



Wednesday, March 16, 2022

Candidate Questionnaire - 2022 Primary

Dear Grace Lee,

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](#).

**

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Grace Lee

Office Sought (New York State)

Assembly

District Number

65

In which primary

Democratic

What party line/s are you running under?

Democrat

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

Democrat

Age

Education

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Website <https://www.graceleeforassembly.com/>

Twitter [@GraceLeeforNYC](https://twitter.com/GraceLeeforNYC)

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

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

Grace Lee

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?

No

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.

No

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.

At a time when the right to vote in a free and fair election is under attack all across our country, we must lead the way in making sure that our democratic is robust, efficient, and transparent. I am in favor of greatly strengthening our oversight systems and streamlining our election administration.

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.

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.

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)

Redistricting should be a fair process that centers on voting equity, not partisan political power. The failures of this year's Independent Redistricting Commission are very disappointing and the ultra-partisan maps created by LATFOR are a far cry from the people-focused, fair maps that we deserve. I will support some form of independent, non-legislative body to oversee redistricting but I don't believe the current version of the IRC works.

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.

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.

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.

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: I'm fighting for a New York recovery that places equity at the forefront, that prioritizes communities over corporations, and that helps our neighbors and neighborhoods be safe, healthy and strong. For too long, too many of our communities have been ignored and neglected by those in power, especially our immigrant communities. To that end, I am prioritizing: 1) Fair and affordable housing: including championing the passage of Good Cause Eviction - particularly given that the current governor failed to extend the eviction moratorium in the middle of winter during a COVID surge, building deeply affordable housing that centers tenant voices, and fully funding NYCHA.

Second: 2) Equitable pandemic recovery: including high quality affordable healthcare for all, universal childcare, passing the Excluded Workers Fund and creating a permanent Fund and pathway to unemployment going forward, and small business recovery.

Third: 3) An equitable public education system: including fully funding both New York City public schools and CUNY, keeping the charter school cap in place, and investing in community schools with wraparound services for the most vulnerable communities.

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?

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

What we need most is leaders who will listen. That's why I will make sure to open a ground level storefront office that is transit-accessible, staffed with passionate people who reflect the diversity of our community and who are equipped with the language and technical skills needed to connect all of our constituents with the resources and services they need.

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.

As a community organizer, much of my work has been about pulling back the veil on government workings and holding agencies and corporations accountable to the people. For example, my work with Children First has completely altered the trajectory of a brownfield cleanup and development program by forcing the government to uphold stringent protective rules against the developer. I have also worked closely with Councilmember Gale Brewer, who now chairs the Investigations committee. I consider her a friend and mentor and have seen in her what devotion to transparency and accountability looks like.

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

15 years

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

Yes

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?

N/A

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?

Lower Manhattan is extraordinarily diverse - and we plan to run a campaign that is multilingual and reaches voters in their language through door-to-door field operations, phone calls, earned media in ethnic newspapers, and direct paid media efforts. We expect around 14,000 voters so we estimate we need 7,001 votes to win.

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

140k+

How many individual donors do you have?

300

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

I am proud to have the endorsements of Aixa Torres, TA President of the Alfred E. Smith Houses; Chinatown leader Don Hong; Children First activists and public school parents Megan Malvern, Emily Hellstrom, Colleen Robertson and Maggie Dallal; Lower East Side resident Wei-Li Tjong; and Arnette Scott, a third generation Lower East Side resident, community leader, and executive member of CEC1. We've also been endorsed by six District Leaders: Jonathan Gardenhire, Victoria Lee, Paul Newell, Caroline Laskow, Lee Berman, and Daisy Paez as well as the three largest democratic clubs in the district - Downtown Independent Democrats, Grand Street Democrats, and New Downtown Democrats. Finally, we have most recently been endorsed by Congressman Jerry Nadler.

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?

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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