

## Candidate Questionnaire Local Candidates Committee NYS 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 20th. Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for Governor of New York State, 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: Cynthia Nixon

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat

Age: 52

Education: Barnard

Office Sought: Governor

Occupation/Employer: Actor

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: Spokesperson for the Alliance for Quality Education for seventeen years.

*(Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.)*

### **Campaign Contact Information**

Campaign Manager Name: Hayley Prim

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## I. AFFIRMATIONS

Have you completed required campaign finance filings? YES **X** / NO

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES **X** / NO

*(Please note: interviews are prerequisites for Citizens Union endorsements.)*

Signature of Candidate:



Date: JULY 20, 2018

## 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 **X** / 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 **X** / 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 **Support**
  - b. No-excuse absentee voting **Support**
  - c. Election Day voter registration **Support**
  - d. Re-enfranchisement of people on parole automatically through legislation, without requiring a Certificate of Good Conduct or Relief **Support**
  - e. Automatic voter registration, unless the potential voter opts out **Support**
  - f. Consolidated state and federal primaries **Support**
  - g. Electronic poll books **Support**

4. Reform the special election process, utilizing a nonpartisan special election for state legislative seats and eliminate delays in filling vacancies. **Support**

### **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**

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**

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

### **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**

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**

### **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**

### **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.

**Support**

12. Empower the attorney general to investigate and prosecute election law malfeasance and cases of public corruption.

**Support**

## **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**

**14.** How would you seek to further restore the public's trust in government? What other steps would you take to expand transparency of state government, including the Executive Chamber?

I support dissolving JCOPE and reinstating the Moreland Commission. A committee that is run by the Governor's former aides and whose members are all appointed by partisan elected officials has no business representing itself as an independent check on Albany.

It's clear that only an independent body, free from political interference, can investigate and clean up the rampant corruption in Albany. That's why, on my first day in office, I will dissolve JCOPE and convene a new, independent Moreland Commission on public corruption to finish the work Cuomo started but abandoned. Andrew Cuomo originally convened the Moreland Commission in 2013, but abruptly shut it down after it started to investigate corruption in his own office.

As Governor, I will restore oversight of economic development by enacting the Comptroller's Procurement Bill. The bill would standardize procurement rules, and restore the State Comptroller's independent oversight of SUNY, CUNY, and OGS contracts, which was removed by Governor Cuomo. The bill would also authorize the Comptroller to approve contracts in excess of one million dollars awarded by the SUNY Research Foundation.

I will also create a statewide Database of Deals. The state spends \$4 billion annually on business subsidies through so-called "economic development" programs. Taxpayers have a right to know whether these businesses are creating the jobs that were promised, and whether the corrupting influence of political donations is swaying this process. The Database of Deals legislation, already passed by the State Senate, would create a single public database listing all state projects awarded to companies and track our return on economic development investment.

I think we can also think about police accountability and transparency in the context of faith in government.

There is a movement rising in our country to transform how we do policing. The movement is showing all Americans that in so many communities the police feel like more of an occupying force than public servants. We entrust them to carry and discharge weapons, we should be holding them to the highest standards.

We must shift away from policing as a solution to poverty and disinvestment, when government investment in things like housing and education and jobs can be the truly effective solutions to providing safety and well-being for families and communities.

After the killing of Eric Garner, the NYPD refused to tell the public about the disciplinary record of and earlier incidents of misconduct by Officer Daniel Pantaleo, who placed Garner in a chokehold and ultimately killed him.

That's why as Governor, I will press for the repeal of **Section 50-a** of state civil rights law in order to make information and records about law enforcement misconduct and discipline publicly available.

I'm also pushing for the **Police STAT Act** to have more data publicly available about patterns of arrests and stops by precinct level to make sure people's civil rights aren't being violated.

If you think of the most high-profile police killings, the victims had not been convicted of serious, violent criminal offenses or in many cases any offenses. But police departments will routinely go to the press and demonize these individuals such as mentioning that a victim of police violence had marijuana in their system at the time of their death. Meanwhile, they do everything they can to protect the awful disciplinary records of problematic officers.

As Governor, I will also press for policy that ensures law enforcement around the state **releases the names of officers** involved in shootings or killings of civilians within 48 hours of the incident. If something horrible like this happens, there needs to be a process so the community can hold their public servants accountable if there is wrongdoing.

**15.** How do you view the budget process with respect to timeliness, effectiveness, fairness, and public accountability? What improvements, if any, would you make?

I am for greater public transparency around the state budget. The three men in a room system results in too many decisions being made without public debate or even public awareness. Major decisions deserve a robust public debate and I would use my office to make sure that happens. On time budgets are important and should be the norm. There have been multiple times in recent years where there were late budgets. However, on time budgets should not be considered sacrosanct, as long as we do not return to the era when late budgets were the norm. The most important thing about a budget is its content. A budget will be in place for a year and it needs to be a good budget for New Yorkers. I oppose using 'messages of necessity' which is currently a practice too commonly used, except in a true emergency, because legislators and the public should have the full 3 days to review bills before they are passed.

**16.** Further to your responses to questions 5, 6, and 7, related to campaign finance, in the previous section, what is your view about measures to limit the role of money in elections and politics? If elected, would you set an example on campaign finance reform by voluntarily (even unilaterally) limiting the size of campaign contributions you receive by an amount significantly less than the current limit, should reforms not be enacted? If not, why not?

I believe our democracy should be a forum where every New Yorker has an equal say, and, for this reason I have refused to take money from corporations. As Governor, I will enact campaign reform to reduce the power of big money and elevate the voices of ordinary voters.

Public funding systems reduce the power of big money and elevate the voices of ordinary voters. New York state needs a voluntary system of public funding of elections for all state legislative and statewide races in order to give every voter an equal say and an equal voice in our democracy. Candidates who choose to opt into the system and can demonstrate public support would receive public matching funds. This will enable candidates without wealth to run, and will turn ordinary voters into important donors to campaigns.

Under my plan, all contributions up to \$175 from eligible natural persons residing in New York State to candidates participating in the public financing system would be matched 6-1. An enhanced match of 9-1 would apply to even smaller donors, those who make a contribution of \$50 or less. This would encourage candidates to seek truly small donors and value those small donors in the system. Under my plan, contributions would be matchable when made after January 1st of the year of the election; or in the case of special elections, when made within six months of the special election.

I would also make sure NY's contribution limits matched the federal limits, ban "Pay-to-Play" donations from companies doing business with the state or seeking state contracts, close the LLC loophole, and ban donations from political appointees.

**17.** What is your view of the state's current financial situation? Are there specific programs or revenue sources that you would consider increasing, decreasing, eliminating or creating? How will you deal with the recent federal tax law changes that limit the tax deductibility of state income and property taxes to \$10,000?

The most important decisions a state government makes revolve around the questions of taxation and spending. As is often pointed out, a state budget is as much a moral document as a fiscal statement. A budget tells you what we have decided, as a society, is most important.

I believe that the Governor's current 2% state austerity budgets have been very problematic for our state and localities in particular who have been forced to be responsible for too large of a burden of raising revenue when they are in a much more difficult position to do so in a progressive fashion than the state. The cap itself is arbitrary and has never been enacted into law or been the subject of public debate, it results in automatic cuts to program and services annually. I believe the state must increase its share of paying for some key big ticket items like schools and infrastructure, and return to a time when corporations and the wealthy paid their fair share of taxes.

I believes that providing a quality education to all our children regardless of what zip code they live in or the color of their skin is our state's most important responsibility. My birth through college Educate NY would cost \$7.367 billion. We will pay for this plan through a millionaire's tax and raising corporate taxes.

The state attempted to relieve its taxpayers of the disproportionate burdens put on blue states due to Trump's tax bill. But this issue is facing a potential federal challenge. I am prepared to litigate this on behalf of NYS. I support keeping the local property tax cap in place with some changes in how it's administered, and I also believe that if the state starts once again to pick up its its fair share of some key large costs, that this should ultimately be reflected in lower property taxes.

**18.** What would be your approach to education? How would you ensure the provision of funding needed to ensure a sound basic education under the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decisions to all of New York's school districts? What is your view on the use of standardized tests?

The Governor's refusal to address inequity has devastating consequences. Our state currently has the second highest inequality in funding between rich and poor school districts in the nation, a gap that has grown by 24 percent under Andrew Cuomo. In addition to being underfunded, schools that serve communities of color have become increasingly criminalized. Now children can come into contact with the law at a very young age in school, where suspensions for children of color are inordinately high and police are often inappropriately involved for infractions that should be addressed through lesser disciplinary approaches. Together, the underfunding and criminalization of schools that disproportionately serve children of color have created two different education systems in New York State. White, wealthy children are prepared for college, and low-income, children of color are disproportionately put into the school to prison pipeline.

Our children need schools, not jails. As Governor, I will guarantee every child a quality education, and I will also implement a birth-to-college approach to public education that allows every child to reach their full potential.

My first budget will include a plan to fully fund Foundation Aid, phased in over three years. Upon full phase in, this will increase the state's annual investment in K-12 education by \$4.2 billion. In advance of her second budget, I will appoint a commission that includes school finance experts, educators, school administrators, parents, economists and other key stakeholders to recommend updates to the Foundation Aid formula which can be enacted into law.

New York should be a leader in innovative education. Instead we have led the way on narrowing innovation by overemphasizing standardized testing. We need more reliable and valid methods than standardized tests to assess student learning and growth and to offer feedback to teachers regarding their skills and student progress and understanding. The first steps are to undo the damage that has been done. This involves:

Repealing Governor Cuomo's failed Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) which uses test scores to evaluate teachers and adds additional testing for students, testing which has no educational purpose and is solely for the purpose of evaluating teachers. Return teacher evaluations to local district responsibility using effective methods such as principal observations and peer review, and providing teacher supports to improve teaching and learning.

Respecting the Rights of Parents to Make Educational Choices for their Children: Taking or refusing the state standardized tests should be viewed as a personal choice and no parent, student or school should be punished due to a parent's choice to refuse the test for their child.

Reducing the Amount of Testing and Limiting High Stakes Consequences. I will work with the Board of Regents to undertake a review of all state and federally mandated testing and of all related high stakes consequences that punish schools, students and educators. The goals of this review will be to significantly reduce the total amount of standardized testing and eliminate high stakes consequences based upon test scores.

**19.** How do you plan to address the systemic failures of the Metropolitan Transit Authority and New York City's transportation infrastructure? What is your view of congestion pricing, both in general and as a source of revenue?

I support congestion pricing. While the MTA hasn't put out a clear number on the cost to repair their subway, we will need a dedicated revenue stream that can be reliably counted on. It is very likely that to repair an infrastructure problem this significant, we will also need multiple revenue streams. To meet those needs, we propose comprehensive congestion pricing, as well as funding from part of the revenue generated from a polluter fee and a millionaires tax.

**20.** What is your plan for ensuring that New York State's economy is effectively positioned in the years ahead to create economic opportunity and address income inequality, and with regard to the growth of the upstate economy?

We have to stop doing economic development in a way that solely hands giant tax breaks to corporations with zero strings attached. We have to invest in communities, not just corporations. As Governor, one of my top priorities will be to rebuild our crumbling roads and bridges upstate. We also have to heavily invest in renewable energy jobs and transition our economy toward 100% renewable energy. Our plan will include a major investment to create tens of thousands of good paying jobs, especially in communities of color and low-income communities most impacted by fossil fuel extraction and climate change. I also support extending the \$15 minimum wage statewide as soon as possible.

**21.** What is your view of recent federal policies as they affect New York? What should New York's Governor do, going forward, to address those issues?

One of the biggest federal issues we have to be concerned with is the attacks on our immigrant neighbors. Since 2001, undocumented New Yorkers haven't been able to get a driver's license. They often have to drive without a license, putting them at risk of deportation. Fixing this was important before Donald Trump. But with him in office—and his immigration agents using minor traffic violations to justify picking up immigrants—it's now a crisis. I will pass an executive order to restore access to drivers licenses for undocumented immigrants on Day One of my administration. I will also work with the legislature to pass the Liberty Act to stop our local law enforcement from cooperating with ICE and pass the NY DREAM Act to give access to college tuition grants for undocumented students.

We also have to resist the federal attacks on women and our health. That's why as Governor I will As Governor, I will pass the Reproductive Health Act. New York State Law has not been updated since Roe v. Wade. We must must pass the Reproductive Health Act, which will take abortion out of the criminal code; codify Roe v. Wade explicitly in our state law; ensure abortion is accessible after 24 weeks for cases where a patient's health is at risk or in instances of fetal

non-viability; and allow advanced practice clinicians to administer abortions so people living in rural areas are able to access abortion services.

I will also pass the Comprehensive Contraception Act. The Comprehensive Contraception Act will mandate that all state insurers cover FDA-approved birth control. As the Trump administration works to rollback Obama-era employer mandates, its more important than ever our state passes legislation to safeguard this right.

And I will create a Maternal Mortality Review Board. Women of color are [four times](#) more likely to die because of pregnancy or childbirth than white women. Low-income women face even higher rates of maternal mortality — 67 percent of maternal deaths from 2012 to 2013 were women with Medicaid insurance. We must strengthen health insurance for all New Yorkers by expanding Medicaid, prenatal education and social support. We must pass legislation to create a Maternal Mortality Review Board to collectively assess this dangerous disparity in maternal mortality and review each death to help inform methods for practitioners to reduce the number of women dying in pregnancy. Most important, we must develop quality-improvement toolkits and metrics to enact the recommendations of the review board.

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.

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

In addition to evaluating stances on the issues above, Citizens Union also assesses candidates on their current campaign promises and goals, and how they intend to approach them.

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 2018 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS**

1. Fully fund NY's public schools
2. Drivers Licenses for undocumented New Yorkers

3. Rent stabilization
4. Campaign Finance and Ethics Reform
5. Abolishing bail

#### **IV. ETHICAL REPRESENTATION OF CONSTITUENTS**

**Citizens Union believes that all New Yorkers deserve to be represented by officials who work for the public interest and honor the public trust. With the corruption conviction of recent legislative leaders, we seek to endorse a candidate who will demonstrate that she/he will honor the full commitment of the oath of office, and always represent the public interest above all else.**

**Please tell us how you have and would continue to conduct the political affairs of this office in an upright manner, and maintain the public trust.**

Since I'm not taking money from corporations or through the LLC loophole, I won't be accountable to the influence of dark money in our political system. One of the benefits of running a campaign based in small-dollar donors is that I am accountable to ordinary working New Yorkers at the end of the day.

Unlike the current Governor, I am not obsessed with maintaining my own power at any and all costs to the rest of New Yorkers. As Governor, I will strengthen the office of the Comptroller and Attorney General. I will restore oversight of economic development by enacting the Comptroller's Procurement Bill. The bill would standardize procurement rules, and restore the State Comptroller's independent oversight of SUNY, CUNY, and OGS contracts, which was removed by Governor Cuomo. The bill would also authorize the Comptroller to approve contracts in excess of one million dollars awarded by the SUNY Research Foundation.

Please return to: Citizens Union, Local Candidates Committee, 299 Broadway, Suite 700 New York, NY 10007 Via email to [candidates@citizensunion.org](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org) or fax to 212.227.0345 • Call us at 212-227-0342 with questions