



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: David I. Weprin Age: 53

Campaign Address: 250 W. 54th Street (ground floor) NY, NY 10019

Campaign Telephone Number: (212) 582-2138 Fax: (212) 582-2820 (zip)

Party Affiliation(s): DEMOCRAT Campaign Manager Name: Eban Bronfman

Website & Email: WWW.DAVIDWEPRIN2009.COM

Education: Please see attached CV

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): Second term as City Council member

Previous Offices and Campaigns:

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" or "Endorsed Candidate" rating only to candidates we have interviewed. We will make every effort to interview candidates in this race.)

Signature of Candidate: David Weprin Date: 8/10/2009

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.

- | | | |
|---|----------------|---------------|
| 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? | <u>Support</u> | Oppose |
| 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. | Support | <u>Oppose</u> |

___ I led the fight against extending term limits without a referendum. I felt that voters should have had a say, just as they did in 1993 and 1996. I introduced a bill before the Mayor's announcement, to extend term limits only by referendum. No one elected official should reign over the will of the electorate and while I am not a fan of term limits, I believed that the Mayor's utter usurpation of power and the shameful disregard of the outcome of two public referendums was a dark day in the political history of our city.

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 have stated that I will not deal with intermediaries, only principals. I will only deal with licensed securities professionals. I would seek to ban all third party placement agents.

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

____ First, I would audit the office of the Comptroller. Second, I would use the new legislative authority to audit all outside contracts. I believe the comptroller's office should go beyond the ordinary financial audits and be involved in doing more management audits. For example, had the State Comptroller audited the State Water Commission from a management point of view the recent findings could have been found much sooner.

8. How would you maximize the power of the Comptroller's office to ensure the fiscal health and integrity of city spending?

____ As stated before, I would audit my office first to ensure it is running effectively and efficiently. Fiscal health and integrity must begin within the Comptroller's office before we go after other City Agencies. This is not to say or imply that there is no issue of integrity or question about the office currently under Bill Thompson's tenure. I would work closely with the legislature, both in the City and at the State level to ensure my office has the resources necessary to carry out the Comptroller's office's duties. I would also do a systematic review of all city contracts

9. Do you believe there needs to be improvements to the Comptroller's role and practices? How would you manage the position?

____ I believe the comptroller should not only provide the prudent and sound stewardship over the city's pension funds, but also serve a more proactive role in the investigation and audit of public and private entities. The office should also collaborate, with input from the representatives of the five pension funds, to create objective criteria in the evaluation of contract awards. The office should also engage in financial literacy programs for the general public. I believe all these cumulative efforts will help bring about positive management changes to the office and engage the public to become a more active participant in the protection of the city's pension funds and also contribute to a deeper substantive understanding of the vital role the office plays in the lifeblood of the city.

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

____ I believe that the Comptroller's office should have complete audit power of the

Department of Education. Since it is under Mayoral Control, the DOE is now considered a City agency and must adhere to all the rules and regulations as stated in the New York City Charter. It is only reasonable since part of the funding for our schools comes from City taxpayers. We must also ensure that all contracts within the DOE are executed effectively and efficiently and that taxpayers money is not being wasted.

11. 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 have taken the position of opposing congestion pricing and several of the Ravitch Commission recommendations. During the debate I proposed bringing back the commuter tax at 1%, which would have generated approximately \$1.4 billion per year. With that revenue I recommended that we split the revenue 50/50, between the City and the MTA, giving the MTA a recurring funding stream of \$700 million dollars.

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

_____ The fundamental problem with the city budget is that the current law mandates every penny earned must be spent from year to year. There is no provision for savings to be carried into the next fiscal year. I would strongly advocate that the city lobby for state legislation designed to create a "rainy day" fund. It is fundamentally flawed to continue to have a budgetary scheme which does not allow for the flexibility of diverting savings from one year for use in another. If the city had more flexibility in the way money is allocated from year to year it would give lawmakers a useful tool towards addressing shortfalls and surpluses over a longer period of time.

13. 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?

_____ A primary reason why the city decided not to pay down future health care and pension obligations is that there simply wasn't enough in revenues to do so. I was the sponsor of the Health Care Trust Fund and secured \$2.5 billion for this effort. This set aside was just one step towards a realistic approach in addressing rising health care costs for municipal retirees. I believe that it is essential in revenue surplus years to set aside some amount for both obligations. Neither

will recede nor retract over time. I also believe that by collaborating with unions to enter into voluntary efforts at reducing these obligations, we could significantly alleviate the city's burdens for future payments. Unions are an integral part of the city's fiscal health and I strongly believe if they were made a collaborative partner in coming up with solutions to these mandatory obligations, we could come up with some real and lasting long term solutions.

14. 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?

_____ Create objective evaluation criteria to determine eligibility of consultants under consideration for DOE contracts. For instance, how do we know that a consultant has put forth the most competitive bid if we do not know the length of time the consultant has done business in the particular industry, the level of experience offered, the type of clients served in the past, the reputation of the consultant from trade and other professional associations that exist in that field, the composition of workers in the consultant's business in terms of ethnicity, gender, level of professional expertise, etc. Such criteria MUST be in place under a system where the Mayor retains sole control over the DOE and has the discretion to award no-bid contracts. With objective evaluation of criteria, the opportunities for patronage and nepotism is diminished because a consultant must objectively be eligible for consideration. This would go a long way towards transparency. Transparency just allows the public to obtain information on what has taken place, what has been awarded. My proposal goes farther to allow the public to see for themselves objectively if the award was objectively reasonable and make the public more of a stakeholder in the system.

15. 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?

_____ First there needs to be continued public disclosure. Elected officials should not directly or indirectly benefit from funding that is received from the City or State governments. The only way to do this is by strengthening financial disclosure forms and make them easily available to New Yorkers via the internet.

16. What would you propose to ensure that charter mandated elected offices receive equitable budget allocations?

____ The mayor and the council should not be allowed to unilaterally decrease the funding of charter mandated elected officials.

17. 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 seek to make unions a collaborative partner in identifying voluntary concessions towards a solution. The unions have been vital to help find ways to combat fiscal shortfalls and soaring pension costs, as they did back in the last city fiscal crisis of 1975.

18. 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 New Yorkers receive very valuable services for the amount of taxes that are paid. However, many others do benefit from the superlative fire, police, transit and public safety services, to name a few, that this city has to offer. While it may be unpopular, I have proposed that we consider bringing back the commuter tax. New York city is a premier employer, with countless firms bringing workers to the city daily. All of these workers do benefit greatly from the mass transit system that is in place, the public safety available. A small increase, just a fraction of a percent, to allow us to continue to fund these valuable services, would not detrimentally impact to a great extent a corporation's decision to move out of the city, because it will not affect their corporate tax rate. While commuters may not appreciate the small increase to their taxes, it is a small price to pay to enjoy the tremendous benefit of services New York has to offer. This is similar to other non-resident use fees imposed by towns for the use of their beaches, libraries and other public benefit services.

19. 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?

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 FIVE CAMPAIGN PROMISES FROM 2005 AND ACTION ON THEM

1. Fund more schools in my school district- did so
2. Fund more senior programs-did so
3. Direct allocation of dollars to supplement arts and sports programs in city schools-proposed such
4. Initiate anti-hate crime workshops-proposed such
5. Offer small business owners information on available city programs and resources- proposed such

TOP FIVE 2009 CAMPAIGN PROMISES

1. Self Audit the Comptroller's office
2. Bring the Comptroller's office to the people with Satellite Borough Offices and implementing Financial Literacy programs
3. Protect Jobs and Homes with a small business incubator and helping families with guidance on foreclosure avoidance and loans
4. Strategic Investment by identifying opportunities in growing fields and industries
5. Demand Accountability from the Department of Education and other agencies and entities