done to address the MTA's fiscal solvency issues and ensure that the burden for funding the MTA are equitably distributed amongst all stakeholders?

I believe that the New York City Comptroller should have full audit authority over the MTA. State audits of the MTA have revealed a history of inefficiency waste and questionable accounting practices. Granting the City Comptroller audit power would improve oversight and lead to greater efficiency at the MTA. It is also essential that New York State and New York City work to create new revenue streams for funding the MTA. I support most of the Ravitch Plan, as it is essential that we ensure the MTA's fiscal solvency while continuing to expand subway and bus service in the outer boroughs. It is also essential that we require future funding allocated to the MTA for capital projects to actually be spent on capital projects and not used to finance the agencies' operating costs.

I support the 7-train expansion and the 2nd Avenue Subway. I also support government policies to create new revenue streams that would allow us to continue to expand public

transportation. I strongly support the Ravitch Commission recommendations for a new regional mobility tax.

I also support the reinstatement of a commuter-tax that would be specifically earmarked for funding public transportation. New York State could also increase its motor vehicle registration fees and index it so that the cost of the fee would depend upon the gas mileage of the motor vehicle being registered. Doing so would raise revenue for public transportation and help the environment by discouraging people from driving cars with poor gas mileage.

10. What would you propose to address some of the structural imbalances in the current budget process?

I believe that the New York City Council, New York City Comptroller and the public must have a greater role in New York City's budget process. As City Comptroller, I will issue clear reports on the City's finances and the Mayor's proposed budget. Currently the budget documents given to the Council only assign dollar amounts to programs that the administration proposes to cut in the executive budget. To make matters worse, the units of appropriations used by the Council can be removed when they issue public documents, and there is not enough transparency for the public regarding New York City debt issuances and future debt schedules.

11. 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?

This year New York City was not able to use surplus tax revenues to pay down future healthcare and pension obligations because New York City did not have surplus tax revenues. In previous years, I have supported the practice of using surplus revenues to pay down future obligations. I believe that during periods of prolonged economic growth, government must use surpluses to hedge against future economic downturns. Paying down future obligations during periods of growth allows government to spend more to stimulate the economy during periods of economic stagnation. The City's past practice of using surplus tax revenues to pay down future healthcare and pension obligations is one of the major reasons New York City is facing more manageable budget deficits than most municipalities across the United States.

12. 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?

The first thing I would do to increase transparency at the Board of Elections is to end the practice of partisan appointments to the New York City Board of Elections. Instead of appointing Democratic and Republican representatives, all appointees to the Board of Elections should be non-partisan and should answer to the general public instead of a political party. I also believe appointees to the Board of Elections should serve a four-year instead of a two-year term.

To improve the management of the New York City Board of Elections the City should appoint a single officer to oversee all five of the City's county boards. This individual should be appointed by a non-partisan search panel and should be barred from seeking elective office for at least two years after leaving the position.

We must also work to bring greater public transparency to the Board of Elections. New York State should centralize information from county boards at the state level to create a clearing house for voter enrollment totals from each municipality, voting results, and absentee ballots cast. New York State must also increase resources for providing public information and communication at the state and local levels.

13. What would you propose to further enhance transparency regarding the relationships between elected officials, their families, and nonprofits that receive funding from New York City?

I believe that all nonprofits seeking government funds from New York City should have to provide detailed information about their finances and operational history before receiving any City funding. This information should include information on any relatives of elected officials that are currently or formerly employed by nonprofits either as staff members or outside consultants. All this information should be made available to the public online. I believe nonprofits should also be required to exist for at least two years before receiving any money from New York City and should be required to demonstrate that the organization is seeking funding that will provide clear benefits and value to the community.

14. 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?

The first thing I would do as New York City Comptroller is reach out to New York City's public employee unions and work with them to negotiate restructured benefits agreements that help City employees in the long run and save New York City money. A successful example from this year was with the United Federation of Teachers. Tier 5 is often offered as a solution to New York City's growing pension costs, but it is a phony solution. Reducing the pension benefits of newly hired city workers during a hiring freeze will not address the growing problem. Any real solution will have to be negotiated between the City and the City's workforce. It must also address current employees and the healthcare benefits that City workers receive.

15. 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.

I believe that City residents do not receive nearly enough value for the taxes they pay. As New York City Comptroller, I will use my office's audit authority to identify waste and mismanagement in City agencies and develop strategies to correct these problems. I believe that, given the current economic climate, New York City must explore new revenue options including changes to our tax code. This year I voted against the New York City sales tax increase because it is a regressive tax that will mostly affect New York City's poor and working class residents who are already struggling with decreased wages and record unemployment.

I do support several other tax increases that are more progressive, including increasing the personal income tax for high income New Yorkers, reinstating the commuter tax and instituting a city tax on cigars and other tobacco products as New York City has already done with cigarettes.

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 currently holds an office other than the one for which you are running,

- 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 or why have you not fulfilled those promises?
- b. what are your top five campaign promises you are making to voters during your campaign for this new position?

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

TOP CAMPAIGN PROMISES FROM 2005 AND ACTION ON THEM

1. I promised that I would continue to fight to create affordable housing for working class New Yorkers

Since joining the City Council, I have funded about 90,000 units of affordable housing.

2. I promised to continue to work to protect New York City communities from overdevelopment.

Since joining the City Council, I have down-zoned and protected 9,000 blocks from overdevelopment.

3. I promised to use my position as Land Use Chair in the New York City Council to create quality jobs for City residents.

Over the last four years, projects that I have passed through my committee have created tens of thousands of construction industry jobs. I have also worked to make sure that the service industry jobs created by projects that have passed through my committee are quality paying union jobs.

4. I promised to fight for the community to make sure that the Metropolitan Avenue Public School Campus is zoned locally, instead of citywide

The Metropolitan Avenue Public School Campus is now almost ready to open and it is zoned local for local children.

TOP FIVE 2009 CAMPAIGN PROMISES

1. I have promised to utilize the New York City Comptroller's Office to create quality jobs for City Residents

2. I have promised to utilize the Comptroller's newly acquired authority to audit the Department of Education to work to eliminate waste and inefficiency in the Department of Education
3. I have promised to utilize the New York City Pension System to stimulate New York City's Economy
4. I have promised to increase the budget of the New York City Comptroller's Audit Bureau
5. I have promised to continue the use of socially responsible investments and alternative investments to grow the New York City Pension System in this difficult economic period.