

**Biographical Information**

Candidate Name: Vincent Gentile

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat

Age: 58

Education: Juris Doctor

Office Sought (including district): Kings County District Attorney

Occupation/Employer: NYC Council Member, 43<sup>rd</sup> District

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: NYC Council Member 2003-present; NYS Senator, 1997-2002; Assistant District Attorney, Queens County 1985-1996; have been a candidate on the public ballot eleven times in the last 23 years.

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

**Campaign Contact Information**

Campaign Manager Name: Sam Powers

Additional Staff Contact:

Address: 151 Kent Avenue, Apt 113, Brooklyn NY, 11249

Telephone: 651-387-2577

Fax:

Website:

Email: Sam@GentileForDA.com

Twitter:

Facebook:

**Affirmations**

Have you completed required campaign finance filings? YES

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? YES

**I. CANDIDATE QUESTIONS**

Please state your position on the following issues by using the space provided below each question or a separate sheet of paper to elaborate on your positions on the following questions. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.

- 1. What trends do you see in criminal activity that the district attorney's office should address?

Deaths from the overdose of narcotics now outnumber the number of deaths in NYC from homicide and car accidents combined. Accordingly the DA's office in Brooklyn needs a comprehensive major case narcotics investigations unit that will do the necessary investigative work to interdict the flow of narcotics before they hit the streets of Brooklyn.

- 2. What role do you think the district attorney plays in anti-corruption efforts and building public trust? What changes would you make to the structure of the office to help bolster public confidence in the DA's office?

The District Attorney in conjunction with other law enforcement entities like NYC DOI and the US Attorney has a significant role in anti-corruption efforts in investigating, pursuing, and prosecuting corrupt public officials

as well as non-elected agency operatives all of which builds public trust in the zero tolerance the DA has for these activities. The Brooklyn DA's office needs to bolster its public confidence by expecting and more aggressively pursuing more cases of wrongful convictions beyond the twenty-two already uncovered.

3. To what extent would your office use the district attorney's existing authority to investigate and monitor elected officials' conduct in relation to issues like campaign finance compliance and proper use of government resources and influence?

I would investigate any and all so called "pay-to-play" schemes and would not hesitate to pursue and prosecute where criminal activity is found. This holds true for investigation of criminal activity with respect to campaign finance compliance.

4. Do you believe more needs to be done to ease the re-entry of formerly incarcerated persons into society and if so, what would you propose?

More successful re-entry of the formerly incarcerated is necessary for the benefit of the individual, society and to prevent the occurrence of the revolving door of recidivism. I propose to use my twenty years' experience as an elected official working with business and labor to work with them as the DA to create job opportunities for this population. This would be an innovative use of the District Attorney's platform that can bring hope to those involved.

5. What should the role of the district attorney be in addressing issues relating to terrorism? How would you ensure citizens' privacy rights while fulfilling this role?

While most issues relating to terrorism are likely to be handled by federal law enforcement entities, I would assist in those efforts should it be a significant matter of public safety. While a DA's first job is to keep people safe, I would still be sure that any investigation I conduct or that I participate in follows and protects civil and privacy rights of individuals such as adhering to the Hanschu standards of surveillance and investigative technique.

6. Do you think that the number of incidents of police misconduct is a problem? If so, what would you propose to facilitate more effective oversight of police misconduct? What data do you have to support your point of view?

Police misconduct is always a concern particularly when there are victims involved that are hurt or killed. More police oversight has been introduced with the creation of the police inspector general and I plan to engage with the IG frequently as a means by which investigations and or prosecutions would result if needed. This proposal is new so while no data is available, I am confident this engagement will facilitate more effective oversight.

7. There had been fears that a drop in the reportable instances of Stop, Question, and Frisk could lead to higher

I support the more limited and more judicious use of stop, question and frisk. For too long this police practice has had a quota system attached to it which caused unnecessary, frivolous, stops that caused harassment, intimidation, and often humiliation of innocent targets. The unchecked use of this tactic also contributed to destroying police/public relationships and mutual trust and respect. Such practice serves neither the best interests of the police or public.

8. Do you support requiring that police interrogations be videotaped?

Yes, I fully support that police interrogations be videotaped as a way of eliminating/discouraging any forced testimony or confessions during those interrogations. Moreover videotaping will disallow juries to assess the mental and emotional state of the person being interrogated.

9. Earlier this year a commission led by Judge Jonathan Lippman and supported by Speaker Mark-Viverito and Mayor de Blasio made recommendations for the closing of the Rikers Island jail complex. How do you feel about the plan to close the complex? What concerns do you have and what are the potential benefits and pitfalls of the plan?

I support the concept of closing the complex and as DA I would closely monitor how the plan rolls out with the details over the ten-year period. The Rikers complex is not working and conditions are getting worse both for inmates and correction personnel. Too many people are incarcerated at Rikers while awaiting trial (70%). We need bail reform as a way to reduce this population while still ensuring the public's safety.

10. In November, voters in New York will be asked whether they wish to hold a constitutional convention to amend the New York State Constitution. Do you support holding such a convention?

I am currently not in support of such a convention because I believe we already have the established and necessary venues in place to implement changes the public deems necessary. This can be done with the appropriate procedural safeguards in place which prevent fringe or single issue groups from commandeering the narrow-interest change. Such fundamental change that doesn't serve the best interests of the general public can occur in a constitutional convention. Better would be attempts to change particular portions of the state constitution rather than the entire constitution itself.

11. 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?

Although I am not in favor of a wide-ranging conditional convention, as a District Attorney I would be prohibited from being politically active against it so I do not foresee the DA having much of a role in the resolution of this issue.

12. What would your priorities be as district attorney? How would they differ from the incumbent's? What would you change in the incumbent's approach to fulfilling the responsibilities of the district attorney? What about your background and approach to the position differentiates you from the others running for district attorney?

How my candidacy is unique:

1. I am the only elected public official in the race and as such, the only one with the necessary political relationships with the stakeholders that can effectuate change
2. I am the only candidate whose prosecutorial experience was in the Queens DA (11 years). All others had their experience in the Brooklyn DA's office under District Attorney Charles Hynes. This makes me the only candidate independent enough, from the wrongful convictions during the Hynes years, to continue to uncover and unravel any other such convictions as a way to continue the legacy of Ken Thompson.

My priorities:

1. Expand the unit and the inquiry into wrongful convictions and finally rid the Brooklyn DA of this very bad chapter of its history.
2. Create a new culture of professional responsibility and ethics with new training and oversight
3. Establish, with adequate resources, a major case narcotics investigations bureau that will investigate and interdict narcotics shipments and activity.
4. Conduct and process with tougher prosecutions of gun-possession cases.
5. Establish an Elder Protection Unit focused on protecting seniors in a range of issues, particularly in the area of protection of seniors from financial fraud schemes.

**Additional Comments:**

## 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. Expand the Conviction Review Unit and accelerate the review of more questionable convictions.**
- 2. Create a new Training Bureau that will instill a new culture of professional ethics and responsibility in the Brooklyn DA's office.**
- 3. Establish a major case narcotics investigations unit to attack the soaring drug epidemic and stem the tide of ever increasing narcotic overdoses.**
- 4. Tougher prosecution of gun-related cases**
- 5. Create an Elder Protection Unit with special focus on protecting seniors from financial fraud and schemes targeted towards seniors.**

### 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.

Restoring public trust in the work of the Brooklyn DA comes with the knowledge that the public will be served by a new DA who is as independent of the bad history of the DA's office as was Ken Thompson. DA Thompson showed that path forward in erasing the Brooklyn DA's miscreant past and I am the only candidate with the same independent credentials to carry on that work. Having been a prosecutor in Queens and having no connection to the Brooklyn DA's office or its management, I can without fear or favor continue the work of Ken Thompson. Moreover, I will institute a new culture of professionalism and ethics unencumbered by the past. Moreover as an elected official for the past 20 years I will conduct and I know how to conduct the political affairs of the office in an upright manner and for the public benefit. This effort will also include working across the board with political and business leaders to bring hope and opportunity to areas of Brooklyn that have been underserved and overlooked. Doing all of these things will go a long way in restoring the trust in the office of the Brooklyn District Attorney.