



Candidate Questionnaire

Local Candidates Committee

NYC Public Advocate Special Election 2019

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 January 3rd. Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for New York City Public Advocate, and to issue our endorsement in the Special 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 publish returned questionnaires on our website, in printed voters directory, and in other appropriate venues. We thank you very much for your response.

Biographical Information

Candidate Name: Rafael L Espinal jr.

Party Affiliation(s): Livable City (Dem) Age: 34

Education: Bachelors, English, Queens College

Office Sought: New York City Public Advocate

Occupation/Employer: New York City Council Member, 37th district

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement:

Candidate Cell Phone: 917-528-3613

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

Campaign Contact Information

Campaign Manager Name: Patrick Jordan Additional Staff Contact:

Address: 41-05 Newton Rd, Astoria NY

Telephone: 917- 392-1284 Fax:

Website: rafaelespinal.nyc Email:

Twitter: Rlespinal Facebook:

Affirmations

Have you completed required campaign finance filings? YES YES / NO

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

(Please note: interviews are prerequisites of being considered for Citizens Union's endorsement.)

Signature of Candidate:

Date: 1/4/2019

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.

CITIZEN UNION ISSUES

1. What is your position with respect to eliminating party primaries and establishing a nonpartisan election system in which all candidates participate in the first round and the top two candidates advance to the second round? All registered voters regardless of party would be eligible to vote in both rounds.	Support <input checked="" type="radio"/> Oppose <input type="radio"/>
2. What is your position on instituting ranked choice voting in all elections for citywide office, including all special elections?	Support <input checked="" type="radio"/> Oppose <input type="radio"/>
3. 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 <input checked="" type="radio"/> Oppose <input type="radio"/>
4. What is your position on establishing independent budgeting for: a. borough presidents? b. The Conflicts of Interest Board? c. The Public Advocate? d. community boards?	a. Support <input checked="" type="radio"/> Oppose <input type="radio"/> b. Support <input checked="" type="radio"/> Oppose <input type="radio"/> c. Support <input checked="" type="radio"/> Oppose <input type="radio"/> d. Support <input checked="" type="radio"/> Oppose <input type="radio"/>

ISSUES OF CITYWIDE IMPORTANCE

5. How would you use the office of the Public Advocate to impact public policy to serve the broad public interest?

I believe the Public Advocates ability to introduce legislation is the most important power of the office. I will always introduce legislation to shape the direction of our city, especially when the City Council or the Mayor fail to push progressive measures forward.

6. What would be your most important legislative and non-legislative priorities as Public Advocate?

- 1. I would do everything in my power to hold the Mayor accountable.
- 2. Three important issues I would focus on are Climate Change, Affordability for tenants, homeowners and small businesses, our infrastructure (MTA, NYCHA) and equal access to services and programs for all communities.

7. What do you consider to be the three most important oversight functions of the Public Advocate?

1. The Public Advocate being an ex officio member of all city council committees.

This is essential to being able to probe and oversee agencies under oath.

2. The citywide platform the office provides, I believe is a power within itself. Being the voice of the public creates a unique opportunity to organize New Yorkers against the Mayor when initiatives, investments or overall city management isn't working.

3. Having appointments on the Pension Board is also influential in being able to influence how those dollars are invested.

8. The most recent Public Advocate has used litigation extensively, with mixed results, at least with regard to the Public Advocate's standing to bring a lawsuit. What is your view on the Public Advocate's use of litigation to attempt to force policy changes?

I am not a lawyer, but I would hire a strong team of litigators to sue the city on issues it fails to act on. I believe it's an important tool that is used properly can restore justice and and provide relief for New Yorkers that need it most. As a legislator, I understand first hand that it's not the easy to pass policy changes. The power sue should be an available tool

9. What discrepancies, if any, do you see between services promised to New Yorkers and services rendered? For those listed please indicate your proposals for bringing policy closer to practice.

The city could be more aggressive in the fight against climate change. We have to pass legislation that would cool, our city while also improving livability, water and air quality. I believe its time

To ensure all NYC roofs are converted into green spaces. Cities like Portland, Detroit and San Francisco are already mandating developments to do so, we should here in NYC.

I will pass legislation creating this mandate on all roofs. New construction and retrofits.

I would also use the bully pulpit to demand more aggressive waste and carbon goals.

10. How would you approach the responsibilities of the Public Advocate regarding access to public information in monitoring the implementation of the city's Open Data Law?

I would commission a website in the office of the public advocate that would make the cities open data more user friend. It is currently hard for average New Yorkers to navigate and

find the information they need to understand how effective government is working. I would also call for the office of DOITT to provide periodic updates of the data that is being shared or withheld from New Yorkers.

11. What specifically will you do as Public Advocate to ensure New York achieves a full and complete Census count in 2020?

The biggest threat to getting a proper count is the fear of New Yorkers having to include their immigration status. I would create a outreach team dedicate to outreach efforts in immigrant communities, working with non profits. New Yorkers living in illegally converted units also fail to fill the census for fear that the city would vacate their homes. I would use the bully pulpit to have the Mayor and agencies commit to and ensure New Yorker that the data will not be used against their housing status.

12. How would you leverage the office of Public Advocate to address any of the following issues, if not discussed in answering previous questions:

- a. Affordable Housing
- b. Public Safety
- c. Public Transportation
- d. Health and Environment
- e. Economic Development
- f. Education

Public transportation is no doubt a major issue for all New Yorkers. The Public Advocate has to play a major role in advocating for a seat in the MTA board. I would also travel to albany and advocate for adequate funding and a expeditious plan.

I will work internally with my office to create a dedicated website that would provide New Yorkers with a clear picture of who should be held accountable, how their dollars are being allocated to the MTA, and where the shortfalls lie in repairs. The information empower New Yorkers by bringing them into the process and conversation.

And finally, I would advocate for city control of the MTA to remove all ambiguity on who is responsible for the lack of repairs and service disruptions.

It would also help centralize spending and capital improvements.

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.

On Education, We need to create more seats in specialized schools to open up more opportunities for students that feel shutout because of how limited seats are. We also have to provide capital investments to all buildings, to ensure students have the resources they need to create school equity. Every classroom should be the same.

In neighborhoods like East New York, students can't perform because they're not feeding their bodies properly. Many students don't have a choice. Schools need to provide the building blocks for healthy lifestyles and success even outside the classroom. In my district I made sure every public school in my community has a program that delivers fresh fruits and vegetables, and teaches healthy cooking students, parents, and school staff. I'm striving to bring this throughout the city and combine it with my plan to put farms in schools, so students understand the value of the healthy food they eat.

Millions of students also come from tough upbringings and living conditions, almost certainly setting them up to fail in the classroom. I'd like to see meditation and yoga as part of our curriculum, considering they've been proven to reduce stress and stimulate learning in high-need communities. We must try new and innovative ways to give students the tools they need, to lead a more productive lifestyle and improve their chances at being successful. Private schools and public schools in more affluent communities are already practicing this. It not a foreign idea.

Like Letitia James, was able to advocate for Free School Lunches for all, I would do the same with the issues above

II. CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS

What are the top five promises or goals you are making to voters during this campaign?

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. Hold the Mayor accountable on issues and initiatives he fails to deliver on.

2. Fight Climate change and make the city greener by introducing policy that will create and expand green space and push the city for more aggressive carbon/waste goals

3. Protect the cities character and integrity by advocating for SBJSA to protect small businesses, Nightlife and cultural establishments important to service workers and artist.

4. Push the passage of new workers rights, like the “right to disconnect” A European inspired regulation, that would protect workers from retribution if they decide to disconnect after their normal work hours

5. Be a watchdog of NYCHA and the MTA. Their is no reason why key infrastructure like housing and transportation should be crumbling and underfunded. I would push against the Mayor and Governor to create expeditious and efficient plans to rebuild both agencies and their infrastructure.

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 would continue to conduct the political affairs of this office in an upright manner.

~~As a City Council Member, I am proud to say that I have never abused the powers of the office and committed my time to serve every constituent in and outside of my district that sought my offices assistance. Little part of my life has been dedicated to understanding and working in government, but I did it because I have a strong passion for wanting to bring equity in services and representation to all New Yorkers.~~

~~As as candidate in this race, I will also be participating in the New matching funds program. I believe that we must do everything we can to keep big special interest dollars out of politics.~~

~~I also vowed not to take any PAC money from corporation or real estate, to ensure New Yorkers that I will only be, and I am, only accountable to them.~~

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.