

**CITIZENS UNION CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE
MAYORAL
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:

Tony Avella

Age:

58

Campaign Address:

2 Prince St., #6006
Brooklyn, NY 11211

Campaign Telephone Number:

(718) 855-7035

Party Affiliation(s):

Democrat

Campaign Manager Name:

Christian Schneider

Website & Email:

<http://www.tonyavellaformayor.com>

info@tonyavellaformayor.com

Education:

Hunter College, CUNY, B.A in political science

Occupation/Employer (or years in currently held elected office):

City Council Member since 2001.

Previous Offices and Campaigns:

(In order from most recent to least recent)

- Chief of Staff for State Senator Toby Stavisky
- Chief of Staff for State Senator Leonard Stavisky
- Aide to Mayor David Dinkins
- Aide to Mayor Ed Koch
- Aide to New York City Council Member Peter Vallone, Sr.

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee?

YES

Have you completed requisite campaign finance filings?

YES

(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:



Date:

08/19/09

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.

1. What is your position with respect to allowing voters who are registered as an independent to vote in party primaries? Support

2. What is your position on the passage of state legislation that would allow referenda initiated by

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| <p>the City Council and/or by citizens to appear on the ballot at the same time as when there is a charter reform proposal initiated by a charter commission appointed by the Mayor?</p> | Support |
| <p>3. 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?</p> | Support |
| <p>4. What is your position on allowing campaign financing for ballot proposals?</p> | Support |
| <p>5. What is your position with respect to increasing the limit on the number of charter schools permissible under state law?</p> | Oppose |
| <p>6. What is your position on changing the current land use process under ULURP to limit the role of community-based planning?</p> | Oppose |
| <p>7. 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?</p> | undecided |
| <p>8. What is your position on restructuring New York’s election administration structure to eliminate most aspects of the two-party system, including the appointment of local and State boards of elections, which currently controls the existing operational structure?</p> | Support |

9. 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? Oppose

10. What is your position regarding the creation of a Charter Revision Commission to review the roles of the various offices of government to evaluate how best to effectively deliver government services? Support

10. What is your position on term limits for elected officials? Support

11. What is your position on modifying the City Charter to require that changes to term limits may only be approved by the voters? Support

12. 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. Oppose

I strongly opposed the extension of term limits because it ignored the twice-stated will of the voters. The push for term limits was also a prime example of politicians putting their own interests above the interests of the public they are supposed to serve. I helped to lead the opposition to the extension of term limits in the City Council.

13. What is your position with respect to the State Legislature establishing a state constitutional convention in advance of the next regularly

scheduled state constitutional convention?

Support

a. If support, what are the three most important areas that need improvement?

- Term limits for state elected officials
- Campaign finance reform
- Ensuring that all vacancies for state offices must be filled by a special election, taking away the governor's power to appoint officials

14. How do taxes paid by New Yorkers compare to the value that is received in 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, listed in order of greatest magnitude.

I believe that the regressive sales tax and property taxes should be lowered. I also believe that it is possible to lower taxes without reducing City services, by identifying alternative sources of revenue and eliminating waste in city government

15. Many policy advocates champion the creation of a more diversified economy, and one that is less reliant on Wall Street. Do you support such a plan? If so, how would you adjust spending in New York City to accommodate the reduction in tax revenue as the tax base shifts to lower paying jobs?

We can increase the number of jobs in the city by strengthening small business and rebuilding a new manufacturing base prepared to compete in the twenty-first century market.

16. What is your position on reforming the current pension funding structure to create multiple tiers for future city government employees?

I believe it is inappropriate to ask union workers to take lowered pension plans before we have taken a comprehensive review of the role of city agencies, made a concerted effort to eliminate waste, and sought out alternative sources of revenue.

If there is still a gap after we have done these things then we may have to consider cutting pensions and benefits. However, these cuts should be the city's last resort.

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, of which \$39 billion was derived

from New York City tax revenues. Are the pension obligations of the City of New York appropriately balanced with what is owed to retired workers, and to New York City tax payers?

There is always a constant battle between the two. All of those things are negotiated from year to year, depending on the amount of revenue. It is in constant fluxuation. Realistic substantive review of what the city can accommodate in terms of pensions and benefits, but I don't believe that has ever been done.

18. Given the current fiscal climate and its effect on economic development in the City, what measures would you propose to restore New York's vitality as an economic engine for New York and the country?

Strengthening small business and increasing the manufacturing base of the city. Many cities in Europe are already creating green energy technology and other products in growing, twenty-first century industries. New York City should follow their lead and avoid relying too heavily on Wall Street and the FIRE sector, the instability of both of which has recently been demonstrated.

19. How would you implement budget cuts that are spread as equally as possible across all agencies while balancing that with the need to ensure city agencies can still deliver services to New Yorkers?

All agencies are not equal. In times of budget deficits, decisions regarding which services should be cut must be done on an agency by agency basis, because not all agencies are equal. This presupposes that a comprehensive review of all city agencies and their work and their mission have been done so that an appropriate analysis can be done.

You have some basis to make cuts if and when there is a budget deficit. You can't equate the fire or police dept with the dept of consumer affairs

20. What would you propose the Department of Education to do increase the ability for parents and teachers to become involved in meaningful ways in the education system? What other positive changes can be made to the New York City public school system?

If I'm elected, I'll begin a series of meetings with all stakeholders, including parents and teachers and principles, in which we will discuss which aspects of the system work well and which need adjustment. I believe that these stakeholders, who engage with the system every day, can offer valuable direction to policy makers.

When I have collected enough input from stakeholders to create a coherent set of policy proposals, I will send that information to Albany for approval.

21. How would you propose the city deal with affordable housing?

My proposals for creating more affordable housing include the following:

-Changing the way the AMI (area median income) numbers are calculated so that the threshold for affordability reflects the income of a neighborhood's actual residents. The way this is currently done includes relatively wealthy suburban areas that inflate the AMI number and make the resulting housing less affordable to local communities.

-A recent study by the homeless advocacy group Picture the Homeless found that there are enough vacant apartments in Manhattan alone to house the entire homeless population of the City. I have been working on legislation that would create incentives for landlords to put this housing on the market, which would make housing more affordable by increasing supply.

-Repeal the vacancy decontrol laws that have allowed landlords to irresponsible hike rents on tenants.

22. 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?

Creating more transparency would probably involve hiring employees from outside of the two main political parties that dominate the board today. These could be people from third parties or people from civil service.

23. 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?

For far too long, the city's budgetary process has been shrouded in secrecy as a direct result of the practice of discretionary funding by both the Council and the Mayor. There has been little transparency to this process and recent events have brought to light the inappropriate manner in which taxpayer dollars are allocated to various groups throughout the city.

I am currently developing legislation that would change the way nonprofits receive City money. The bill would amend budget provisions so that funding for groups larger than \$50,000 can only be allocated through the budget as line items, not through the use of discretionary funds.

This would eliminate the type of corruption we have seen this summer by removing allocations of money from the responsibility of individual legislators and making these decisions more open and transparent.

24. 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?

The first step must be to make the MTA a City agency or to give NYC majority control. Otherwise, all policies we suggest will remain mere recommendations that the MTA can choose to ignore.

25. 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?

Yes, I do. I would like to see the City have greater control over the MTA and be able to set its own traffic regulations instead of using the federal ones, which do not suit New York City's unique traffic conditions.

Some legislation I've written on this issue includes Res 1640-2008, which would amend the State Municipal Home Rule Law (MHRL) to give the City the authority to provide in its Charter that any change in the City's term limits law must be subject to voter referendum, and Res 0495-2006, which would amend the Municipal Home Rule Law by placing limitations on the number of consecutive charter revision commissions that may be created by the Mayor of the City of New York pursuant to Municipal Home Rule Law §36(4).

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. A major commitment I made was to restore people's faith in their elected officials. I did this through fighting the extension of term limits and the unethical pay raise in the City Council.
2. I continued and followed up on my promise to rezone the district in order to prevent overdevelopment and out-of-character construction. The seventh and last rezoning in my council district is now about to begin, which will complete the rezoning of the entire district.
3. I made a commitment to follow up on constituent services and quality of life issues. I have done that through an office dedicated to quality of life issues and I have consistently conducted outreach through my civic action "checklist." Thousands, if not tens of thousands, of complaints have been addressed during my time as Council member.
4. I promised to maintain Northeast Queens's high standard of education, and I followed through on that promise. I worked with the parents association, teachers, and principals, to make sure that schools were operating properly. I also obtained millions of dollars for capital improvements including a new auditorium, new information technology, new wiring, and so on.
5. I promised to expand the landmarking of properties in the Council District and

followed through on this promise as well. I was able to obtain landmark designation for a portion of Douglaston Hill, which ended a 14-year battle for designation.

TOP FIVE 2009 CAMPAIGN PROMISES

1. I will fire Joel Klein, hire an experienced educator as Chancellor of the Department of Education, and hold a series of stakeholder meetings to gather input and set the direction for the reform of the Department.
2. I will be an advocate for small business in New York City and will work towards the regulation of commercial leases.
3. I will create affordable housing through modification of the AMI rules, creating incentives for landlords to put vacant apartments on the market, and requiring developers who develop over the zoning limits to build a certain amount of affordable housing.
4. I will help to instill New Yorkers' faith in their city government by bringing ethics and principle back to the Mayor's office.
5. _____