



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: Ron Kim

Party Affiliation(s): Democrat, People Over Corporations

Education: BA Hamilton College, MPA from Baruch College

Office Sought: New York City Public Advocate

Occupation/Employer: New York State Assemblymember

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: Democratic Organization of Flushing, New York State Assembly, New York City Council Speaker's Office, New York State Governor's Office, Advisor to Chief Education Officer at Chicago Public Schools

Candidate Cell Phone: 646-634-7004

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

Campaign Contact Information

Campaign Manager Name: Jake Dilemani

Address:

Telephone: 917-284-3105

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Additional Staff Contact: Eric Meyer

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Facebook: [facebook.com/rk4pa](https://www.facebook.com/rk4pa)

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's endorsement.)

Signature of Candidate:

Date: January 3, 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 / Oppose

2. What is your position on instituting ranked choice voting in all elections for citywide office, including all special elections?

Support / Oppose

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 / Oppose

4. What is your position on establishing independent budgeting for:

a. borough presidents?

a. Support / Oppose

b. The Conflicts of Interest Board?

b. Support / Oppose

c. The Public Advocate?

c. Support / Oppose

d. community boards?

d. Support / Opposed

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

My vision is to transform the office of Public Advocate into the country's first elected position that focuses on relieving people from the crushing burden of student and consumer debt. I will start by eliminating the most distressed student loans in New York City by seizing them from the banks through eminent domain. This can be paid for by ending corporate handouts. I currently carry legislation to this effect in the State Assembly and authored a position paper on this issue titled Disrupting Student Debt. This action will have a direct and positive impact on working New York families and simultaneously spur economic growth. I also propose other policies, known as "The People's Deal." These proposals include reforming our city's corporate handout policy, healthcare rights for NYCHA tenants, a Green New Deal, reducing the too-big-to-fail influence of massive monopolies and continuing my advocacy for small businesses, students, seniors and working families across New York.

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

As Public Advocate, I would work to reduce the debt burden holding our economy back, break up the trusts that extract wealth from our local communities and end corporate giveaways disguised as economic development. To that end I have introduced several bills/policies in the State Assembly including: The New York Tax Justice Act, The New Yorkers financial Freedom Act and the Anti-Monetization Clause. As Public Advocate I would introduce similar legislation at the city level. I will also fight to end corporate subsidies and will use our eminent domain laws to seize the student loans from the banks that control them and work to cancel them, starting with the most distressed.

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

The Public Advocate is an ombudsman for the people of New York City. I will exercise this role to the fullest extent possible to hold government leaders at all levels accountable and influence them to advance policies that put people over corporations. That includes providing oversight on the Mayor's office. As Public Advocate, I will not hesitate to stand with the mayor when he's right and stand up to him when he is wrong.

The Public Advocate can also have an investigative function. One of my primary areas of focus would be to investigate the NYC Economic Development Corporation. This quasi-government entity gives taxpayer dollars to mega-corporations like Amazon while ignoring the needs of small businesses and everyday New Yorkers. We need to stop helping corporations extract wealth from our local economies and instead focus on investing taxpayer funds in communities.

Finally, the Public Advocate acts as a watchdog over the operations of city agencies. I will ensure that City agencies are responsive to the needs of everyday people, transparent in their operations and efficient in their spending.

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 believe the Office of the Public Advocate does and should have legal standing to sue the City of New York. The Office can also join lawsuits as a third party. I will utilize these powers to protect the interests of the people of New York City.

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.

For as long as I have been in public service, I have witnessed elected officials putting the needs of corporations over people by providing massive taxpayer subsidies to the world's largest companies while ignoring the needs of everyday people. The Amazon HQ2 subsidies are perfect examples of this twisted set of priorities. That is why I was the first elected official to speak out against Amazon HQ2 and remain the deal's most vocal opponent in New York City. I believe the practice of putting corporations over people is the root cause of many social and economic problems that everyday New Yorkers face. For example, something is desperately wrong when predatory mega corporations receive billions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies while millions of New Yorkers struggle to get by due to the crushing burden of debt. In real estate, wealthy developers receive massive tax breaks and direct government funds while children in NYCHA housing are exposed to lead paint. As Public Advocate, I will flip this script by leading a movement to end taxpayer subsidies to corporations and instead focus on investing in local communities and small businesses. Moreover, I will work to eliminate the billions of dollars in student debt that people throughout this city face. This will provide an immediate boost to thousands of families and to the economy at large.

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?

As Public Advocate, I will fight for transparency from all levels of government and will intervene when necessary to ensure the City fulfills its responsibilities to implement the Open Data Law in a timely and usable manner. As the City's watchdog, the Office of the Public Advocate in particular should be able to effectively use city data to hold elected officials accountable and identify and address the unmet needs of city residents. However, I believe in the responsible use of data and will honor the privacy of every day New Yorkers.

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

I will fight to secure the necessary funding from all levels of government for a full and complete Census. If necessary, I will introduce legislation before the City Council to secure this funding and build a movement to ensure its passage. In addition, the bully pulpit will be an important tool in lobbying the Federal government to hire effective census workers. Census workers should be hired from within immigrant communities and have the language skills to communicate in a manner that is efficient, accurate and culturally appropriate. Prior education is vital to full and complete participation. As Public Advocate I will work to build trust in our communities and ensure that all families know that answering the Census will not put them at risk.

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

As Public Advocate, I will stand up to the real estate industry and fight to repeal the Urstadt law, enact stronger tenant protections, and finally end vacancy decontrol at the State level.

b. Public Safety

The Public Advocate acts as a watchdog over the operations of city agencies. Oversight over the conduct of the NYPD is part of that mission, and if I am elected, I will exercise this critical function of the office to the fullest extent. I also support the use of body cameras on police officers and believe the best way to achieve justice in such cases is to ensure an independent investigation. I will carry this philosophy with me to the Office of Public Advocate.

c. Public Transportation

As I have done as a member of the Assembly, I will use the bully pulpit of the Office of Public Advocate to advocate for additional capital and operating funds for the MTA.

d. Health and Environment

Every person is entitled to healthcare as a basic right. Healthcare should not be a profit driven venture, which is why I am a co-sponsor of the New York Health Act in the New York State Assembly. As Public Advocate, I will work to ensure that every New Yorker has access to the quality healthcare they deserve and that health care providers are held accountable.

A central part of my platform for Public Advocate is a "Green New Deal." This incorporates my existing proposals of securing the financial health of everyday New Yorkers, corporate reform, and debt forgiveness, while transitioning to a fully green energy economy that supports green jobs, green research and development, and direct funding of renewable energy efforts. These measures will simultaneously combat economic inequality and climate change.

e. Economic Development

One of the central tenets of my "People over Corporations" agenda is ending taxpayer subsidies to massive corporations. Providing handouts to the world's largest companies exacerbates income disparities and enables companies to extract wealth and resources at the expense of local communities.

As Public Advocate, I will shift these priorities by investing taxpayer funds into communities and small businesses, which are the main drivers of employment and economic growth in New York City.

f. Education

The biggest problem our schools face is funding, yet there is enough money in two zip codes in Manhattan to pay for every student in New York to receive a high-quality education. As Public Advocate, I will fight to ensure that our schools receive the education funding promised to them by the CFE decision and ensure that schools have the resources they need to provide a top quality education at all levels citywide.

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.

As a State Assemblyman, I have introduced several pieces of legislation that support the policy agenda of my campaign for New York City Public Advocate. These bills include, The New York Tax Justice Act, The New Yorkers financial Freedom Act and the Anti-Monetization Clause. As Public Advocate, I will introduce and fight for similar legislation in the New York City Council.

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) Transform the Office of the Public Advocate into the first elected position in the nation devoted to reducing the debt burden for New Yorkers and make measurable progress to reduce the burden on New York City's most distressed student debtors*
- 2) Place significant pressure on the Mayor and City Council to end taxpayer-funded giveaways to massive corporations.*

- 3) *Lead a movement to encourage greater investment in local communities and small businesses*
- 4) *Set New York City on a path to 100% renewable energy by 2030*
- 5) *Fight to break up monopolistic corporate trusts*

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 member of the New York State Assembly, I have prioritized constituent services in my district office. As Public Advocate, I will continue this practice and ensure that my office is equipped to handle the many diverse issues that New Yorkers face on a daily basis whether related to housing, immigration, employment, problems with City agencies or others. Any decisions will be dictated by the needs and best interests of New Yorkers. As Public Advocate, I will ensure that my office's budget is transparent and used to help the greatest number of people possible.