



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: **Ronnie Cho**
 Party Affiliation(s): **Democrat** Age: **34**
 Education: **Arizona State University**
 Office Sought (including district): **City Council, District 2**
 Occupation/Employer: **N/A**

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

VP of Public Affairs, MTV; Associate Director of Public Engagement, Obama White House; Community Editor, Newsweek Daily Beast Company; Program Analyst, National Broadband Plan, Federal Communications Commission; Field Director, Obama for America.

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

Campaign Contact Information

Campaign Manager Name: **Frankie Martinez Blanco** Additional Staff Contact: **Chloe Chik**
 Address: **P.O. Box 20676, New York, NY 10009**
 Telephone: **Frankie: 202-550-4021** Fax:
 Website: **www.ronniecho.com** Email: **info@ronniecho.com**
 Twitter: **@RonnieCho** Facebook: **@ChoforCityCouncil**

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 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

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 / Oppose
2. What is your position on instituting Instant Runoff Voting for all citywide offices and for all special elections for city offices?	Support / Oppose
3. What is your position on creating a voluntary municipal poll worker program to supplement poll worker recruitment by district leaders?	Support / Oppose
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 / Oppose
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 / Oppose

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 / Oppose
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 / Oppose

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?

I feel that the reformed bill drafting process enacted in 2014 has helped enact substantive legislation and create a more judicious budget process than it had been before. By having more transparent and objective processes while empowering committee chairs rather than the Speaker's discretion has created a system to better fund the constituencies of each City Council district. While the New York State Legislative Bill Drafting Commission is a prime example of a nonpartisan counsel, the New York City Council is unicameral legislative body and is heavily skewed toward the Democratic Party. The exact system with two commissioners from each chamber (and both major parties) is not likely to work, but enacting a counsel of nonpartisan commissioners should be done to ensure that each legislation in the NYC Council does what the sponsors intend, that it complies with parliamentary rules, and is above all constitutional.

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 / Oppose
b. Should committee hearings and votes be scheduled at the direction of the chairs?	Support / Oppose
c. Should committees be able to issue subpoenas by a vote of their members?	Support / Oppose
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 / Oppose
10. What is your position on greater disclosure of councilmembers' outside income?	Support / Oppose
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 / Oppose
12. What is your position on ensuring a more equitable and needs-based distribution of discretionary funding?	Support / Oppose
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 / Oppose
14. What is your position on extending term limits from two four-year terms to three four-year terms?	Support / 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 / Oppose

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 / Oppose
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 / Oppose
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 / Oppose
19. What is your position on reinstating the zero tolerance penalty for false official statements by public officers?	Support / Oppose
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 / Oppose
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 / Oppose

22. What is your position on requiring the NYPD to publish a regular report of use of force incidents with data disaggregated by race?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Support / <input type="radio"/> Oppose
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BUDGET REFORM

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

Simply put, the 2017 constitutional convention could put at risk the progress we have made in the last twenty years. It is possible by opening up the constitutional revision process we could codify more rights and state protections, but we put many rights at risk from protections against discrimination to collective bargaining.

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?

~~I believe that NYC Campaign Finance Laws, training, and requirements are some of the most defined in the country— for good measure. New York City’s history with “pay-to-play” needs to be left in the past. For starters, I would add that PACs should need to renew their PAC status with the New York City Campaign Finance Board once every two years, rather than once every four years. Second, I would limit PACs from for-profit institutions like law firms and campaign strategy firms to ensure that PACs that are created by not by wealthy, influential institutions but by groups in need to coalesce to amplify their political voice. But lastly, we can do more to give citizens political wealth and giving into their hands. Seattle has started their “democracy voucher” program to give each citizen four \$25 vouchers to give out as political contributions while only costing each household \$11.50. This program promotes the equality of every household when each person can choose to whom they give away their money, their support, their voice. And New York City should be the forefront of these democratic solutions.~~

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.

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. New York's housing system is in dire need of attention and improvement. As councilman I promise to fight for tenants, creating a public list of predatory landlords and lenders, and advocate for increased transparency and affordable housing ratios for developers who take advantage of breaks like J-51 and 421-a. Furthermore, I will work to make NYCHA leadership more representative, requiring a majority of board members to be NYCHA residents. It is past time that councilmen, especially those from Lower Manhattan, stand up and halt the midtown creep, keeping our community unique, affordable, accessible to everyone.
2. Access to affordable and quality health care is a right for all New Yorkers. The new presidential administration is trying its hardest to prevent people from getting insurance, so it falls to states and cities to lead the charge. New York should explore creating a single-payer health care system that covers all its residents. As a member of the city council, I will fight for single payer, ensuring that New York stays at the forefront of the nationwide progressive movement.
3. As a product of the public school system, I promise to fight for District 2's schools. In a time when we have a Secretary of Education bent on doing everything she can to deprive students of the resources and protections they need, and a recalcitrant assembly in Albany that doesn't have our students' best interests at heart, I will ensure that the children of District 2 have access to comprehensive, well-funded schools, and teachers are trained and treated with accordance to the important role they play in our community.
4. I will hold Gracie Mansion and Albany accountable for funding transportation and will explore creative solutions to the L train shutdown from increased ferry service to dedicated bus lanes across the Williamsburg Bridge. Our public transit system is crumbling, and the regular delays, accidents, and malfunctions are unacceptable to everyday New Yorkers. As councilman, I will work to allocate more funds to the maintenance of our subway system and increase the availability of ferries to and from Manhattan to ensure that New Yorkers don't have to restructure their entire lives due to deterioration.
5. My parents came to America from South Korea in search of a better life for themselves and the family they wanted to have. They worked hard, eventually starting their own small business, but faced many barriers to success. As councilman, I promise to work with both small businesses and labor organizations in the district to stimulate job growth and remove obstacles to success for those who want to start their own businesses, as well as those who want good-paying, stable jobs. The economic vibrancy of our district allows us to maintain the unique character and diversity in our district without heeling to midtown developers.

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.

First, I believe transparency and accountability are the strongest foundation to a robust constituent service and will make me a better representative for the people of District 2. I plan on holding open office hours, holding as many community meetings as possible, and going door-to-door of every neighbor because it is important I learn first hand the struggles and problems of my constituents. I got my political education by working for President Barack Obama, a visionary, not a reactionary. I want to make sure that I am being proactive in creating a bold, progressive agenda to fight for the real causes and changes needed to provide the best for the greatest city in the world and for the greatest neighborhood.

Second, New York State and City are in need of electoral reform. Here in New York City, general elections aren't competitive because we have a restricted primary electoral system. We need to open up the process so that every person has the right to exercise their voice. We need big voter reform from same day registration, vote-by-mail, early voting, to less stringent process for absentee voting. In a city as progressive as ours, as expansive as ours, and as inclusive to all walks of life, we have made the most basic civic tool, voting, cumbersome. We need to make the process more accessible and less restrictive. Any reform that encourages more voting is a better system for our democracy. We should not inhibit more people of from entering the process, we need to be engaging more people in the process for a better city and for a better democracy.

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.