



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: **Simon Minching**

Party Affiliation(s): **Republican**; Age: **31**

Education: **Master of Public Policy, University of Chicago; Bachelor’s (Political Science)- St. John’s University**

Office Sought/District: **State Senate, District 11**

Occupation/Employer: **Business Development, Palantir Technologies**

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

No previous offices held, or campaigns ran. Civic involvement: Little-Neck Douglaston Parade Committee (volunteer); St. Anastasia’s Church (member); Northeast Queens Republican Club (Membership Chair); Big Brother Big Sister (active mentor)

Campaign Contact Information

Campaign Manager Name: **Ryan Girdusky**

Address: **43-60 Douglaston Parkway, Apt. 614, Douglaston NY 11363**

Telephone: **646-541-5087 (personal)** Fax: **NA**

Website: **www.simonforny.com** Email: **info@simonforny.com**

Twitter: **@s_minching** Facebook: **https://www.facebook.com/simonforny/**

If elected, which legislative conference will you join: **Republican**

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: <i>Simon Minching</i>	Date: 6-26-2018

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.	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

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 b. Support c. Oppose ("e.") d. Oppose* e. Support f. Support g. 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
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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
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.	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.	Oppose
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
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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.

Ethics/Limiting Outside Compensation: Despite being one of your priority issues, I oppose this policy as constructed because it's an overly broad solution attempting to solve the relatively narrow problems of legislator commitment and corruptibility. Rational public officials stray from the public interest when they calculate that the benefits from doing so exceed the costs, adjusted by some risk factor (most simply defined as probability of failure).

It is not politically viable to raise legislators' salaries significantly in this environment, which makes the core trade-off in this proposal untenable. In addition, 33 state senators earned some sort of income according to 2016 disclosures.

Better to have extreme transparency, including a public database that ensures no legislator is employed by a firm with business interests before the state; we should continue tightening the definition of public corruption in the post-McDonnell world; and we should pass Senate Bill S7545, making it a crime to give a politician \$3000 in gifts (or to receive that same amount as a gift being a politician).

Election Day voter registration: redundant if we have automatic voter registration.

Re-enfranchisement of people on parole automatically through legislation*: Governor Cuomo has since authorized this through executive order, and I support the legislature having their say in shaping terms. However, we must have a vigorous debate on certain terms, such as whether to give the imprimatur of legislative approval to the re-enfranchisement of people on parole, in exchange for permanently disqualifying repeat offenders of vicious crimes. According to the most recent data released by the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, 46% of violent felony offenders from the 2012 cohort returned into custody within three years (although most were for parole violations). Focusing narrowly on new crime commitments within this cohort (just over 20%, or 2158 individuals) might suffice as a compromise between the various interest groups around this issue.

Repeal Civil Rights Law, Sec. 50-a: that the NYC PBA is fighting to protect disciplinary disclosures surrounding their officers is unsurprising; what is, however, is the lack of will by the courts to utilize the provisions existing in 50-a that clearly allow for rightful disclosure:

“...except as may be mandated by lawful court order...Upon such a finding the court shall make those parts of the record found to be relevant and material available to the persons so requesting.”

Instead, we should continue to promote vigorous civilian reporting to the CCRB, and the NYPD might consider improvement in these statistics (over a sufficient time interval) to be a critical factor of precinct captains maintaining their respective positions.

Restructure the state Board of Elections: the idea that one could find “nonpartisan administration” for the state Board of Elections in this acrimonious environment of hyper-partisanship is belied qualitatively by current events at the federal agency level, and quantitatively documented in a recent NBER paper on regulatory capture, “From Revolving Doors to Regulatory Capture? Evidence from Patent Examiners.”

The paper finds that examiners grant about 12.6%-17.6% more patents to firms that subsequently hire them, relative to those that do not, with regression coefficients that are statistically significant at the 5% level.

As such, we assert that it's better to continue the “cold war” structure of the state Board of Elections involving the two major parties and look for ways to streamline the office of unnecessary sinecures.

III. CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS

In addition to evaluating stances on the issues above, Citizens Union also considers the campaign goals articulated to voters.

TOP FIVE 2018 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS

1. **Growth & affordability**: *property tax reform; occupational licensing; land use/zoning; increasing healthcare supply (Policy platform)*
2. **Education**: *investing in early childhood programs; commonsense HR reforms; anonymous applications for higher education; educational choice (Policy platform)*
3. **Ethics Reform**: *electoral/campaign; budget/procurement; tightly define corruption; term limits (Policy platform)*
4. Through words and deeds, we shall elevate the political environment above the endemic tribalism and corruption that persist in Albany.
5. Go wherever the facts and data lead us, and focus on solving issues where consensus exists, rather than exploiting ideological issues that divide the major parties for political gain.

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.

As a first-time candidate, both Citizens Union and my potential constituents should consider my conduct on the campaign trail, and the heavy focus on ethics reform (as one of my three major campaign pillars) to make said determination.

In addition to running our operation based upon civil discourse and guarding against complacency, we have two minor, yet effective, checks in place to ensure ethical conduct: (a) all major decisions- including expenditures over a defined threshold, key announcements, and campaign strategy- are approved by at least two people; and (b) ruthless transparency between campaign members, regardless of perceived seniority.

If we have the opportunity to roll over from campaigning into actual governance, we plan on maintaining similarly rigorous internal checks and balances, and institute the equivalent of "signing statements," which will explain our vote on every bill to the public- posted online, and advertised to the best of our ability.

Finally, as far as individual behavior is concerned, I've never received a citation for anything- not even a moving violation- and have a pristine record of conduct across the entirety of my educational and professional career. While the past is an imperfect indicator of future propriety, the only thing more important to me than winning this race, is serving Northeast Queens with honor and distinction.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss my candidacy and core convictions.

-SHM

