



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 28th. 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.

Biographical Information

Candidate Name: Robert Holden
Party Affiliation(s): Democrat, Reform Age: 65
Education: MFA Hunter College
Office Sought (including district): City Council District 30
Occupation/Employer: College Professor
Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:
Juniper Park Civic Association president for 25 years, member of Queens Community Board 5 for 25 years.
(Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.)

Campaign Contact Information

Campaign Manager Name: N/A Additional Staff Contact: Larry Caruana (treasurer)
Address: 63-17 84th Street, Middle Village, NY 11379
Telephone: 917-623-7682 Fax: N/A
Website: holdenforcitycouncil.com Email: info@holdenforcitycouncil.com
Twitter: N/A Facebook: facebook.com/holdenforcitycouncil

Affirmations

Have you completed required campaign finance filings? YES
Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES
(Please note: interviews are prerequisites of being considered for Citizens Union endorsements.)

Signature of Candidate:

[Handwritten signature]

Date:

6/18/2017

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

1. What is your position with respect to eliminating party primaries and establishing a non-partisan election system in which all candidates and all voters participate in the first round and the top two candidates advance to the second round? Support

2. What is your position on instituting Instant Runoff Voting for all citywide offices and for all special elections for city offices? Support

3. What is your position on creating a voluntary municipal poll worker program to supplement poll worker recruitment by district leaders? Support

4. What is your position on requiring the Board of Elections to report performance metrics to the City Council that conform to the Mayor's Management Report? Support

5. What is your position on modifying the City Charter to require that laws enacted by referendum only be changed through approval by the voters? Support

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

6. What is your position on prohibiting participants in the city's campaign finance program from using public matching funds to purchase strategic campaign consulting services from firms that also provide lobbying services? Support

7. What is your position on increasing the Campaign Finance Board's public matching grants from a partial match of 55% to a full match of funds raised (Int. 1130-A)? Support

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?

The implementation of the City Council's independent bill drafting unit is a step in the right direction but we have a long way to go to reform the process. It is great for bills that fall into a gray area and it guarantees that the bill will be drafted. It doesn't, however, address the fact that the Speaker controls what bills make it to the floor for a vote. The public deserves vigorous debate of bills proposed and not just those guaranteed to pass because of the effectiveness of big bucks lobbying. I would definitely support an independent process similar to the one that is in place in Albany.

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
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b. Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs?	Support
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c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members?	Support
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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
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10. What is your position on greater disclosure of councilmembers' outside income?	Support
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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

12. What is your position on ensuring a more equitable and needs-based distribution of discretionary funding? Support

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

14. What is your position on extending term limits from two four-year terms to three four-year terms? Oppose

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

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

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

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

19. What is your position on reinstating the zero tolerance penalty for false official statements by public officers?	Support
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
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
22. What is your position on requiring the NYPD to publish a regular report of use of force incidents with data disaggregated by race?	Support
BUDGET REFORM	
23. What is your position on establishing independent budgeting for:	
a. the borough presidents?	Support
b. Conflicts of Interest Board?	Support
c. the public advocate?	Support
d. community boards?	Support
24. What is your position on making the budget process more transparent by clearly defining and limiting units of appropriation?	Support
25. What is your position on release of revenue projections (other than property taxes) prior to Council hearings on the Executive budget?	Support

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

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

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

29. If you support the constitutional convention, what actions, if any, will you take to ensure that it takes place?

I am a member of a public employees union and I know the problem of these unions spreading false information about who runs the convention, the purpose of it and the potential reforms that could be enacted by it, especially when it comes to pensions. Education is the best way to dispel fear. I was the managing editor of the *Juniper Berry* quarterly community magazine up until I announced my run for office. Our op-ed columnist has been asked to write a piece for our next issue about the importance of voting "yes" in the Constitutional Convention referendum this November. Some reforms will never be enacted without the people seizing on this opportunity.

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?

There is a big problem with having managers of non-profits funded by the city council sitting on community boards. They are many times doing the will of the council member and not the community in order to not jeopardize their funding. And they also feel pressured to donate to the incumbent's campaign in order to not jeopardize funding. No one who works for an organization that is funded by the city, works for an elected official or has a familial relationship with one should be allowed to sit on a community 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.

VOTING AND ELECTIONS REFORM (1-5)

I believe that having a 2 party system has been detrimental to government and is the cause of deep divides in this country. The end result of this has been a government that doesn't reflect the values or care about the concerns of the population it governs. We shouldn't have to choose between candidates on either end of the political spectrum when the majority is always somewhere in the middle on most issues. Removing partisanship from the process would be doing a service to democracy. Voters also should not be forced to pay for the primaries of political parties.

I am in favor of instant runoff voting as the person in the lead generally wins the runoff, so having another low turnout election is a waste of time and money.

I believe a municipal poll worker program is an excellent idea and it can bring some income to those in need. I am also in favor of paid juries.

Board of Elections needs as much oversight as possible and therefore I am in favor of mandatory reporting of performance metrics to the City Council.

I am running against someone who was publicly opposed to Mayor Bloomberg's term limit extensions, but is grandfathered in to have the ability to run for a third term and is taking advantage of that loophole. I will do everything in my power to protect term limits and all other laws enacted by referendum.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM (6-7)

If a consulting firm helps you get elected, they have established a relationship with you and therefore should not be lobbying you. This is a huge conflict of interest. I am also in favor of full public campaign funding up to the maximum amount.

CITY COUNCIL REFORM (8-15)

I believe that council committees should have as much autonomy as possible and should not be governed by the whims of the Speaker or the Mayor. As for limiting the number of committees, I am all for that as meetings tend to overlap and you can't be in two places at once.

I think every councilmember should be required to release their tax returns and disclose all sources of outside income. It is absolutely imperative that future raises apply to the following term and not retroactively or while the voting member is serving their current term.

I believe in more equitable and needs based funding, however, due to gentrification of lower income neighborhoods, those below the poverty line may get overshadowed. The basing of funding levels on the council district as a whole should be re-examined, and perhaps there needs to be stricter guidelines on how and where money for services is spent.

I agree with increased transparency for the discretionary funding process, but would take it a step further and require at least 7 days' notice. This gives the public and lawmakers adequate time to review the information and raise concerns. A formal objection process should be implemented as well.

I oppose extending term limits unless it is done via referendum. It is a conflict of interest for sitting council members to give themselves the opportunity to run for an additional term when the people have said no. The race for Speaker is indeed lobbying and should be reported as such.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND OVERSIGHT OF POLICE MISCONDUCT (16-22)

I believe in greater oversight and scrutiny of the NYPD and support all proposed measures which are in the interest of transparency and increased accountability.

BUDGET REFORM (23-25)

I believe in independent funding for all agencies that do not report directly to the City Council. The status quo frequently leads to conflicts of interest. I am in favor of better definition and limitation of units of appropriation because it allows the budget to be examined more easily and leads to more transparency, which is always a good thing. In order to have a more complete understanding and picture of the budget, it is important to have data from as many sources as are available.

LAND USE AND COMMUNITY BOARD REFORM (26-27)

Urban planners being available to community boards would be a great thing. I have worked closely with an urban planner, Paul Graziano, who is also seeking a City Council seat this year. His input was invaluable during the rezoning of our area.

I believe that borough presidents should try harder to recruit new community board members, they should be thoroughly vetted for potential conflicts of interest and the public should know their qualifications.

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

- I plan to introduce legislation that will guarantee that students throughout the city will gain admission to their closest high school should they list it as their top choice.
- As council member, I will continue to advocate for a satellite precinct as well as more staffing for the 104th Precinct.

- I have been a member of the coalition aiming to prevent the destruction of the natural environment of the Ridgewood Reservoir basins dating back to 2007 and as council member I will petition the NYS DEC to give it an official wetland designation that will protect its flora and fauna.
- With the help and support of civic organizations, I will ask the Department of City Planning to create a new zone that would protect 1-family row house areas such as those around Juniper Valley Park and in the Plateau area of Maspeth.
- Getting around our neighborhoods via public transportation is not easy. As council member, I will advocate for better bus service. For example, the QM24 bus passes through Maspeth but doesn't stop there. It should. In addition, many in the area would like to be able to take public transportation to the Ridgewood Reservoir, something which is not currently an option. I will ask the MTA to extend existing bus routes to accommodate travel along Vermont Place.

III. 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 public trust. With the corruption conviction of recent state 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 will 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 restore the public trust in your district.

Prior to the incumbent taking office, the district was represented by Dennis Gallagher who resigned in disgrace after pleading guilty to forcible touching of a constituent. This was appalling and I was the only local leader to call for his resignation. The current council member, Elizabeth Crowley, was elected due to the influence of her cousin, Congress Member Joseph Crowley, who runs the Queens County Machine, infamous for practicing cronyism and nepotism and engaging in blatant conflicts of interest. I have called them out on this many, many times as Juniper Park Civic Association president and in our organization's publication, the Juniper Berry magazine. Please visit JuniperCivic.com and search for Joe Crowley's name and you will see multiple columns addressing this problem.

I am not running to be a machine politician or to make a career out of this. After 25 distinguished years in the civic arena I have decided that it is my duty to run for public office in order to bring ethics and accountability back to the district.

The major issues I wish to address during my council tenure and a list of my accomplishments are available at holdenforcitycouncil.com.

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.