

Monday, March 28, 2022

## Candidate Questionnaire - 2022 Primary

Dear Tony Simone,  
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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org)

We thank you very much for your response.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Name

Tony Simone

### Office Sought (New York State)

Assembly

### District Number

75

### 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

52

### Education

Masters Degree in Public Management, Public Finance and Policy

### Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Hudson River Park Friends, Director of External Affairs (2016-2022)

Office of the New York City Council Speaker, Director of Community Outreach (2007-2014)

People for the American Way, Deputy Director (2005-2007)

Field and Volunteer Director, John Kerry for President (2004)

Field Director, Hillary Rodman Clinton for Senate (2000)

Legislative Aide, Office of State Senator Catherine Abate (1997-1998)

### Website

[www.tonyfornewyork.c](http://www.tonyfornewyork.c)

om

**Twitter** @tonysimone

**Facebook** <https://www.facebook.com/TonyForNY>

## 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**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Tony Simone", written over a horizontal line.

# 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.**

In a time where the integrity of our elections is under attack, it is critical that elections in New York are run in the most open and transparent way possible. Each year, there is some news story that weakens the trust New Yorkers have in our boards of election. I would support reforming the administration of county BOEs from the current system that places control in the hands of party-selected commissioners and instead puts the responsibility of a well administered election in the hands of merit-based professional hires.

**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.

The petitioning process we currently have was originally created to make getting on the ballot more democratic, a reformist process that took over from party boss control. But decades later, it seems outdated, complicated, and needlessly anti-democratic. It stifles healthy competition by forcing candidates to hire election lawyers to assist in the process, thus taking money away from other campaign operations.

As an Assembly Member, I will support policies to authorize the creation of an online petitioning system and other common-sense reforms to modernize this system.

In regards to the process of filling vacancies, I support a primary election at least 30 days in advance of a special election but I do not support a nonpartisan special election only. Party affiliation gives voters a baseline to identify where their candidates stand on 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)**

I believe new district maps should be drawn by the Independent Redistricting Commission as the voters decided in 2014. In the district I am running in, the IRC proposed district lines that better united local communities and were drawn in a manner that made it easier for voters to understand their own districts boundaries and thus giving better representation to communities.

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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.

Since moving State primaries to June in order to align with Federal primaries, there is now less information during a campaign regarding candidates' finances. Previously, when the primary was in September, the July periodic filing served as a sort of midway disclosure. With the primary in June, the only disclosure before the 30 day pre-primary disclosure is in January, when many candidates have not even announced or decided to run. A new mandatory disclosure around early April would create more transparency into a campaign's finances in a time frame that allows voters to evaluate before the voting period begins.

# 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: Protect and expand affordable housing. I will be a proud co-sponsor of good cause eviction if it does not pass this current session and I will support investing in truly affordable housing that actually benefits low and middle income working class people as well as housing for homeless people. We can not continue to rely on subsidizing already wealthy developers in return for small amounts of housing that are still too often out of reach for so many New Yorkers.

Second: Climate change. New York State needs a radical green agenda if we are to avoid the worst effects of climate change. I will support legislation to invest in public renewable energy, improved transit networks that connect all communities, preserve 30% of New York's natural areas, require all electric for new buildings, and improve the air quality that plagues so many of our local communities, support funding for more EV charging stations, and oppose using fracked gas.

Third: Health care: I will carry on Assembly Member Gottfried's legacy by being a true advocate and champion for the NY Health Act (single payer universal health coverage) which I believe would solve so many of the issues facing our healthcare system besides affordability. I will also support increasing funding for our public hospitals which provide care in our most underserved communities and eliminating the Medicaid cap so that health funding is based on actual need.

**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?**

As an Assembly Member I will be eager to introduce legislation to modernize the ballot petitioning process. In a time where so many government services are available online, there is no reason the BOE can not operate a system where registered voters can digitally sign an online petition for a candidate. Additionally on my campaign reform agenda, would be legislation discussed further above about adding a new campaign finance disclosure in the Spring. Locally, I am looking into potential legislation that would help streamline the process of transferring state owned land to local municipalities for the purpose of creating new affordable housing. The housing crisis is felt deeply in the 75th district and there are far too many unused state owned properties that can go a long way in increasing local housing supply.

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

The constituents of the 75th districts primarily relate to housing issues. Ensuring tenants rights are protected and landlords are held accountable is a constant need in the district. Additionally, the congestion of midtown has led to our area having the third worst air quality in the city. I will work to improve that by pushing for rapid implementation of congestion pricing and local improvements to our mass transit network such as ensuring the new Port Authority Bus Terminal is built to take all buses that idle on our streets into the terminal and working for a new subway station in Hell's Kitchen on the 7 line.

**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.**

During my time working in the City Council, our office focused on overhauling the city's campaign finance system including instituting 7-1 matching funds, banning contributions from LLCs and LLPs, and barring lobbyist contributions from receiving matching funds. We also worked to increase government transparency by releasing information on individual council member funding for member items in the city budget. On police accountability, we helped pass the law banning stop and frisk by the NYPD.

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

I have lived in the district for over 20 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?**

# 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?**

Our win number for the primary is 7,000 votes. I'm humbled by the outpouring of support I've already received in this race. After two decades serving my community, I have built a strong base of support. We've raised twice as much as any other candidate in the race as of the last filing (two candidates did not file and appear to be self-funding), and have set a goal of \$300k.

My team has built a sophisticated, data-driven electoral plan that prioritizes direct voter contact and full time staff to maximize volunteer hours, rather than expensive consultants or other wasteful spending. This will allow us to target a broad universe and engage the most voters, which is important given that we expect to see high turnout given up-ballot races.

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

We have recently passed the \$100k mark in our fundraising.

**How many individual donors do you have?**



325

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

<https://tonyfornewyork.com/endorsements/>

## ADDITIONAL INFO

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

 Petition Challenge Pact.pdf	 Simone-PalmCard-Final.pdf
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### What else would you like us to know about yourself?

I'm running for Assembly because I believe that government can be a force for equity, progress, and the improvement of all our lives. I believe in a collaborative approach to find lasting solutions to our most complex problems by bringing disparate stakeholders to the table. That's how we'll get things done and that's why I have the support of Assembly Members Dick Gottfried and Deborah Glick, US Rep Jerry Nadler and former State Senator Tom Duane as well as NYS Comptroller Carl McCall, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, 504 Democrats and DC37.

The Citizens Union endorsement would mean a lot to me. It tells voters that I am the good government candidate, and would give my campaign an important boost. I will not take that support lightly, and I will do everything I can to help grow Citizens Unions agenda and coordinate my electoral and legislative efforts with yours.

**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](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org)

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