



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: Stephanie Miner

Party Affiliation(s): Registered Democrat (Running on Serve America Movement line) Age: 48

Education: BA in Political Science and Journalism from Syracuse University
JD from the University of Buffalo

Office Sought: Governor of New York State

Occupation/Employer: Candidate for Governor of New York State

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

City Council of Syracuse 2002-2009

Mayor of Syracuse 2010-2017

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

Campaign Contact Information

Campaign Manager Name: Sherman Jewett

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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

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

Signature of Candidate: Stephanie A. Miner

Date: 7/18/18

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

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.	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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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?

For far too long, NYS leadership has viewed corruption as "the price of politics." I experienced this first-hand as the Mayor of Syracuse and was often the only leader who publicly questioned both the process and the actual policies emanating from Albany leadership. While my decisions had serious short-term repercussions, I knew that to do otherwise would make me complicit to the political corrupt and dysfunctional culture I was being asked to accept as normal. That I could not do and, to my surprise, found my constituents agreed with my decisions to confront the Albany establishment.

I realized then, and I continue to see today, we find ourselves in an environment where partisanship triumphs over principle, patriotism, and propriety. Self-dealing and use of public office for private gain has reached unprecedented levels, and money dominates our political culture rather than desperately needed policy, progress, and productivity. The candidate with the fattest piggy bank is revered, and the candidate with the earnest approach, but lighter wallet, is ignored or relegated to the sidelines by the press, pundits, and politicians alike. New Yorkers are demanding change and will not be satisfied with the same old trite sound bytes and empty promises. I have fought to change this dynamic throughout my entire public service career and my service as governor will be no different.

Getting the money out of politics and exploring a wide array of options to achieve that objective will be my first priority. I already have done this. First, I stopped accepting contributions for LLCs in 2015 and I have continued to do so with this campaign. While this makes raising money exponential more difficult, it is to me a vital indication of my commitment to

changing the political status quo.

To truly restore trust in government, we need to revitalize voter participation: (1) pursue true non-partisan redistricting; (2) establish vote by mail; (3) early voting; and (4) no excuse absentee voting. We need to pursue public campaign funding, limiting outside income for incumbent legislators, and the promotion of free airtime for use by bona fide candidates are but three things we could achieve. Serious consideration must also be given to term limits. I have been subject to term limits throughout my elective career and have found that limits reinforce a dynamic political process.

Above all, our government must be less opaque and more open. To start, we need to re-examine the Public Meetings Law to strengthen its application of opening the process, and we need to stop the closed-door, back room approach to budget negotiations. Additionally, I would insist on compliance with the Freedom of Information Law requests. I also support the creation of an open database in which the public could see and monitor the bidding and contracting process.

I would require that all contracts for goods or services be subject to open competitive bidding with approval and oversight by the State Comptroller, and I would end the practice of designating a "preferred developer" on all state economic developer projects. I would require all employees of the Executive Chamber to conduct all State business on the State email service and prohibit the use of private devices or email accounts. In addition, regular access by the press to governmental officials is essential to maintain the focus on the public's right to know. I would meet with the Legislative Correspondents Association members on a regular basis, and would also be open to other state and local media coverage, which is critical to maintaining public confidence in the process.

Additionally, I will create and empower a truly independent commission for ethical and other violations, enforcing strict conflict of interest policies to ensure government policy makers are implicitly and explicitly focused on the public's business, rather than self-enrichment.

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

The budget process in New York is broken. Timeliness has been elevated over substantive achievement. The current horse trading back room atmosphere that finalizes spending priorities and permeates the budget making process must give way to a more open and far more balanced process. Here are some initial suggestions:

I would insist that both houses of the Legislature conduct the submission of a budget through the process of open committee hearings and deliberations as envisioned by the drafters of the State Constitution. I would require that the Legislature conduct the process in a timely manner and would enforce the penalties that currently exist to withhold legislative salaries without the prospect of retroactive payment in the event the deadline is not met. Timeliness, transparency and effective policy-making are not mutually exclusive achievements.

Furthermore, I would convene a commission of government leaders, academics and advocacy groups to suggest concrete, specific reforms to be adopted for improvements to the budget process, with a clear and definite timetable for achieving the goals set forth by such a group.

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?

As stated in the answer to Question 14, limiting the amount of campaign contributions received is something I would agree to, even unilaterally, and have already done. While not accepting contributions from LLC's is a campaign revenue liability, it is a hard and fast example of my commitment to lead change in the political status quo.

I favor not only closing the LLC donation loophole, but I also would like to see the prohibition of campaign contributions from any person or entity who is doing business or seeking to do business with state government. We must be better if we are going to do better. Change starts with a personal commitment to abide by a set of standards that leave a candidate free to advocate for the commonwealth without the influence of big money in politics.

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?

A fair and progressive tax system would be my goal. The current reliance on the property tax has caused inequality in our ability to achieve consistent statewide educational standards and has driven many New York businesses away. This month the State Comptroller issued a report on the State Fiscal year 2018-19 Enacted Budget Financial Plan and Capital Program and Financing Plan. The report paints a grim future for the state's economic outlook due to the use of various budget gimmicks, misuse of one-shot revenues such as the settlement funds, and other practices that further the structural imbalance in the budget. These practices risk creating the decline in the statutory capacity for state-supported debt precisely during a time of uncertain federal actions and wavering or directly combative federal fiscal policy. The recommendations of the state comptroller should be heeded.

State mandates are also at the heart of the problem. For example I believe we need to focus on such reforms as the state's takeover of the local share of Medicaid funding. In some counties, the local property tax levy goes almost 100 percent to Albany to reimburse the cost of the Medicaid program. That is unacceptable and unsustainable. The state must takeover the local share of Medicaid payments and insist that savings from the takeover gets passed onto property tax payers. When accomplished, this will soften the detrimental impact brought on by the federal decision to do-away with the deductibility of state and local property taxes.

Additionally, the practice of the current administration using the funds from settlements gained by litigation with Wall Street investment houses and tobacco companies for purposes other than what it is intended for must end. i.e., if money from tobacco settlement is intended for public health, then that purpose, and only that purpose, should be observed.

Economic development programs and bureaucracies used to bolster elected officials' campaign coffers and create gold-plated boondoggles must be eliminated. There are too many tangible examples of failed economic development programs, many of which are mired in corruption investigations as well. To the extent that the state has revenues, from whatever source generated, it should utilize them for essential infrastructure projects; both traditional, such as transportation, and modern, such as affordable, high speed broadband. These should all be openly and competitively bid. Whether in today's federal climate or another, we must embrace the state as a "laboratory for democracy" to test new ideas and policies in this new age, to find public-private partnerships that address the relevant issues. For example, the IBM and the Bloomberg Foundation partnership to find innovative solutions to the infrastructure challenges, which I oversaw in Syracuse.

Similarly, we need to find a way to creatively balance funding systems and methods of tax collection in order to achieve real, fundamental and meaningful changes that will breathe new vitality into the ability of local government to effectively perform its functions and at a reduced cost. Government is not the answer for all ills, but it should seek to achieve collectively, that which we cannot achieve individually.

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?

Our state must lead in demonstrating that education should be public and free from ideology. As mayor, I saw how essential a strong public education for everyone. Education is the greatest equalizer for children. All children deserve a high quality education that provides them with 21st-century skills and prepares them for future careers. I believe in

supporting a strong and vibrant public education system and recognize that other models such as charter, parochial, and private schools exist as a complement to a public school system. They are not mutually exclusive; rather they should all be seen as a means of producing complimentary options and quality of choices.

Since 2003, New York State, through a series of court orders and appeals, ordered the governor and legislature of New York to provide a basic sound education to all children of New York. Since then, even after the establishment of the foundation aid formula, NYS has not met its obligation to provide schools an appropriate level of funding as dictated by said aid formula. It is critical that the current state aid distribution formula be changed to develop new distribution categories and require each legislative district be responsible for meeting at least 50 percent of the formula aid distribution. Additionally, the present formula for state funding for school district needs to be changed to reflect present-day issues and ensure that it meets critical needs.

The purpose of standardized tests is to simply determine what students may or may not know on a particular given day. The goal of assessments in education should be to understand what students have mastered and what they need to learn to further growth. Therefore, it is essential we do not minimize our students to a number and we give students several opportunities and methods to demonstrate mastery of a given standard. Assessments should allow students to demonstrate mastery of skills and knowledge through a variety of different methodologies. Authentic real world demonstrations of content comprehension are essential to prepare students for the college and careers.

As a mayor of a poor city, I experienced every day the struggles that our students and teachers go through and the bureaucratic obstacles they encountered in the school system. I recognized and had to deal with the aftermath of an education system failing huge swaths of our citizens. I worked with community partners, the public, and the private sector with the goal of creating a dynamic system of education that supported learning in a variety of forms. We made great strides in creating a system that increased graduation rates to its highest levels in 8 years, created a program where Syracuse students could go to college tuition-free (Syracuse Say Yes), and supported technical education programs for the new economy. As I sought to implement changes I saw countless ways NYS could have been committed to equity, performance, and innovation but, instead, stayed committed to the failures of the status quo. We need to be open to different partnerships, amenable to community input, and willing to break long-standing bureaucracies that have strangled educators and failed our children. NYS public education system is one of the most unequal in the United States. This is simply unacceptable.

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?

The state's failure to address critical public infrastructure needs and instead choosing to focus on flashier but less substantive issues is the epitome of Albany's dysfunction. We must commit ourselves to a 21st century infrastructure that acts as a platform for long-term equitable social and economic growth.

The state moved 1.4 billion dollars in disbursements to the MTA, allowing it to claim that it held its spending increase to 2 percent. It has also committed to providing the MTA more than eight billion dollars in funding for its 2015-2019 capital plan no later than State Fiscal Year 2025-26, or by the completion of its capital plan. However, it has not identified the funding sources for the majority of this commitment. This bodes negatively. The MTA is an essential service for the greater metropolitan region of the state. The crisis it now faces and the burden this crisis imposes upon its users is the result of inaction, finger pointing, and blame shifting by state officials for decades. We must strive to be leaders who find solutions and that rise above the political blame game.

Specifically, I would insist that all MTA officials appointed by the current governor resign. I would then work with leadership in New York City to find and appoint board members focused solely on fixing the system. I would insist MTA board members have no conflicts of interest that may detract from their ability to focus on the decisions needed to fix the transit system. Additionally, I would insist the MTA board members and my gubernatorial staff work with local officials and advocates to agree on priorities to be addressed (i.e. signals and lines), and come to a joint multi-year agreement on operating revenue and capital plan expenses.

More than anything, I believe we need honest leadership with a clear vision and know-how and determination to turn things

around. We need to focus on accomplishing some goals quickly to prove to the transit users and taxpayers that we are up to the task of fixing the system. Patchwork progress is not enough to keep the trains running on time and efficiently.

We need to adopt a capital budget, adequate to improve the infrastructure, and stick to it. A combination of bonding, taxes, and potential fare increases should all be considered, and we need to examine all sources of revenue to sustain the viability of the system for users. Congestion pricing is a potential solution to some of the problems we are encountering, but fair pricing is even more critical. All of these discussions need to occur in a transparent and open way to ensure we communicate the pros and cons of the difficult choices needed to constructively make our way out of the chaotic disarray of the status quo.

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?

Lack of opportunity has caused more than 1 million people to leave NYS in the past eight years. This number is the highest in the US--a glaring refutation to the efficacy of politics in Albany.

The upstate economy will improve when Albany recognizes that Buffalo requires a different regulatory environment from Brooklyn. For far too long, Albany politicians have sought to claim "transformative" programs, instead of much needed regulatory reform and investment in infrastructure. New York must abolish economic development programs and bureaucracy and invest directly into infrastructure. Film Hubs, light-bulb factories, and nano-tech factories have proven to be flashy failures. Job creation must not be a theoretical goal, but a verifiable fact. There are important reasons to assist local governments in critical infrastructure and development programs, but picking winners and losers and limiting the Comptroller's oversight on such economic development programs has been a recipe for abuse and wasted tax dollars.

New York must create a business-friendly climate both to attract new business and retain existing business. The NYS regulatory system desperately needs an overhaul to streamline the archaic, bureaucratic, and time-consuming processes that have become endemic. Structural obstacles to attracting business to New York must be removed. For example, the cost of Workmen's Compensation Insurance disproportionately burdens employers in upstate. To make the whole state more competitive, New York needs to be divided into economic zones in which the rates are based upon the claims made within that zone rather than on a statewide basis. This would foster more competition amongst zones seeking the lowest rate and provide more incentives for a business to operate upstate.

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?

The whittling away at the Affordable Care Act and the recent tax legislation create the most imminent risks to New Yorkers. The next governor needs to be creative in addressing these issues.

To ensure that adequate medical care is available to all, NYS may need to partner with communities to establish clinics that are accessible locally. Clinics staffed by physicians assistants and nurses could be located in fire stations, police precincts, and schools to serve and foster community through greater interaction.

Public and private medical and nursing schools should be encouraged to provide training and curricula to their students while assisting in the staffing of these clinics. The NYS Insurance Department could require insurers to cover services at clinics and make such care eligible for Medicaid reimbursement.

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

1. Institute Non-Partisan Redistricting of Political Boundaries
2. Make it easier to vote, including, but not limited to, vote by mail, early voting, and no excuse absentee voting
3. Eliminate Economic Development Programs and Invest Resources in Infrastructure
4. Establish Independent Ethics Board with Jurisdiction over NYS government
5. Have NYS take over local share of Medicaid costs

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.

In order to restore the public's trust in government, you have to start by telling them the truth. I have a history of telling voters the truth and standing up for their interests, even when it was politically challenging. As a Common Councilor in Syracuse, when a developer asked for 30 years of property tax exemptions and said they would build a mall that was like "nothing [else] in the world," I stood up and said it was a bad deal for the public. They showered other politicians with campaign contributions, and made my life difficult, but more than a decade later, I have been proven right. That mall is just like any other mall and the people of the City of Syracuse and NY State are out \$700 million.

As a Mayor, when Governor Cuomo offered a financial gimmick to fund pension obligations by kicking the can down the road, I spoke up in a *New York Times* Op-Ed, informing the people of NY State that the Governor's offer would increase our debt and put our cities in further fiscal peril.

When COR Development misled the people of the City of Syracuse, I fought them in court despite calls by other politicians to go along to get along. A few years later, those same developers have been convicted of bribery and bid rigging in connection with that project. It is a leader's job to tell people the truth and stand up for them.

In order to stand up for the people of NY State, we need to eliminate corrupt economic development schemes that have become piggy-banks for campaign contributors and invest that money back into the infrastructure New Yorkers use every day: roads, bridges, subways, water mains, and new technologies like broadband. We need to give oversight authority of all economic development programs back to the NY State Comptroller. We have to lower the property tax burden on residents by transferring Medicaid costs back to the State, where they belong, so people can build families and businesses in New York.

In addition, we must make our leaders more accountable to voters. We have to eliminate the barriers to citizen participation that have been erected by status-quo parties. New York needs no-excuse absentee ballots, early voting, vote by mail, non-partisan redistricting, government transparency on contracts, and the end of anonymous campaign contributions.

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