

Candidate Questionnaire

Dear Candidate,

In the following pages, you will find questions regarding your positions on various reform issues and your plans for office.

Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for office, and to issue our preference for the June primary. Read more about the method, principles, and criteria of the candidate evaluation process [here](#).

**

If you seek our support, we will need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process.

**

If you cannot complete the questionnaire in one sitting, you can click Save at the bottom of every page.

Once you submit the questionnaire, you will receive a confirmation email with your responses. Citizens Union will not be able to see your answers unless you submit the form. We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).

For any questions, please email candidates@citizensunion.org

We thank you very much for your response.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Name

Thomas Suozzi

Running in which primary

Democratic

What party line/s are you running under?

Democratic

Age

59

Education

JD from Fordham University School of Law, BS
from Boston College

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Member of Congress (2017-Present)
Nassau County Executive (2002-2010)
Glen Cove Mayor (1994-2002)

Website

suozziforny.com

Twitter

twitter.com/Tom_Suozzi

Facebook

facebook.com/tom.suozzi

Affirmations

Have you completed the required campaign finance filings?

Yes

Are you willing to be interviewed by Citizens Union's Local Candidates Committee?

Yes

(Please note: interviews are prerequisites for Citizens Union preferences and endorsements)

Signature



ETHICS

Please elaborate below on your agenda to improve ethics in New York state government. What do you see as the main flaws in the current system? What policies would you implement to correct those flaws? What actions you plan to take to advance your positions on ethics issues.

As US Attorney Damian Williams said at his April 12 press conference announcing bribery and corruption charges against Lieutenant Governor Brian Benjamin, "Public corruption remains a problem in New York. It is a bipartisan problem. It is an ongoing problem." Last August, The Washington Post ranked New York as the #1 most corrupt state in the country, and it is no surprise given all the elected officials who have left office in scandal.

Unfortunately, despite saying "A new era of transparency will be one of my hallmarks of my

administration” and “We’ll focus on open, ethical governing that New Yorkers will trust”, Governor Hochul has made the culture of corruption worse:

- Her handpicked Lieutenant Governor was forced to resign after being arrested.
- She gave the billionaire owners of the Buffalo Bills the largest taxpayer-funded handout in NFL history, jamming it into the state budget at the last second after a secretive negotiation with no public debate.
- After refusing to release her daily schedules to the public for months, the schedules she has released show an unprecedented amount of time spent at fundraisers with lobbyists. They also showed abuse of taxpayer-funded state aircraft that forced her to reimburse the state for tens of thousands of dollars.

We need common sense reforms that will increase transparency and restore New Yorkers’ faith in the Office of the Governor. That is why I have laid out my 6-Point Government Accountability Plan:

1. Any expenditure over \$10 million not included in the Executive, Senate, or Assembly Budget that is added later in the budget process (like the Buffalo Bills stadium) must be subject to legislative hearings.
2. Adopt federal campaign finance laws: Lower contribution limits to \$2,900 and prohibit corporate donations.
3. Require quarterly campaign financial disclosure filings.
4. Reform JCOPE into a truly independent ethics commission. Governor Hochul’s proposal does not do so because it still allows elected officials to play a role in choosing the people meant to oversee their behavior.
5. Ban the use of state aircraft for non-official events in order to prevent the abuse like we’ve seen from Governor Hochul.
6. Ban the promotion of statewide elected officials in taxpayer-funded, unsolicited mass communications within 90 days of elections. Doing so would prevent situations like the one we recently had, where a taxpayer-funded advertisement from the New York Power Authority served as a de facto Hochul campaign advertisement.

What experience have you had, if any, with

ethics reform? If you have worked to advance this issue (as a lawmaker, public official, professional, or a private citizen) we would like to hear about it.

When I was Nassau County Executive in 2004, I launched a campaign called “Fix Albany”, a statewide political action committee whose goal was “to root out corruption in the New York State government, reform the Legislature, and hold State legislators accountable for their non-action to help County and local governments.”

When I launched Fix Albany, I was applauded for finally going after the corruption that had for decades been entrenched in the State Government. The New York Times praised “Suozzi’s Excellent Idea!” Newsday issued a call to “Support Suozzi’s Challenge.” The Buffalo News lauded me for “Going After Albany.” The Staten Island Advance said “Right on to Suozzi’s Revolution.”

Prior to starting Fix Albany, I’d faced immense resistance when even asking for a meeting with the power players of the New York State Government, many of whom would ultimately succumb to ethics scandals themselves (Sheldon Silver, Joe Bruno, Dean Skelos, etc.). I decided to run a challenger Democrat against an incumbent Democrat in a State Assembly primary and a challenger Democrat against an incumbent Republican in a State Senate general election. Sure enough, both of the challengers I backed won their races, and those guys started to listen to me. That’s why I was able to get a Medicaid Cap passed that saved New York City and the counties billions of dollars.

When I ran for Governor a couple years later, The New York Times Editorial Board reflected on my Fix Albany campaign, saying, “Suozzi was earlier (than Spitzer) in recognizing that New York’s state government is a mess and that its irresponsibility threatens local governments as well. And unlike the vast majority of politicians who complain that Albany needs fixing, he did something about it, risking his own political capital to back candidates against entrenched incumbent state legislators. That kind of gumption is rarer than any other political virtue in New York.”

Ethics Oversight

Do you support replacing Joint Commission on Public Ethics with an effective and independent enforcement body, whose members are not appointed directly by elected officials?

Yes

Do you support the new independent ethics oversight agency to also replace the Legislative Ethics Commission (LEC)?

Yes

Do you support allowing the new ethics body to investigate misconduct more effectively by simplifying its voting rules to allow for majority vote in making decisions, giving it the authority to subpoena testimony and documents, empowering it to suspend or terminate public officials (not elected officials), and increasing its transparency?

Yes

Preventing corruption

Do you support reducing nonspecific lump sum funding in the state budget by publicly posting comprehensive information regarding how they are distributed, enforcing stricter disclosure requirements from the elected officials who award them, and establishing a searchable online database for such appropriations?

Yes

Do you support creating a Doing Business Database to track entities and individuals who have been awarded contracts or other economic agreements with the state, similar to the one in use by the NYC government?

Yes

Do you support restoring the State Comptroller's authority to review state contracts before they are executed, including procurement audits for SUNY, CUNY, and centralized contracts of the OGS?

Yes

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

Election Administration

How would you use your power as a governor to improve election administration in New York?

Election administration in our state is seriously deficient. It often takes weeks to count ballots and determine who won an election, which can undermine the public's faith in the democratic process. As Governor, I will hold a statewide conference with the Boards of Elections and develop a system of best practices.

What experience have you had, if any, with election reform? If you have worked to advance this issue (as a lawmaker, public official, professional, or a private citizen) we would like to hear about it.

When I was in law school, I received the New York State Bar Association's Ethics Award for my pro bono work on the New York State Commission on Government Integrity and helped draft its report. As a public official for over two decades, I have always encouraged open, fair, and transparent elections and have long advocated for campaign finance reform.

Do you support removing the constitutional requirement in election administration that empowers the two major political parties to nominate and effectively control election boards?

No

Do you support reducing the party-based hiring in boards of elections to the minimum currently required by the constitution?

No

Do you support implementing an open, competitive, merit-based hiring process for all election administration staff and certain functions at polls?

No

If needed, you may elaborate below on your positions on the previous questions.

I support the political parties themselves

conducting oversight over each other. I am deeply concerned about the technical deficiencies of New York City and the Counties and the extraordinary amount of time it takes to tabulate election results. As Governor, I will use my office to highlight and correct these deficiencies.

Voting Rights

Do you support re-passing the constitutional amendment to enact same-day voter registration, and putting it on the ballot in 2024?

Yes

Do you support immediately reducing voter registration deadline to ten days before an election, the minimum allowed in the state constitution?

Yes

Do you support re-passing the constitutional amendment to enact no-excuse absentee voting, and putting it on the ballot in 2024?

Yes

Open and Competitive Elections

Do you support easing access to the ballot for parties and independent candidates, by returning to the pre-2020 voting and signature thresholds? That includes reducing the voting threshold to become a registered party back to 50,000 votes in a gubernatorial election, and the petition requirement for independent candidates back to 15,000 signatures.

Yes

Do you support reforming the process of filling vacancies in the state legislature by implementing nonpartisan special elections or holding a primary election at least thirty days in advance of the special election?

Yes

Who do you think should draw new district maps every decade in New York? (e.g., the

current Independent Redistricting Commission, the Legislature/LATFOR, a new body)

I still think that the Independent Redistricting Commission is the body best suited to draw maps. However, we saw this past year how partisanship prevented the Commission from submitting a consensus map with bipartisan support. Ultimately, the best and perhaps only way to get partisanship out of the redistricting process is to pass federal legislation banning partisan gerrymandering and requiring independent redistricting commissions in all states.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

How would you use your power as a governor to reform the campaign finance system in New York and reduce the role of big money in campaigns?

A key piece of my 6-Point Government Accountability Plan is aligning New York's campaign finance rules with the stricter rules the federal government has. I would sign a law limiting campaign contributions to \$2,900 for the primary and \$2,900 for the general election, the same as for federal offices. Right now, statewide Democratic candidates can receive \$22,600 for the primary and \$47,100 for the general election.

What experience have you had, if any, with campaign finance reform? If you have worked to advance this issue (as a lawmaker, public official, professional, or a private citizen) we would like to hear about it.

In Congress, I have consistently received an 'A' rating from End Citizens United, whose goal is to reduce the role of big money in politics. As a candidate for Governor, I have made my campaign finance reform a major piece of my platform. For too long, New Yorkers have been forced to deal with the consequences of Albany's culture of corruption, which largely stems from the influence of big money donors. As Governor, I will sign \$2,900 contribution limits into law.

Do you support further reducing campaign contribution limits?

Yes

Do you support setting even lower contribution limits for registered lobbyists and those who do business with the state?

Yes

Starting from the next election cycle, New York will have a public campaign finance program, offering matching funds on small donations for candidates who opt in. If you decide to run again in the next election, do you intend to participate in the program?

Yes

Do you support moving the campaign finance matching program to be administered by an independent, nonpartisan body outside of the State Board of Election?

Yes

COURT REFORM

Do you support simplifying and consolidating New York State's court system - which includes 11 trial courts - by passing the Chief Judge's proposed constitutional amendment to modernize the courts?

Yes

STATE BUDGET PROCESS

What is your view on the balance of power between the Governor and the legislature during the budget process?

There is not enough transparency or public input in the budget process. That is why my Government Accountability Plan includes a requirement that any expenditure over \$10 million not included in the Executive, Senate, or Assembly Budget that is added later in the budget process must be subject to legislative hearings. Such a requirement would have required last minute additions this year like the Bills stadium and the \$350 million Long Island giveaway to be subject to public debate.

How do you view the budget process with respect to timeliness, effectiveness, fairness, and public accountability? What improvements, if any, can be made?

There is not enough transparency or public input in

the budget process. That is why my Government Accountability Plan includes a requirement that any expenditure over \$10 million not included in the Executive, Senate, or Assembly Budget that is added later in the budget process must be subject to legislative hearings. Such a requirement would have required last minute additions this year like the Bills stadium and the \$350 million Long Island giveaway to be subject to public debate.

MISCELLANEOUS

What are the top three campaign promises or goals, and what action will you take to achieve them if elected? Feel free to reference an answer above rather than restate it.

First: Fight crime: Implement my 15-Point Crime Intervention and Prevention Plan

Second: Lower taxes and make New York more affordable: Implement my Property Tax Reduction Plan

Third: End the culture of corruption in Albany: Implement my Government Accountability Plan (Referenced above)

Other than what you noted above, what experience have you had, if any, with good government and reform issues? (e.g. voting and elections, campaign finance, ethics, government transparency and oversight, police accountability).

Having a government reform agenda like I do is one thing, but you also need to be able to implement that agenda. Too many New York politicians are good at giving a speech but don't have the ability to overcome the culture of corruption that is so engrained in New York politics. I was excited when Governor Hochul promised "a new era of transparency" and "open, ethical governing that New Yorkers will trust", but we've seen that things have only gotten worse during her tenure. From Brian Benjamin to the Buffalo Bills to the secretive, rushed budget, Governor Hochul has not only failed to fix the culture of corruption in Albany, she has become part of it.

I am the only Democratic candidate with a proven track record of success as a reformer of the New York State Government. My Fix Albany fought back against Albany corruption on behalf of New York taxpayers. As Governor, I will finally bring the change that Albany so desperately needs. I hope to have your support.

What are your current fundraising numbers?

I've raised about \$10 million.

How many individual donors do you have?

About 3,000.

Please indicate any endorsements that your campaign has received, if applicable (you can also share a link to a list of endorsements)

Former Bronx Borough President Fernando Ferrer
New York City Councilman Robert Holden

IBEW Local 3

IBEW Local 25

IBEW Local 1049

UWUA Local 1-2

IATSE Local One

Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen Local 56

Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen Local 241

What else would you like us to know about yourself?

Everything I've done in my career has prepared me for this particular job at this particular time.

New York is in trouble. When I was born, we had 45 Members of Congress. Today, we have 27 and we are about to go down to 26. We are losing influence because we are not growing as quickly as the rest of the country. From 2020 to 2021, we lost 300,000 residents, the largest outmigration of any state in the United States, and more than Illinois, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and New Jersey combined.

New York faces serious problems with crime, affordability, troubled schools, and government corruption. I am the only Democratic primary candidate with 1) the proven executive experience, 2) the common sense approach to governing, and 3) the vision to make the New York State Government successful once again.

1) Proven Executive Experience:

I am the only candidate in the field with years of experience and a long track record of accomplishment as a chief executive. I served as Mayor of my hometown of Glen Cove for eight years and as County Executive of Nassau County, with a population and budget larger than 11 states, for eight years. When I took over as Nassau County Executive in 2002, we were on the brink of bankruptcy, our social services were a mess, and our physical infrastructure had deteriorated. During my eight years in office, I restored the fiscal health of the County, I brought a

revolutionary “No Wrong Door” human services delivery system to those most in need, I championed a \$150 million environmental restoration program, and I dramatically upgraded the County’s physical infrastructure and technology.

2) Common Sense Approach to Governing:

While I am a lifelong Democrat who will always advocate for my progressive values, I have learned throughout my career that in order to get things done that will make peoples’ lives better, you need to be willing to work with people who you disagree with. I will work with anyone, whether they are progressive or moderate, Democrat or Republican, to make New York the best that it can be.

3) A Clear Vision for New York:

I am the only candidate in the field who has laid out a comprehensive vision for New York:

- Fighting crime
- Lowering taxes and making New York more affordable
- Helping our troubled schools
- Ending the culture of corruption in Albany

Please review your answers by clicking PREVIEW ANSWERS below. You can submit the questionnaire at the bottom of the preview page by clicking SUBMIT.

Once you click SUBMIT, you will receive a confirmation email with a PDF file containing your responses. *If you don't see the email, please check your spam box.*

If you have any further questions, you may contact us at candidates@citizensunion.org

Responses to the questionnaire will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for office, and to issue our preference for the Primary and endorsement for the General Election.

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.