



Candidate Questionnaire
Local Candidates Committee
NYS Legislative Elections 2018

Citizens Union appreciates your response to the following questionnaire related to policy issues facing New York State, and our interest in reforming state government. **Please return the questionnaire to us as soon as possible, and no later than July 1st.** Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for the New York State Legislature, and to issue our preference for the Primary and endorsement for the General Election. Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.

If you seek our support, we will also need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process. **Please contact us if you wish to be interviewed.**

We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues.

We thank you very much for your response.

Biographical Information

Candidate Name: Harvey Epstein

Party Affiliation(s): Democratic

Age: 54

Education: J.D., CUNY Law School; B.A., History, Political Science - Ithaca College

Office Sought/District: State Assembly, 74th District

Occupation/Employer:

Currently member of the Assembly.

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

Formerly: Associate Director, Urban Justice Center; Community, Development Director, Urban Justice Center; Associate Director, Housing Conservation Coordinators; Staff Attorney, The Legal Aid Society; Community Board 3 Member; PTA President, the Neighborhood School; Co-President, CoDA

Campaign Contact Information

Campaign Manager Name: Divya Sundaram

Additional Staff Contact:

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If elected, which legislative conference will you join (e.g., Republican, Democrat, other)?

Democrat

I. AFFIRMATIONS

Have you completed required campaign finance filings?	YES / NO
Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee?	YES / NO
<i>(Please note: interviews are prerequisites for Citizens Union endorsements.)</i>	
Signature of Candidate: s/Harvey Epstein	Date: 6/29/18

II. CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

Please state whether you support or oppose the following reform measures, and feel free to may elaborate in the space provided at the end or on additional paper.

2018 PRIORITY ISSUES:

ETHICS

1. Limit outside compensation earned by state legislators and statewide officials to 25% of their salaries, while enacting a salary increase and eliminating stipends.	Support / Oppose
2. Reform the Joint Commission on Public Ethics to eliminate the ability of one party to veto an investigation and to increase disclosure of its decision-making.	Support / Oppose

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

3. Do you support or oppose the following changes to the state's current registration and voting system? a. Early voting b. No-excuse absentee voting c. Election Day voter registration d. Re-enfranchisement of people on parole automatically <u>through legislation</u> , without requiring a Certificate of Good Conduct or Relief e. Automatic voter registration, unless the potential voter opts out f. Consolidated state and federal primaries g. Electronic poll books	a. Support/Oppose b. Support/Oppose c. Support/Oppose d. Support/Oppose e. Support/Oppose f. Support/Oppose g. Support/Oppose
4. Reform the special election process, utilizing a nonpartisan special election for state legislative seats and eliminate delays in filling vacancies.	Support / Oppose

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

5. Establish public financing of campaigns for state legislative and statewide offices using a method similar to New York City's Campaign Finance Law.	Support / Oppose
6. Close the LLC loophole to ensure that limited liability companies have the same contribution limits as corporations, rather than the higher limit for individuals.	Support / Oppose

7. Drastically reduce campaign contribution limits and reduce them even further from registered lobbyists and those who do business with the state.	Support / Oppose
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BUDGET PROCESS

8. Require full disclosure of grants and contracts issued by the state, including the budget lines from which the spending is made and reporting on the results of each grant or contract over a certain amount.	Support / Oppose
9. Provide for adequate online disclosure and itemization of spending from elected officials' lump sum appropriations, including reporting on potential conflicts of interest and how the funds are spent.	Support / Oppose

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

10. Repeal Civil Rights Law, Sec. 50-a, which shields from public view the disciplinary records of police officers, correction officers, and firefighters.	Support / Oppose
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ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

11. Restructure the state Board of Elections to abolish the strict two-party division of governance and operation and putting in place professional, nonpartisan administration. Restructure the state Board of Elections to abolish the strict two-party division of governance and operation and putting in place professional, nonpartisan administration.	Support / Oppose
12. Empower the attorney general to investigate and prosecute election law malfeasance and cases of public corruption.	Support / Oppose

HOME RULE

13. Make mayoral control of city schools permanent, with a governance system that provides for accountability, transparency, parent engagement, and democratic participation.	Support / Oppose
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Local communities have been disenfranchised by mayor control. I support a strong central system with meaningful local control to ensure diversity and real parent and community engagement.

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.

Many New Yorkers struggle to get to the polls on Election Day. Sometimes, this is an accessibility issue (voters who are elderly, disabled, chronically ill, or caring for young children face extra challenges in getting to their polling places). In many cases, work schedules conflict with voting hours, which puts wage workers at a disadvantage because they may be forced to choose between voting and earning money. Regardless of the cause, expanding access to early voting (3a) and implementing no-excuse absentee voting (3b) helps

address these issues and ensure that people remain fully franchised whatever their life circumstances.

People on parole should automatically be re-enfranchised without the need for a Certificate of Good Conduct (3d)

People on parole face many challenges reintegrating themselves into society, and cutting them off from participating in their democracy exacerbates that struggle. A system that continues to push people out of society rather than allowing them to fully rejoin once they have served their time harms the health of our democracy as a whole, and perpetual loss of franchise is an unfair way to punish people's mistakes. Enjoying the full privileges of citizenship should not be conditional on compliance with certain definitions of good conduct.

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

In addition to evaluating stances on the issues above, Citizens Union also assesses incumbents on how well they kept the promises made to voters during the previous election.

As an elected official who is seeking re-election,

- 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?
- what are the top five promises you are making to the voters during this campaign?

Please feel free to use additional paper if the space provided is not sufficient, and to affix additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements. We thank you very much for your response.

TOP FIVE CAMPAIGN PROMISES FROM LAST ELECTION AND ACTION ON THEM

1. Fix the MTA for more reliable bus and subway service

2. Expand and preserve affordable housing

3. Champion economic and social justice initiatives

4. Fight for fair funding in NYC public schools

5. Improve voting access and transparency in government

Past Campaign Promises: Extended Info

1. As a New York City resident, I am unfortunately familiar with the shortcomings of our public transportation. With an annual ridership of over 2.6 billion, **fixing the MTA** is crucial to help the city and state keep moving forward. This project was and remains one of my top priorities. So far, much of my work on this issue as an assemblyman has focused on ensuring that people have their voices heard and advocating for improvements. In May, just a few days after my inauguration, I hosted a press conference advocating for handicap accessibility on the L train and throughout the MTA subway system. I look forward to future opportunities to improve the system, both through legislation and through advocacy.
2. I have spent almost my entire career advocating for fair housing policies and tenant rights. My top priority upon taking office was to **alleviate the New York City housing crisis**. While this is an enormous issue that will take consistent, sustained effort to solve, I am proud of the actions I have taken to address the problem so far. I cosponsored the Assembly bill to repeal vacancy deregulation (A09815), which is currently awaiting Senate action. I also sponsored bills to ensure that landlords would face financial consequences for providing substandard conditions (A1065), including lack of heat in winter months (A11083) and limited landlord ability to increase rents (A11104) and charge high application fees (A11076). I am working to ensure that NYCHA housing is held to a higher standard and to help people who have been hurt by substandard housing, most notably through my work on establishing NYCHA health centers that provide residents basic services and specialty care for mold exposure, lead poisoning, and respiratory illnesses (A10887). I also recently introduced a bill to establish an office of the cooperative and condominium ombudsman (A11109), and I look forward to further opportunities to chip away at the crisis and ensure that New Yorkers are guaranteed safe and fair housing for generations to come.
3. The criminal justice system often fails to provide equal treatment, biased by race and class. **Reforming the criminal justice system to improve fairness** was and remains one of my top priorities. I supported legislation to help pregnant women avoid pretrial detention regardless of their ability to pay bail (A10837) and to change marijuana possession sentencing laws (A6600). I have also joined with several of my colleagues in their efforts to legalize marijuana (A3506B), which is a particularly important step to making the justice system fair because people of color tend to face harsher penalties for marijuana-related activities. I am also taking steps to protect victims of crime—from providing services such as safe housing for victims of human trafficking (A09566) to increasing penalties for companies that criminally endanger their workers (A10728).
4. Funding for our Public Schools in New York State has been woefully inadequate for some time. As a parent of two public school educated kids, I know firsthand how a **strong public education** levels the playing field and sets our kids up for successful

futures. The funding shortfall is unconscionable and the discrepancy between funding per student in the city and the suburbs is outrageous. In addition to securing all the funds our kids are owed, we need to continue to serve them by expanding Pre-K programs, after-school programs, and increasing funding for teacher professional development.

5. After decades of community organizing and housing advocacy, I am well-acquainted with the frustrations that ordinary citizens face trying to navigate an opaque government bureaucracy. One of my top priorities now that I am working within the government system is to **increase transparency and citizen access**. I maintain a high level of engagement in my district—it's a community that I've spent most of my life in, and making sure that my neighbors' continue to have their voices heard and amplified is one of my most important duties. I have also used legislation to ensure that citizens across the state have access to their government. I've sponsored bills to update voter registration procedures (A10842 and A10843), to help those without computers access state agency mobile websites (A10843), and to ensure that public retirement systems are transparent (A11140). I'm also committed to ensuring that people's access to services is not limited by their English ability. I have cosponsored bills to ensure that housing courts provide documents in the seven most common languages in New York City (A02890) and that civil courts provide parties with documents in their native languages (A02891).

TOP FIVE 2018 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS

1. Improve, expand, and preserve decent affordable housing

2. Improve and invest in public education, with a particular goal of helping students get equal opportunities regardless of race or class

3. Fix the MTA

4. Expand voting access and election transparency

5. Social justice reform, including but not limited to bail reform



State Assembly Member Harvey Epstein
New York's 74th Assembly District

With a landslide victory in the April 24th special election, our district voted to send a new voice to Albany. Harvey Epstein is a community leader and coalition builder who is uniquely qualified to move a progressive agenda forward in the New York State Assembly, just as he's done throughout his 20-year career as a social justice lawyer.

In the two months he's been in office, he's already introduced seven new, potentially groundbreaking bills. Harvey has put forth legislation that would protect tenants and preserve affordable housing in New York City, promote environmental sustainability, and keep our streets safe and quiet. He's also continued his work as an activist, advocating alongside the community to defend reproductive rights, implement gun control, and strengthen New York's status as a sanctuary city. At his first press conference as State Assembly Member, he called on the MTA to make public transport more accessible to all New Yorkers, especially the disabled and elderly. Harvey is also working to build grassroots power within the district, encouraging constituents to get more involved in local politics.

We now have a champion in Albany who will fight for our interests—that's why we must re-elect Harvey this fall.

State Assembly Page: <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Harvey-Epstein>

Publications

- First State Assembly Newsletter:
http://nyassembly.gov/write/upload/member_files/074/pdfs/20180525_81764.pdf
- Op-Ed: “Same fight, different jersey”
<https://town-village.com/2018/06/05/opinion-assemblymember-harvey-epstein/>
- Op-Ed: “MTA should fast forward disabled accessibility in existing projects”
<https://www.cityandstateny.com/articles/opinion/opinion/mta-should-fast-forward-disabled-accessibility-existing-projects.html>

Press Links

- Fighting Predatory Landlords:
<http://thevillager.com/2018/06/07/pols-focus-on-banks-behind-predatory-landlords/>
- Increasing Accessibility in Public Transport:
<http://thevillager.com/2018/05/31/attorney-l-train-elevators-issue-could-be-settled-soon/>
- Legalize Class 1E Bikes:
<https://www.buffalorising.com/2018/06/the-push-is-on-to-legalize-class-1-e-bikes-in-nys/>

Video Links

- State Assembly Media Page:
<http://nyassembly.gov/mem/Harvey-Epstein/media/>
- Harvey Epstein: A Leader for Our Community
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjQORRbLiOZ9x-XykwmSYJQ>