



Thursday, October 7, 2021

Citizens Union 2021 Candidate Questionnaire - New York City Mayor

Dear Candidate,

In the following pages, you will find questions regarding your positions on various reform issues and your plans for office. The form includes four sections: the pandemic and city government, elections and voting, police accountability, and miscellaneous.

Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for city offices, 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 April 17 and no later than 48 before your interview.

If you seek our support, we will also 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 and Continue Later at the bottom of every page.

Once you submit the questionnaire, you will receive a confirmation email with a PDF file containing 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Your Info

Name

Curtis Sliwa

Running in what primary

Republican

Age

67

Education

high school

Occupation/Employer

self

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Founder, Guardian Angels; former Chair, NYS Reform Party

Website

<https://sliwaforny.com/>

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/CurtisSliwa>

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/curtisliwa>

Affirmations

Have you completed the required campaign finance filings?

Yes

Have you qualified to receive matching campaign finance funds from the CFB?

Yes

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

Yes

(Please note: interviews are prerequisites for Citizens Union's endorsements)

Signature



THE PANDEMIC AND CITY GOVERNMENT

1. If elected, you will start your term as New York City (hopefully) begins to reopen its businesses, offices, and institutions. How will you utilize the mayor's office to help rebuild the economic base of NYC?

As I've said many times during the campaign, businesses can not function in an environment of

lawlessness and fear. Under my administration, the police will immediately go to work taking back the streets from criminals. Meanwhile, City Hall will do everything in its power to restore the Big Apple's economic vitality.

My Right to Business Plan recognizes that all NYC residents have a right to start a business, and as Mayor, I will work to eliminate barriers preventing people from owning and operating small businesses. Specifically, my administration will:

1. Streamline and impose time limitations on the business permit and licensing process. All permit and licensing applications will receive a final determination within 60 days. No business should be left waiting in bureaucratic perpetuity.
2. Create a new small business loan program that offers low-value loans (\$300 to \$45,000) to help small businesses in lower- and middle-income neighborhoods get off the ground.
3. Revive and expand the NYC Business Express initiative, which provides residents with easily accessible information on the regulatory steps for operating a business.
4. Create an Entrepreneurs and Small Business Council, including appointed industry leaders. The council will advise me on the best approaches to maximize the efficacy of partnerships between city government and small businesses.

Preparing young people for a meaningful role in the economy will also be a priority of my administration. NYC's vocational training programs have proved highly successful, and we must allocate more resources to them. Every student should be exposed to vocational training in middle school, high school, and college. I am calling for the introduction of at least one vocational training course in all high school curricula. To further expose our children to more vocational training opportunities, I will expand after-school vocational training programs. Along with fostering the development of vocational skills, I will create a Business Enterprise Division (BED) within the Department of Education and introduce new financial literacy programs. The BED will work with students who aspire to entrepreneurial ventures and careers. The BED will work closely with the NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS) to provide students with small business resources and guide them through the small business licensing process. This BED-SBS partnership will provide students with the unparalleled opportunity to unlock their entrepreneurial potential and enter the

business world.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) instruction is also vital to preparing students for careers in today's fastest-growing industries. But our schools' outdated infrastructures and teaching materials make STEM instruction nearly impossible. I'm committed to remedying this situation with updated technology and materials, and with advanced STEM programs in NYC schools. These programs will be available for students with demonstrated interests and potential in STEM fields, and will be accessible to students from all school districts.

Taking the lead in STEM education is a natural role for the world's most iconic City. Of course, we must do other things to ensure our continuing status as a technological, economic, and cultural force. NYC has always embraced innovation, which in turn has helped to boost our economy and move the City forward. Now, as cryptocurrency expands across the world, NYC must welcome this revolutionary development in global finance. Cryptocurrency is expected to grow rapidly as more industries accept it as a payment method. Big tech, airlines, and athletic organizations have already begun to accept and remit payments in cryptocurrency as an official method of financial transactions. Specifically, in banking, cryptocurrency offers financial advantages, like greater transparency and secured storage of consumer information.

San Francisco, Los Angeles, Miami, and other US cities are leading the charge of cryptocurrency innovation nationwide, while New York is lagging behind.

As Mayor, I will work with cryptocurrency experts, consumers, and stakeholders to make NYC a hub of innovation and development for cryptocurrency. Among the steps to be explored:

1. Allowing City employees to receive salaries (either in full or partially) in cryptocurrency.
2. Creating and expanding the use of cryptocurrency ATMs throughout NYC.
3. Incentivizing small businesses and corporations to begin using and accepting cryptocurrencies.
4. Allowing City residents to pay taxes, fines, and fees in cryptocurrency.
5. Issuing tax credits and government benefits in cryptocurrency.
6. Incentivizing cryptocurrency operations and start-ups to come to NYC.

2. New York City is facing an economic and fiscal crisis. How would you ensure the fiscal health and integrity of city spending, while providing New Yorkers with valuable city services?

Among my ideas for restoring the City's fiscal health, I've developed a comprehensive Property Tax Reform Plan to deliver a fair, efficient, and transparent property tax system to New York City. Remedying decades of tax inequality, the plan eliminates unfair tax benefits and ensures that New York City's low- and middle-income communities are no longer forced to subsidize the City's wealthiest residents and neighborhoods. It is the boldest tax proposal of any mayoral candidate in recent history, and will finally deliver the tax equality and fairness that has eluded NYC since the 1980s. By finally making private, wealthy universities and landlords pay their fair share, I will create millions of dollars in new tax revenue that refunds our police department and delivers economic relief to low- and middle-income NYC residents, while keeping NYC's budget balanced.

I am proposing the following major reforms to NYC's property tax system:

1. A 2% Property Tax Cap: Implement a 2% Cap on NYC's Annual Tax Levy.
2. Market Value Assessments: Value and Assess all Residential Properties and New Construction Based on Actual Fair Market Value.
3. Tax Exemption Efficiency Review: Launch a Comprehensive Review of All Properties Receiving Property Tax Exemptions to Ensure NYC's Tax Expenditures are Being Spent Efficiently; Implement Reviews Every 10 Years.
4. Eliminate University Tax Privilege: Require That Wealthy, Private Universities, Colleges, and Hospitals Pay Their Fair Share in Property Taxes.
5. Eliminate Madison Square Garden's Tax Privilege: Eliminate Madison Square Garden's Property Tax Exemption (Estimated at \$42.4 Million/Year).
6. Support Our Seniors: Provide a Property Tax Deduction for Seniors with Household Income Below \$75,000.
7. Octennial Efficiency Reviews: Institute a Comprehensive Review of NYC's Property Tax System Every 8 Years to Ensure It Stays Fair, Efficient, and Transparent.

3. In March 2020, Mayor de Blasio issued a

state of emergency in New York City (as did Governor Cuomo in NY State) to remove any legal and regulatory barriers to fight the coronavirus pandemic. Do you have any concerns regarding the use of emergency powers by the Mayor during this crisis? How do you think city government can maintain public accountability standards at this time?

Under de Blasio (and Cuomo) we've seen an alarming abuse of executive power, with often tragic results. Both men were allowed to get away with too much for too long without being held to account. It took legal action from Comptroller Stringer to finally get de Blasio to rescind his emergency procurement powers and restore Charter-mandated oversight of City contracts.

I'm a believer in bold leadership. My whole career has been about setting a strong example, and inspiring others to go above and beyond the call of duty to serve the community. I'll bring that type of leadership to City Hall. But my administration will be transparent and fully accountable to the people of New York and its governing institutions. I'm determined to have good working relationships with my fellow elected officials, regardless of their political affiliation. I grew up with a healthy respect for the separation of powers and checks and balances as the hallmarks of good democratic governance. My administration will be a model of such governance.

4. The ability of citizens and advocates to make their voices heard in City Hall has been severely curtailed since city government shifted to work remotely. The next Mayor will need to decide how to adapt to the new reality. How would you propose to improve community engagement and public participation while using remote technology (in public hearings, meetings, etc.), particularly to ensure equity in participation?

I'm an activist by nature, and I've always believed in working directly with other citizens and advocates on the ground to get things done. Whatever course the pandemic takes, the life of the City must go on. If that means more use of Zoom and other remote technologies to enable civic engagement and participation, then so be it. As an activist and as a broadcaster, I've made my mark working with people of all socioeconomic backgrounds,

ethnicities, races and religions. My mayoralty will reflect this from Day One as we reach out to all the groups and cultures that form the great melting pot of the City and involve them in the urgent task of making New York prosper in the 21st Century.

Virtual town halls can never replace the intimacy of in-person gatherings, but today's technology does allow for unprecedented communication among huge numbers of people at great distances from each other. My administration will take advantage of all the tools at our disposal to usher in a new era of civic engagement between government and citizens.

VOTING AND ELECTIONS REFORM

5. Do you consider yourself a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting? How will you work to maintain this system and educate voters on how it works?

I was an early proponent of Ranked Choice Voting, but its implementation this year was a disgrace. In the recent Democratic Mayoral Primary, the Board of Elections included nearly 135,000 ranked-choice voting test ballots when releasing a round of the primary election results. This wasn't a flaw inherent in Ranked Choice Voting, but a screw-up that's all too typical of the Board of Elections and its outdated procedures.

NYU's Brennan Center for Justice issued a report on the Board last month pointing out that "systemic defects explain the agency's uniquely poor track record" and recommending a number of changes (many dependent on the State Legislature) to fix the Board. As Mayor, I would advocate for some of these reforms (and many others -- see below), which would improve the Board's ability to -- among other things -- run elections with Ranked Choice Voting and educate voters in a clear manner about RCV.

6. Now that New York City has implemented Ranked Choice Voting, do you support moving to an Open Primary system (eliminating party primaries and establishing a non-partisan election system)

Yes

Comments

7. How will you use your power as Mayor to improve the operations of the NYC Board of Elections and its accountability to the city?

Because the Board of Elections structure is spelled out under the state constitution, I'd lobby the legislature and the people for a state constitutional amendment to reform the Board along non-partisan rather than bi-partisan lines. As Mayor, I'd also do the following:

1. I'd publicly support State Senator Liz Krueger's bill to reform the Executive Leadership of the Board of Elections.

2. Since all of the current Commissioners are holdovers and dependent upon appointment by the City Council, I'd encourage Republicans in the City Council to appoint Commissioners who have experience administering elections, rather than look at this as a plush political post for a loyal partisan.

3. Even though the City doesn't have any control over the structure or the nature of hiring, the City does fund the city board. As Mayor, I'd use the power of the purse to work towards getting the Board to make long overdue changes like training for those on the management level. Election supervisors at poll sites with minimal incidents and no errors should also have a bonus structure in place, so as to incentivize quality control of election day operations. I'd also fight more funding for poll worker staffing and training.

4. I'd work with the City Council to pass NYC legislation requiring regular ethics training for Board staff and greater accountability in the hiring process, along with new hiring standards. Legislation to prohibit the immediate family member of an elected official should also be considered. If the Board tries to go to court to block these changes, we'll see them there.

5. I would direct my Chief Democracy Officer to work in conjunction with the Executive Director of the BOE, so there's minimal duplication of effort and so that the BOE voter outreach efforts don't contradict the City's.

6. Perhaps most important, I'd appoint a Charter Revision Commission, consisting of election reformers across the political spectrum, specifically tasked with putting questions on the ballot for non-partisan elections and replacing the petition gathering process in NYC with a system where candidates would get on the ballot through filing fees. Not only would this remove a heavy burden from the city board in sifting through hundreds of candidates' petitions, but it would create more of a non-partisan culture when it comes to our elections, which has heretofore been lacking. The Commission would also look at implementing ranked choice voting for the November election, so that voters don't have to deal with two separate systems of voting for the two rounds of voting.

8. The next mayor will appoint seven members to the city's redistricting commission. In doing so, the next mayor will have share the responsibility for shaping a fair political map for the coming decade. If elected, what objectives will you have in appointing commission members?

I want the redistricting process to be as non-partisan as possible. Accordingly, my goal is to appoint seven independent-minded New Yorkers who have shown a commitment to the City, not primarily through partisan political activity, but through their work as community leaders and volunteers, and through their accomplishments in the City's civic, cultural, and commercial institutions. I want redistricting commissioners who represent the broad interests of NYC as a whole, and my appointments will reflect this.

9. Mayor de Blasio created a DemocracyNYC office, headed by a Chief Democracy Officer, tasked with increasing voter registration, improving voter access, promoting youth participation, and advancing democratic reforms. The Campaign Finance Board, the Board of Elections, and the Civic Engagement Commission share similar responsibilities. How would your administration organize its efforts to promote civic engagement and participation? How would that fit in your overall vision for the city?

Like other aspects of the outgoing administration,

the good intentions behind DemocracyNYC have collapsed under horrible execution. De Blasio launched DemocracyNYC with much fanfare, but then he sent 30,000 New Yorkers letters erroneously telling them they'd been marked as "inactive" voters. His first head of DemocracyNYC (or "Chief Democracy Officer") quietly resigned in early 2020, and wasn't replaced for more than a year.

Increasing voter registration and turnout in NYC is an important goal, but the effort has to be managed competently. It fits into my larger vision for restoring the City. The great lesson I learned from building the Guardian Angels is that grassroots participation is vital to a healthy democracy. Voting is just the tip of the iceberg. My vision for NY involves an informed, energized citizenry getting involved at all levels of civic engagement, from school boards and community boards to volunteer block watchers and auxiliary police to community clean-up efforts and merchants associations. By unleashing the City's grassroots potential, my administration will do everything in its power to spearhead a true renaissance in NYC.

10. Do you support allowing the winner of a special election for a city office (except the mayor) to serve the remainder of the unexpired term, instead of only filling the position until the next general election?

Yes

Comments

11. The de Blasio administration launched a citywide civic education program, Civics for All, which included a new curriculum, training for teachers, and increased student voter registration drives. Do you support maintaining Civics for All and student voter registration drives at the same capacity?

Yes

Comments

Civics education is vital to the health of our democracy. I had it as a kid, and I want all NYC students to have it too. Likewise, I'm supportive of

efforts to increase the number of younger voters through student registration drives. As far as the specifics of the civics curricula, this is something I plan to review very thoroughly with the Chancellor and other educators in my administration.

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Citizens Union has been studying police accountability and performance in New York City for more than a decade. In our reports and advocacy efforts we have urged city government to strengthen the accountability of the New York Police Department to the public and create a more cohesive system of police oversight. Previous reports include: [2016 issue brief](#), [2013 position brief on Stop and Frisk](#), [2012 report on the CCRB](#), [2008 policy statement on police misconduct](#). Citizens Union's 2021 agenda for police reform, [published as a report](#) in March, calls for establishing a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, allowing the CCRB to appeal the Police Commissioner's decisions, making the appointment of Police Commissioner subject to advice and consent of the City Council, consolidating agencies with oversight authority, ending qualified immunity, and more.

12. Do you support appointing a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, with the expertise and authority to monitor and supervise the Police Department on the Mayor's behalf?

No

13. Do you support making the appointment of the Police Commissioner subject to the advice and consent of the City Council?

No

Comments

No. In recent years, too many City Council members and candidates have shown themselves more interested in pandering to the "Defund/Abolish Police" crowd than in supporting realistic approaches to public safety. If I'm elected Mayor (the same can probably be said of my opponent too), it will reflect a consensus among voters that the City needs effective policing and strong leadership in the NYPD.

14. Who do you think should have the final say on discipline in the police department? How would you ensure penalties are imposed on police officers that commensurate with the gravity of their wrongdoing?

Under the NYC Charter, the Police Commissioner has the final say on discipline in the NYPD. As Mayor, I'll make sure the disciplinary process is fair, well structured, and grounded in due process. But it's not the Mayor's job to second-guess his Commissioner. It is the Commissioner's job to

implement the policies of the Mayor, and in my administration, that will include zero tolerance for bad cops. If my Commissioner fails to carry out that policy, he or she will answer to me.

15. Do you support allowing the Civilian Complaint Review Board's (CCRB) to initiate an investigations without having to wait for an individual complaint?

No

Comments

16. Do you support granting the CCRB prompt and full access to footage from body-worn cameras, police officers' employment history and disciplinary records and all other document and materials in the possession of the NYPD relevant to its investigations?

No

Comments

I support granting the CCRB access to body-cam footage after the NYPD has been allowed to review it. As far as other documentation pertinent to its investigations, I believe it should be evaluated on a case by case basis. Although the CCRB serves an important role, its track record is far from perfect. I don't support granting it carte blanche in its investigations of police officers.

17. Do you support consolidating the three bodies that exercise oversight of the NYPD: the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), the Inspector General for the Police Department, the Mayor's Commission to Combat Police Corruption?

Comments

There's too much corruption and waste at ALL levels of City government, not just at the NYPD. I'm open to the idea of consolidating the CCRB, the Inspector General for the Police Department, and the Mayor's Commission to Combat Police Corruption. But first I want to be confident that it will have the desired result.

18. Do you support moving the disciplinary hearings for police officers, like those for all other City employees, to be conducted before the independent administrative law judges of OATH (Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings) rather than within the NYPD?

Comments

OATH already oversees certain disciplinary hearings for police officers. My staff is currently researching this to see if more hearings should be moved to OATH.

19. Feel free to add any other policy proposals you support in regards to police accountability, misconduct, and oversight, or to effective policing including functions, training, and community relations.

In reviewing reform proposals from Citizens Union and other advocates, I find myself in agreement with some ideas more than others. For example, I support updating the NYPD's information and data storage technology to allow police oversight agencies access to data relevant to their mission.

The NYPD's ability to keep the City safe has taken a major hit under the current Mayoral administration. I propose a number of changes to help us again become one of America's safest cities. First and foremost, I will restore all the cuts that Mayor de Blasio made to the NYPD budget. With those funds, I plan to restore the NYPD's Anti-Crime Units, which have historically led the fight to get gangs and illegal guns off the streets, and its Homeless Outreach Unit. As Mayor, I will also reauthorize the NYPD to oversee enforcement of street vendors.

I don't favor the creation of a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety. However, in cases where the Police Commissioner proposes to depart from a discipline recommendation of the CCRB involving suspension or termination, I support giving the CCRB the right to appeal directly to my office. I also support expanding the CCRB's jurisdiction to include traffic and school safety agents and other civilian employees of the NYPD.

MISCELLANEOUS

20. How would you utilize city-affiliated

nonprofit organizations such as the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City in raising private revenue to supplement city agencies and programs? How would you ensure that there is sufficient transparency and accountability of funding received through such entities?

The Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City was established as Public-Private Initiatives Inc. Since then, the Mayor's Fund has facilitated public-private partnerships to help the City. Independent charity evaluator Charity Navigator consistently gives the Mayor's Fund high scores on financial performance, and on accountability/transparency. As Mayor, I would build on this foundation. But a huge caveat must be kept in mind. According to the Fund's FY 2020 Form 990, its largest single program outlay went to Connections To Care, which is part of the scandalous ThriveNYC program. Until that program has been fully investigated and all its funding accounted for, my administration will not permit ThriveNYC to receive another cent.

21. What experience have you had, if any, with good government and reform issues? (e.g. voting and elections, campaign finance, ethics, police accountability, government transparency and oversight). If you've worked to advance these goals, we'd love to hear about it.

My main experience has been serving the public as an activist and as a commentator on public policy and urban issues affecting the city's lifeblood. The Guardian Angels came about in part because NYC's fiscal crisis in the late 70s led to underpolicing in large areas of the City, both on the streets and in the subways. Our very existence was a constant reminder to the Koch administration that it had to beef up law enforcement, even if it meant doing more with less.

I've always been a strong voice for good governance and cleaning up corruption in politics. In 2016, I became chair of the NYS Reform Party. I'm a strong advocate of direct democracy, including increasing public participation in the legislative process through initiative and referendum.

Like Citizens Union, I've endorsed calls for a NYS Constitutional Convention. I enthusiastically supported the 2017 ballot measure, Proposal One, which would have approved the first State Constitutional Convention since 1967.

Unfortunately, the proposal lost, and it can't be voted on again until 2037. But as Mayor, I will work with reformers to advance what would have been some of the Convention's main concerns as pointed out by Citizens Union and other reform groups, including fair campaigns and accessible elections with minimal partisan influence and control by moneyed interests; honest and ethical government; and balanced power between Local and State Government, with an emphasis on allowing Municipal Governments to manage more of their own affairs and improve representation of and service delivery to local residents.

22. In light of everything we have discussed above, why do you want to be mayor?

I've spent my entire life serving the people of New York. From recycling to safety patrols, to helping the homeless and emotionally disturbed people, I've dedicated myself to making the world (or at least my corner of it) a better place.

De Blasio has left the city in terrible shape. I don't need polls to tell me this. I'm out on the streets and subways every day, where I see New Yorkers from all walks of life who are filled with fear and hopelessness. The feeling is similar to when I started the Guardian Angels. I want to make the City strong and safe again. I want to revive people's hope and faith in the future.

I learned a lot from observing some of NYC's most influential leaders. Even when the City was in dire financial straits, Ed Koch was a great cheerleader for New York, and he set the stage for the City's recovery at the time. From Rudy Giuliani I learned that public safety and quality of life are the foundations that everything else rests upon: Good neighborhoods, good schools, good jobs, vibrant culture and nightlife. Otherwise, families and entrepreneurs will flee the city, and tourists will avoid it, as they've been doing under de Blasio. I want to be Mayor to get NYC back on its feet, and set it on a bright, safe, prosperous course for the 21st Century.

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

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.