



Wednesday, April 6, 2022

Candidate Questionnaire - 2022 Primary

Dear Brent Michael O'Leary,
Congratulations on your decision to run for a seat on the New York Legislature!
Citizens Union appreciates your commitment to serve the public.
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](#).

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If you wish to be considered, please submit the questionnaire by March 16.

If you seek our support, we will need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process. Given time constraints and the limited capacity of a member-based organization, we may not be able to evaluate all contests or candidates in this election cycle.

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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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Brent Michael O'Leary

Office Sought (New York State)

Senate

District Number

37

In which primary

Democratic

What party line/s are you running under?

Democratic

If elected, which legislative conference will you join (e.g., Democrat, Republican, other)?

Democratic

Age

51

Education

Law School

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

2004-2008 Democratic National Committee Member

Democratic National Convention Superdelegate

Chair, Democrats Abroad, Japan Chapter

Lead Coordinator, Irish Americans for Obama

Founder, Hunters Point Civic Association

Board President, Woodside on the Move

Co-Founder, Boys & Girls Club of Sunnyside

Co-Founder, John Brown Party

LIC Covid-19 Relief Group

Woodside/Sunnyside Covid-19 Mutual Aid Relief

Organizer, Community Unity Street Fair and 108th Precinct Cancer Awareness Street Fair

Website brentfornyc.com

Twitter <https://twitter.com/brentoleary>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/olearyforassembly>

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

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, 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

Do you support significantly limiting outside compensation earned by state legislators and eliminate stipends, while increasing their pay?

Yes

Do you hold financial interest or serve as an officer on an entity that receives funding from the state? If you do, how will you manage this conflict of interest?

Yes, I am President of the Board of Woodside on the Move, which receives funds for after school programs and housing assistance. Upon my election, I will resign from my position on the board to eliminate any conflict of interest.

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

Yes, I am President of the Board of Woodside on the Move, which receives funds for after school programs and housing assistance. Upon my election, I will resign from my position on the board to eliminate any conflict of interest.

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

Election Administration

How would you use your power as a legislator to improve election administration in New York? Feel free to add any policy proposals you support in regards to reforming the BOE.

In office I will fight to make the BOE as nonpartisan as possible, and remove party influence. It is essential that every political party, including minor ones, goes through the same processes.

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

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

All government positions must be exclusively merit based to ensure the most effective system is in place. No politician or party should have control over BOE decisions.

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

Yes

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

Democracy means equal opportunity and access to office for all, regardless of party. My campaign stands for fair policies on redistricting, special elections, and minor parties.

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)

A new, nonpartisan body made up of merit-based hires with zero party affiliation should redraw district maps.

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

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CAMPAIGN FINANCE

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

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

Pay-to-play is a serious problem in New York Politics. Those who win elections entirely from a personal cache do not represent the needs of New Yorkers. Matching funds and donation limits are important to ensure a fair democratic process.

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

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

The Chief Judge's plan to simplify the courts into the State Supreme Court and the Municipal Court will stop redundancy and save millions. I support this plan.

GOALS, PLANS, AND REPRESENTATION

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: Public Safety – I will push for better lighting and cameras in our neighborhoods, get illegal guns off the streets, deal with crime at its source by investing in schools and mobility programs, and introduce new NYPD trainings to ensure that officers are trained in proper conflict resolution measures.

Second: Education – I will reallocate funding to local schools, establish an education system fit for the 21st century with STEM and finance education, and work towards free higher education for all.

Third: Healthcare – I will fight to pass the New York Health Act and the Hospital Equity and Affordability Law.

If elected, what is the first piece of legislation you would want to introduce? If you are an incumbent, what is the first piece of legislation you would want to pass?

I will roll back Bail Reform

In providing constituent service, what are the major needs of your district's constituents and how will you meet them?

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). If you've worked to advance these goals, we'd love to hear about it.

I organized against the Independent Democratic Caucus so that Democratic voters would know their Democratic elected officials were caucusing with Republicans. I have also organized voter drives.

How long have you lived in the district in which you are running?

14 years

Have you lived in the district before this year's redistricting?

14 years

For incumbents: If your district has changed significantly following this year's redistricting, how do you intend to run your office to serve the needs of the new constituents you now represent?

PATH TO VICTORY

What is your win number (the number of votes needed to win this race), and what is your plan to achieve that number?

6,500

What are your current fundraising numbers, if different than the last campaign finance filing?

Over \$60,000

How many individual donors do you have?

42

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

504 Democratic Club

ADDITIONAL INFO

Please feel free to attach any additional information such as resume, campaign brochures, or issues statements.

What else would you like us to know about yourself?

I am Brent O'Leary, an attorney and grassroots organizer running for State Assembly in District 37. My family's roots in Queens stretch back over 100 years, with my Grandparents immigrating from Ireland and settling in Sunnyside in the 1910s. My father was a union man for Local 3, working as a ticket teller at Belmont Racetrack. Growing up, he used to say he didn't realize he was poor because of how our community came together to provide for us. I'm running because I've seen the power of the community, and I believe that if politicians step up, they can provide the same opportunities to their communities.

For over a decade, I've organized community service initiatives in Queens, including the Hunter's Point Civic Association, Woodside on the Move, the Boys and Girls Club of Sunnyside, and the LIC and Woodside/Sunnyside Covid-19 Relief Groups. When people come together to give back to the community, real change happens. Politics should be no different from community service, and good government should work to listen to and serve the people. As the representative of District 37, I plan to work closely with Queens residents and other organizations to make our borough safe and accessible to all.

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

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