



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: Blake Morris

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat

Age: 57

Education: BA, University of Florida, JD, Brooklyn Law School

Office Sought/District: State Senate District 17

Occupation/Employer: Commercial Attorney/Self-Employed

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: I have been a member of the Commercial Law Legacy of America since 1996. I have been a member of the Ditmas Park Neighborhood Association Board of Directors since 2000, and the co-chair of the association's annual block party that yields more than 300 participants. I am also a member of the Kings County Democratic Committee (Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.)

Campaign Contact Information

Campaign Manager Name: Jen Berkley

Additional Staff Contact:

Address: 1195 Coney Island Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11230

Telephone: 917-843-5669

Fax: NA

Website: BlakeMorrisForStateSenate.com


Email: BlakeMorris4StateSenate@gmail.com

Twitter: BlakeMorris4NYS

Facebook: /BlakeMorris17

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

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 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

The passage of all progressive legislation is at stake in this election. My opponent is the main obstacle to the passage of the DREAM Act, the RHA, the CVA, school speed cameras, and on and on. If you support my candidacy, we have a real shot at New York state becoming truly Democratic.

1. Increase and preserve affordable housing – I will sponsor legislation to eliminate preferential rent, vacancy bonus, and the deregulation of rent-regulated units, as well as re-regulate thousands of units that have been illegally deregulated in New York City.
2. Health care- I will vote to pass the NY Health Act and remove insurance companies from the equation entirely.
3. Education Reform – I will sponsor legislation to phase in free tuition for New York state residents to attend CUNY, SUNY, and public community colleges at no cost.
4. Transportation – I will sponsor legislation to use taxes generated from the sale of the declassification of marijuana as a legal substance to fund major infrastructure improvements to the MTA and our roadways.
5. Voting Rights- I will sponsor legislation to support and vote for voting reforms such as early voting and same-day registration.
6. Ethics- Demand and introduce legislation for full transparency of government expenditures and create a statewide system for campaign finance that also discloses all PAC and LLC contributions in real time

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

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.

My basic political philosophy is one that embodies smart government, problem-solving solutions with high utility that creates the least imposition and maximizes benefits. I have championed the same causes your organization believes in for my entire professional life. I am the true Democrat is this race who believes in progressive ideals and will work hard to make this state a true leader in Democratic policies. I will remain true to the Democrats who elect me, unlike my opponent, who abandoned his Democratic voters by voting with and caucusing with Senate Republicans since he was first elected. His decision represents the ultimate betrayal – campaigning as a Democrat and then switching parties for his own political gain. I will sponsor reform-minded legislation that institutes publicly-funded campaign finance to remove the financial incentive that exists under our current system. As I have as a private citizen, I will sponsor legislation that brings full transparency to Albany and creates a zero tolerance policy for “pay-to-play” politicians.

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

Additional Information:

I have lived in Flatbush (Ditmas Park) for nearly 20 years where I am a homeowner and active member of the Ditmas Park Civic Association. I am married with a teen daughter who attends Brooklyn Tech. For almost 30 years, I have been a practicing attorney, focusing on contract and property rights. I have also worked in city government in the planning department. I am a graduate of Brooklyn Law School and have lived in New York City since 1984. My family has deep roots in the borough of Brooklyn. For all these reasons, I decided in early March to challenge state Sen. Simcha Felder in Senate District 17. I am running for State Senate because our district needs and deserves an elected representative who will actually represent all the people in the district not just himself. When we vote for a Democrat to represent us we want a real democrat not a Republican with a D next to his name. I have thrown my hat in the ring because I know that everything from much-needed funding for educating our children to running the MTA, safe streets, affordable housing, and healthcare policies have very real affects on our lives. When our priorities are ignored in Albany, as they have been for the past six years, our public schools are shortchanged, rapid transit becomes unreliable, housing becomes unaffordable, healthcare costs becomes a substantial burden, and traffic-snarled streets become unsafe for everyone. I'm running because I want to bring true leadership to the people of state Senate district 17. It's time to take this senate seat back from a turncoat Democrat who makes his own rules and prides himself on being a self-described party of one. We're not going to be democratic road kill any longer. The days of ignoring the voices of this community are in the past. Too much is at stake.