



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: Thomas Greco Age: 36

Campaign Address: 369 West 46th Street, New York, NY 10036

Campaign Telephone Number: (917) 442-9004 Fax: N/A

Party Affiliation(s): Democratic Campaign Manager Name: Michael Oliva

Website & Email: <http://grecoforsenate.com/> / grecoforsenate@gmail.com / michaeloliva@mac.com

Education: University of Hartford / Bachelors in Finance

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office): Owner and Operator of the Ritz Lounge, Hell's Kitchen, NYC; 6 years

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: Executive Vice President, McManus Democratic Club; Board of Directors, Times Square Alliance; Executive Board Member, Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club; Member, Mid-Manhattan NAACP; Member, Restaurant Row Association.

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: Friday, July 13th, 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

<p>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?</p> <p>I support removing redistricting power from the hands of the Legislature, and placing it into the hands of an independent commission.</p> <p>In the instance of S.6698/A.9526, having a 10 member independent body determine apportionment based on census data, rather than it being determined by a legislative task force, is a logical first step towards fairer redistricting. Two members would be picked by the president of the Senate, two by the Senate Minority Leader, two by the Assembly Speaker and two by the Assembly Minority Leader. That body would in turn vote on an additional two members.</p> <p>The District I hope to represent is an excellent example of the failure of our current process. The newly formed Senate District 27 stretches from Canal Street in SOHO to West 72nd Street on the Upper West Side to East 56th Street on the Upper East Side to East 2nd Street on the Lower East Side. Further, it winds back and forth throughout Manhattan as if it were an incomplete jigsaw puzzle...</p> <p>http://www.latfor.state.ny.us/maps/2012s/fs27.pdf</p> <p>Borders determining representation should not be determined by political motivations, but instead by congruent geography, as well as sensible economic and demographic considerations.</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>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?</p> <p>I am in full support of restructuring the NYS Board of Elections. As it is currently structured, the agency is still run as a patronage mill. Under current rules, parties determine, through a firm grip on the process, who is employed by the board, as well as which employees take on positions of management, and further, commissionerships. It is an untenable collusion between two non-governmental political parties and the government they are intended to be regulated by.</p> <p>As a candidate without the majority of political club support I've found petition collection to be an extremely time consuming and arduous task. A portion of those responsible for reviewing my petition signatures at the Board of Elections will inevitably be members of several of the Democratic clubs opposing my candidacy. This is an obvious conflict of interest.</p> <p>The two major parties hold so much institutional power at the Board, and in the elective process, that it not only prevents competition from additional parties, it prevents them from fair competition from within party primaries as well.</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>

<p>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?</p> <p>For the political reality referred to in question #2, I profoundly support an easier process.</p> <p>Draconian rules invalidating signatures because a voter had earlier signed “prior” or “duplicate” petition for a candidate running for the same office should be eliminated, especially if the intention of collecting signatures is to open the process to a variety of candidates.</p> <p>Additionally, archaic rules such as invalidating signatures collected by witnesses who fail to specify their borough of residency below their witness signature have no place in an open democracy. Entire pages of signatures by confirmed registered voters should not be invalidated on technicalities such as party enrollment of the witness, errant marks, or mistakes in dating.</p> <p>To open the process we should err on the side of the intention of the petition gatherers and signers enrolled in the party for which a candidate is seeking its nomination. If the intention of the validly registered voter who signs a petition is reasonably apparent, their signature should be considered valid. While years of legal precedent are trending in this direction, it has not been enough to truly open the process and create more ballot access.</p> <p>We should also lower the number of signatures required to qualify for all respective seats. As is, prospective candidates are institutionally discouraged from running for office by the extremely daunting task of “getting on the ballot.”</p> <p>Ballot access is much less burdensome in the majority of other U.S. States. This opens the process without limiting the power of major party candidates from competing in the process, while at the same time allowing 3rd and 4th party candidates the chance to compete. The assertion that too many candidates will qualify to run is a red herring, since for the most part only candidates with the intention of running a full campaign will bother collecting nominating signatures, or further mounting a viable campaign afterwards.</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>5. What is your position on automatically granting New Yorkers on parole the ability to vote?</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>6. What is your position on amending the constitution to allow for Election Day Registration?</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>7. What is your position on amending the constitution to allow for no-excuse absentee voting?</p> <p>If one cares enough to take the time to vote by the more tedious process of absentee voting, their vote should be honored without question. As it is the process of voting absentee is institutionally designed to discourage non-election day participation. We need to set up rules to make absentee voting easier within a reasonable time frame.</p> <p>I am a firm proponent of increasing turnout however possible in a way that is legal and cost effective. Every sensible step we can take to open the electoral process to more</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>

<p>of our citizens will better the process for all of us, and inevitably improve the quality of our government.</p>	
<p>8. What is your position on instituting early voting in New York State to allow voters to cast their votes at more convenient times?</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>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?</p> <p>Turnout in special elections is alarmingly low, especially on the state level. On the city and state level there is lower turnout in special elections than there is in primaries (though on the city level special elections are non-partisan). About a quarter of New York State legislators are currently elected in special elections, which are often determined by a closed off process on the part of the two major political parties. Over the past several years, the State of New York State has had an unelected governor, lieutenant governor and comptroller, as well as a U.S. Senator.</p> <p>Turnout in special elections fluctuates between 10 and 15 percent, representing only a small portion of registered voters in each district. In short, the public is currently only marginally involved in the determination of who represents them on almost every level of government.</p> <p>Non-partisan elections on the state level will open the process to more voters, while also allowing candidates a broader range of issues and ideas with which they can campaign on.</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

<p>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?</p> <p>As a non-establishment, non-incumbent candidate, without access to typical party donor pools or wealthy affiliates, I fully support a campaign finance program with matching funds as a way to reasonably level the playing field and foster increased competition in elections.</p> <p>The amount of total contributions should be a truer determinant of political support than the wealth of each of one's individual donors. This gives a larger portion of the population a more equal voice in the electoral process, and a better chance to effectively support the candidate of their choice.</p> <p>That said, on the state and city levels I suggest reforming the CFB process by eliminating some of the more ponderous technical roadblocks in reporting and process, while at the same time keeping in mind the need for higher scrutiny of the process due to it being funded by public revenue. In other words, while rules governing filings should not be oversimplified, they should be streamlined enough to not hinder a candidate's ability to run a fully functional campaign.</p> <p>Additionally, the CFB, or a new state agency, should structure their methods of internal operation so that candidates no longer receive money well after they are able to effectively employ it towards executing a successful campaign.</p> <p>While I fully support campaign finance programs, I also see the need for their improvement. If the intention of campaign finance is to make the process of running for office easier for the under-funded, that should also be the result of their operation. If we set up a similar program on the state level we must first examine which logistical components work well, and which do not.</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>13. What is your position on lowering campaign contribution limits for legislative and statewide candidates for public office?</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>14. What is your position on restricting campaign contributions from registered lobbyists, placement agents and those who do business with the state?</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>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.)</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>

<p>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?</p> <p>It is integral that we do not allow soft money loopholes to undermine the effectiveness of campaign finance, which would give candidates intentionally subverting the spirit of the system a disproportionate advantage to those following the rules.</p> <p>As for housekeeping accounts, I believe that when a candidate raises money there exists between them and the donor an assurance that the funds donated will be spent towards the campaign, and not towards items of personal convenience or towards fallacious expenses without limit.</p> <p>If a candidate is allowed to accrue limitless sums of money for housekeeping, only to funnel that money into their campaign, they are perpetrating a fraud on both their donor base, opposing candidates, and the public in general.</p> <p>The more we can do to reform the fundraising process the better.</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>17. What is your position on requiring candidates to include full name, home address, and employer/business name for each contribution and bundler?</p> <p>Casting sunlight and transparency on who may be influencing a candidate’s future decision making is an essential component of enforcing legislative and executive accountability. The more we can examine the war chests of our candidates and elected officials, the better we will be able to examine the possible motivations behind their actions, and what may be motivating their policies.</p> <p>As noted earlier, we should also make the process of reporting as simple as possible, so that we can have immediately facile access to their records.</p> <p>Disclosure is one of several effective methods of gauging independence of action in an elected official.</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM (CONTINUED)

<p>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?</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>19. What is your position on stricter requirements on the use of campaign contributions for non-campaign related activity, such as personal use?</p> <p>As earlier noted, I believe the abuse of campaign finances breaches the trust between the donor and the candidate they donate to, and the public who entrusts candidates and elected officials with taxpayer matching funds designed for the express purpose of campaign operations.</p> <p>We should take every step possible to ensure this personal and public trust is not eroded by personal greed or unethical decision-making.</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
<p>20. What is your position on improving disclosure of independent expenditures such as requiring disclosure of electioneering activities and linking expenditures to candidates targeted?</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>

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/Oppose
22. What is your position on creating an enforcement entity independent of the State Board of Elections to oversee campaign finance laws?	Support/Oppose

JUDICIAL REFORM

<p>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?</p> <p>As our system stands, most Civil and Supreme Court Judges are elected rather than appointed by a panel of professionals. However, to call the current process a truly elective one would be a misnomer. For the most part, there aren’t many competitive primary contests for Civil Court, and very seldom a viable opponent to the candidate winning the Democratic Primary, if one at all, in the General Elections. Supreme Court judges are elected by party insiders in a closed off convention system which favors “politics” over merit. This means that on both levels the important decision of who sits as a judge is largely made by party clubhouse leaders.</p> <p>Many New Yorkers are unaware that we elect Judges, and the overwhelming majority of these New Yorkers do not believe that elections are the best, or even an appropriate way for New York to choose its judges.</p> <p>Civil, Surrogate, or Supreme Court Court Judge are positions of importance and prestige, and the determination as to who should sit in Civil, Surrogate or Supreme Court should be made by non-partisan merit selection. New Yorkers deserve the most competent and dedicated jurists available to serve in a challenging system that is heavily overburdened. While we have elected some great Judges in New York, the current system all too often results in mediocre candidates being selected for reasons that have little to do with tangible or applicable experience and education.</p> <p>Elections often force candidates to raise money from lawyers and law firms that are seeking to win influence over those they helped to elect. Judges should not be selected based on money or politics. They should not begin their careers on the judiciary as politicians, or have to act as such to achieve their judgeships, and they should not be put in the position of having to raise money in order or curry favor with local political leaders.</p> <p>The current system essentially allows District Leaders and their political clubs to dictate who is chosen to become a Civil Court Judge, and that in turn puts judicial independence in jeopardy. Qualified candidates unwilling to ‘play ball’ with the politicians are discouraged from even attempting to run in a primary. Local political clubs and their leaders often consider judgeships as a reward to be doled out for political loyalty.</p> <p>There are those who argue that even nonpartisan merit selection is subject to political manipulation. While there is some inevitable truth to this, I argue that it would be far superior to the current system of elections, which all too often encourages the imprudent doling out of seats by party bosses with unsavory motivations.</p> <p>The fact that no system is perfect should not disable our motivation to aim for perfection. While neither system is without its flaws, the appointment of judges based on merit is a significantly better way to ensure we have qualified candidates taking the bench, while at the same time preserving the integrity of our courts and eliminating even so much as the appearance that political or monetary impropriety are influencing</p>	<p>Support/Oppose</p>
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which judges we select.	
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/Oppose

ETHICS REFORM

25. What is your position on empowering the Attorney General to investigate and prosecute cases involving public corruption, including serious election law malfeasance?	Support/Oppose
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/Oppose

BUDGET REFORM

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/Oppose
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/Oppose
29. What is your position on the use of Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) rather than cash accounting for the state budget? As a candidate who has made open elections, and open process (on my literature), and eliminating as much as possible fraud and waste in New York State (also on my literature) one of the centerpieces of my campaign, I believe consistent, and above board, accounting standards such as GAAP, or GASS for auditing, are an imperative piece in achieving that goal.	Support/Oppose
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? In essence, S. 7007/A10116 will empower state agencies to oversee the spending of allocated discretionary funds, with a component requiring members to publicly report the usage of distributed member items. I believe this will go a long way in reforming how member items, or discretionary funds, are distributed. To prevent abuse of taxpayer money, and to ensure the integrity of public decision making, by elected officials, it is essential we set standards for the way appropriations are awarded and reported. The disproportionate distribution of such funding inevitably erodes the integrity of our legislative bodies. In addition, awarded legislative grants, along with the name of the recipient groups and the sponsoring legislator, must be made public 24 hours in advance of budget approval to allow for public comment. The bill also calls for legislators and member item recipients to report any possible conflicts of interest in advance of budget approval. Pre-certification by the Attorney General for groups wishing to receive member items is another sound component of this legislation, since it requires the verification of the organization's tax status, and compliance with having filed the mandatory annual report on any previously received legislative grants.	Support/Oppose
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/Oppose

32. What is your position on instituting a later start date for the state fiscal year?	Support/ Oppose
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 /Oppose

ADDITIONAL REFORM

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/ Oppose
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 /Oppose

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.

See above.

II. CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS

As a candidate who presently does not hold elected office, CU is interested in knowing your top five campaign promises or goals you are making to the voters during this campaign for this position.

If elected, Citizens Union will use these promises or goals 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 2012 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS

1. Build more affordable housing: I would like to bring a new program to New York State modeled after the Mitchell-Lama program, which to this day stands as was one of the most successful housing programs ever established here. In a similar model we can work with developers to make it fiscally advantageous for them to build new affordable housing, while strictly regulating that they do so through tax incentives and legislation.

In strained economic times like these, making affordability a component of all new construction is crucial to keeping people, and a tax base, living in our city, and to providing people working here, like teachers, police officers and firemen, a decent place to reside within the community in which they work. Mitchell-Lama Housing was originally built to house middle-income and lower middle-income workers like these, which improved the communities for the better. As an example, if a police officer knows the children in the neighborhood he will be much less apt to “stop and frisk”

them unreasonably, or to distrust them, or suspect them of crimes they are not committing. In turn, the children will more respect the officer knowing he is from their community, and relates to their neighborhood's problems. The same would go for teachers and the children they teach. They will be able to relate to their culture, mindset and personal issues much better if they share the concerns of the communities they serve, in turn providing children with a better quality of education.

In addition, this will provide jobs if we also work to strengthen and reform Wicks Law, ensuring that jobs are "spread out" among many employers.

Another aspect of housing I would like to encourage is that we value aesthetics, landscaping/open space and spatial relations in all new architecture. People will often treat the place where they live as a result of how it makes them feel psychologically and socially. If you treat people poorly by housing them in drab, confined and isolated surroundings, they will have a lack of respect for their surroundings, and in turn their communities. If we provide people with a home they care about it will change how they treat themselves and others. It is in essence a matter of personal and physical health. This goal can be achieved by including a 60/40 component in all new luxury construction.

2. Create green jobs for local businesses, better transportation and infrastructure: As a small business owner, I believe in providing tax incentives to businesses for increased recycling, community greening and green construction, and the use of alternative energy sources such as solar panels and windmills.

I also believe we should incorporate green technology into new construction in infrastructure. New York State's public facilities, roads and bridges are crumbling. We can provide jobs statewide by publicly funding much needed construction projects. In turn, the increased tax revenues collected as a result of these jobs can do much to close the budget gap.

A great way to subsidize these projects would be to include private interests in the innovation and technology portions of these projects. We should include, through tax incentives, the development of local green businesses located within New York State. These businesses will in turn employ more people, further growing revenue pools.

We're also victim to an outdated and energy wasting rail system, which encourages more cars on the road, further exacerbating environmental problems due to carbon emissions. I would like to

build a high-speed rail system in cooperation with other states and the federal government. This system will provide temporary and ongoing jobs throughout its construction, and permanent jobs upon its completion. Private companies will be encouraged to buy ad space in order to further subsidize the transportation system. Entities large and small can bid on green energy solutions through a fair and open process, which will help to power the system, and reduce environmentally hazardous consequences.

There is no reason that in the 21st Century New York cannot be at the forefront of green technology and innovation. It provides jobs, improves our lives, and makes a healthier world for people, their families, and communities.

3. Expand and improve healthcare: While I am a supporter of President Obama's Affordable Care Act, I do not think it goes nearly far enough in addressing the country's healthcare concerns and out of control costs. It is my goal to bring a public option to New York, similar to the successful program that has been instituted in San Francisco. The plan passed by President Obama does not provide a true public option, which can compete in the marketplace with private plans. As it stands now, Americans will be mandated to purchase health insurance, which will be enforced through the tax code.

Healthcare should be treated as a right, not a profit seeking luxury. If there is any matter that requires public funding, it is healthcare. A public option will place great pressure on insurance companies to compete and lower their prices, giving taxpayers a choice of better options with which to sustain their good health.

We must also educate the public on healthy eating and exercise, and the need to see a physician yearly. Preventative healthcare, as well as the healthy maintenance of our environment (see goal #2), will save the State billions of dollars in costs in the long run, which is good for our well being physically, and for the financial health of New York.

The average time spent waiting in a Manhattan emergency room is now 5 hours, comparable to the wait times in states like Mississippi. This is unacceptable. There has to be a better way than either emergency room care or private insurance remedies. A public option on the state level can be that way.

4. **Reform elections/open processes:** Provide matching funds on a statewide level, and full disclosure of all fundraising, including PACS and “Super PACS.” Make ballot access less tedious and more open to non-insider candidates. Create non-partisan elections.

5. **Eliminate Albany fraud and waste:** The problem that exists in the New York State Senate is that while it does have an Oversight Committee it is run much less successfully, and is much less active, than the Assembly’s. I want to bring the will to investigate to this body so that taxpayer money is being spent as wisely as possible.

**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.**