



Candidate Questionnaire  
Local Candidates Committee  
New York City Council Elections 2017

Citizens Union appreciates your response to the following questionnaire related to policy issues facing New York City and our interest in reforming city and state government. **Please return the questionnaire to us as soon as possible, and no later than June 28<sup>th</sup>.** Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for the New York City Council, 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.

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**Biographical Information**

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Candidate Name: Mark Gjonaj

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Party Affiliation(s): Democrat Age: 48

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Education: Bachelor's Degree in Marketing, St. John's University

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Office Sought (including district): City Council, District 13

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Occupation/Employer: New York State Assembly since January, 2013

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Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: I took on the Bronx Democratic establishment in 2012 to win my current seat. Previously, I had served as the Bronx Commissioner for the Taxi and Limousin Commission. I am an active member of my church and many community and civic organizations.  
*(Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.)*

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**Campaign Contact Information**

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Campaign Manager Name: Joseph Cooper Additional Staff Contact:

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Address: 2018 Williamsbridge Rd. Bronx NY 10461

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Telephone: 718-684-4888 Fax:

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Website: markgjonaj.com Email: newyorkersformarkgjonaj@gmail.com

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Twitter: @markgjonajNY Facebook: @MarkGjonajNY

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**Affirmations**

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Have you completed required campaign finance filings?  YES / NO

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

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

I. POLICY QUESTIONS

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

VOTING AND ELECTIONS REFORM

Table with 5 rows and 2 columns. Column 1: Questions about party primaries, runoff voting, poll worker program, Board of Elections reporting, and City Charter modification. Column 2: Response options 'Support / Oppose' with 'X' marks.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Table with 2 rows and 2 columns. Column 1: Questions about campaign finance program restrictions and public matching grants. Column 2: Response options 'Support / Oppose' with 'X' marks.

CITY COUNCIL REFORM

8. How do you feel the reformed bill drafting process is going under the enacted 2014 Council Rules Reforms and do you think we need a more independent process similar to New York State Legislature's bill drafting commission? As an Assemblymember, I am always concerned when folks want to make things more like Albany. Albany is frequently dysfunctional and has allowed far too much corruption. While I am a strong supporter of our current Speaker, I believe that history has shown what opportunities for corruption exist with an overly powerful Speaker. I was pleased with the City Council's reforms in 2014 and would be open to discussing ways to further improve.

9. What is your position on the following proposals enabling Council committees to function more effectively and independently of the speaker:	
a. Should committee chairs have the ability to hire at least one committee staffer?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
b. Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
d. Now that committee chair stipends have been eliminated what is your position on reducing the overall number of committees so members can participate more meaningfully in fewer issues?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
10. What is your position on greater disclosure of councilmembers' outside income?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
11. When the Quadrennial Compensation Commission is reconvened, what is your position on requiring that any future increase in councilmember compensation only apply prospectively to the following term?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
12. What is your position on ensuring a more equitable and needs-based distribution of discretionary funding?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
13. What is your position on increasing transparency of discretionary funding by requiring the list of capital and expense funds and their sponsors be provided to Councilmembers and the public three days in advance of any vote, and expanding the online searchable database of expense funds to include all capital fund recipients and applicants?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
14. What is your position on extending term limits from two four-year terms to three four-year terms?	Unless approved in a referendum. Support / <del>Oppose</del>
15. What is your position on making all actions designed to influence any City Council outcome, including the choice of Speaker, reportable as a lobbying expense?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>

**PUBLIC SAFETY AND OVERSIGHT OF POLICE MISCONDUCT**

16. What is your position on establishing the Commission to Combat Police Corruption (CCPC) as a permanent commission in the City Charter while empowering the CCPC to issue subpoenas?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
17. What is your position on enhancing the Civilian Complaint Review Board's (CCRB) authority to initiate an investigation into reported or known incidents of police misconduct without receipt of a formal complaint?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
18. What is your position on granting the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) with the authority to prosecute officers found guilty of lying during CCRB investigations?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
19. What is your position on reinstating the zero tolerance penalty for false official statements by public officers?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
20. What is your position on requiring the Police Commissioner to explain divergence from NYPD trial judge and CCRB disciplinary recommendations and to make the explanation public?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>
21. What is your position on requiring the NYPD to publish a regular report of use of force incidents with data disaggregated by race?	Support / <del>Oppose</del>

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**BUDGET REFORM**

23. What is your position on establishing independent budgeting for: a. the borough presidents?	Support / Oppose
b. Conflicts of Interest Board?	Support / Oppose
c. the public advocate?	Support / Oppose
d. community boards?	Support / Oppose
24. What is your position on making the budget process more transparent by clearly defining and limiting units of appropriation?	Support / Oppose
25. What is your position on release of revenue projections (other than property taxes) prior to Council hearings on the Executive budget?	Support / Oppose

**LAND USE AND COMMUNITY BOARD REFORM**

26. What is your position on designating urban planners for use by community boards and requiring borough president's report to the Council the manner in which they advertise and make community board appointments?	Support / Oppose
27. What is your position on establishing a formal standardized and transparent process for community board appointments including written applications, interviews of candidates, and filling vacancies within 30 days?	Support / Oppose

**CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION**

28. In November, voters in New York will be asked whether they wish to hold a constitutional convention to amend the New York State Constitution. What is your position on holding such a convention?	Support / Oppose
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29. If you support the constitutional convention, what actions, if any, will you take to ensure that it takes place? If you oppose the convention, what will you do to defeat it?

I am very concerned about the possibility of a constitutional convention tearing away protections for our union workers, especially when it comes to their pensions and benefits. If there were a way to ensure these protections would remain I could conceivably favor a constitutional convention. I'm running for the City Council, however, to address the issues that are closest to home for our residents. I don't expect to take an active role in either supporting or opposing the constitutional convention.

30. Last year, Citizens Union helped craft and push for the enactment of a law that placed political contribution limits and disclosure requirements on nonprofits that are formed by, or affiliated with, elected officials, which helped prevent some significant features of an emerging "pay-to-play" culture in New York City. Do you have any other ideas to further limit such a culture and create a better environment where contributions, either personal or political do not unduly influence the actions of elected officials?

Disclosure is the absolutely most important thing. Thanks to the U.S. Supreme Court and the unintended consequences of some previous efforts at reform, political spending now operates largely in the shadows. "Pay to play" must be snuffed out anywhere and everywhere it rears its head.

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.

I want to work closely with the NYCCFB, the NYS BoE, my future fellow city councilmembers and my current colleagues in Albany to fundamentally transform our campaign finance regime to insist on greater disclosure. Interest groups (like Citizens Union and Planned Parenthood, for two examples) are important vehicles for ordinary citizens to aggregate their political voices and work to change our great city and state. The same can be said for unions, in particular. And donors, especially small donors, have their own important role in a free society like ours, backing the candidates they know and trust. Unfortunately, much reform has represented "unilateral disarmament" where the rich and powerful keep spending from the shadows while smaller but important, necessary players are pushed out. Unregulated, undisclosed independent expenditures have become far too powerful in our political campaigns.

I believe that you and I agree on more than you probably think. I'm sure Citizens Union is disappointed that I've chosen to not participate in the CFB's matching funds program. I simply will not support a system that takes taxpayer dollars and gives them to some people who, frankly have no business running for office (one of my opponents has unapologetically used racial slurs in his campaign, another deliberately lies about my record and a third is locally famous for his vicious tirades and profanity in public meetings, even directed at young women staffers of some of my colleagues.



## II. CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS

As a candidate who presently does not hold elected office, what are your top five campaign promises you are making to the voters during this campaign for this position.

If elected, Citizens Union will use these promises to evaluate your performance while in office, as well as to evaluate your candidacy in the future.

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 2017 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS

1. I do presently hold elected office. As such, I have made many promises and continue to make them.  
My constituents know that I don't make promises lightly. So when I say I'm going to improve quality of life and  
transportation options in my district, support our public schools, improve treatment services for opioid  
addiction, and fight to reduce water and sewer rates and property tax assessments, those are promises  
I will keep.

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