



Monday, March 14, 2022

Candidate Questionnaire - 2022 Primary

Dear David Yassky,

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.

**

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

David Yassky

Office Sought (New York State)

Senate

District Number

23

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

58 in years, 32 in energy, 23 in optimism, 78 in forgetfulness

Education

bachelor's and law degrees

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

City Council Member 2002-2009

Candidate for Congress (2006) and NYC Comptroller (2009)

Chair and Commissioner, NYC Taxi and Limousine Commission, 2010-2013

Director of Policy, Office of the Governor, New York State, 2019-2021

Service on boards of New Yorkers Against Gun Violence, Center for Employment Opportunities and LAUNCH Experiential Learning Charter School

Website

davidyassky.com

Twitter @davidyassky

Facebook David Yassky for New
York State Senate

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 read "David Yassky". The signature is written in a cursive, stylized font.

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 and nor will I.

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 and nor will I.

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.

- support same-day registration
- support vote by mail (essentially same as "absentee voting" but more straightforwardly named)
- support instant runoff voting for State offices
- support matching funds system of campaign finance (putting this here in case campaign finance not addressed below)
- pending constitutional amendment as in next question, I support reform of NYC BOE administration by having parties nominate candidates for senior staff, to be appointed by Mayor and confirmed by City Council. I believe this is consistent with Art. II, Section 8 of NYS Constitution.

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.

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)

New entity with appointees from Governor, legislative leaders from majority and minority and Chief Judge of Court of Appeals. NYS Constitution (and failing that, legislation) should articulate judicially enforceable standards for district compactness.

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.

I opted into the NYC matching funds system in all four campaigns I undertook for NYC offices and strongly believe that it results in more genuinely democratic elections.

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: Universal screening for language-based learning disabilities, full funding for special-needs education, and full access to specialized reading instruction.

Second: Reduce housing costs by enabling more and speedier construction of transit-advantaged housing.

Third: Reduce auto insurance costs by strictly regulating medical providers funded largely by no-fault auto insurance. e of no-fault insaReduce housing costs by enabling more and speedier construction of transit-advantaged housing.

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?

Require utilities to phase out the use of natural gas by 2050. Legislation will begin immediately to reduce utilities' ability to pass on the cost of natural gas infrastructure to customers. This plan is economically feasible because a portion of electric utility payments by households converting to electric heat will be diverted to fund retirement of legacy natural gas infrastructure.

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

- 1) I intend to secure State funding for reconstructing the BQE, following an accelerated design process involving robust community involvement and feedback. I hope to cover the BQE "trench" in Cobble Hill/Carroll Gardens and to relocate the Brooklyn Heights segment at grade level, pending confirmation of engineering feasibility of both.
- 2) The EPA has determined that Coney Island Creek may be eligible for Superfund designation. I intend speedily to develop a community consensus on the best course of action for remediating toxic contamination in the Creek and implement it.
- 3) Traffic throughout the North Shore of Staten Island is significantly affecting quality of life. I would secure a comprehensive traffic study and seek to implement its recommendations.

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 City Council Member, I advocated for elimination of Member Items (with partial success), for ability of individual Members to draft and introduce bills (with success) and for greater independence of Committees (with partial success).
- as NYS Director of State Policy, I drafted the 2021 Policing Reform Collaborative.

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

24 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?

I expect roughly 25,000 votes to be cast in the primary (could be fewer, but I always hope for good turnout as a sign of a healthy democracy). Based on the current field of four announced candidates, I think my win number is 9,000 votes. In light of the fact that all of the other announced candidates live, have worked and are best known in Staten Island, I suppose a pundit would say that the easiest path to that number is to win 60% of the vote in the areas of the district I represented earlier and nearby areas with similar voting patters (DUMBO, Brooklyn Heights, Cobble Hill and Carroll Gardens), one-third of the votes in Red Hook and Coney Island/Brighton Beach, and merely 15% of the vote in Staten Island. However, I intend to compete aggressively for votes throughout the district, and based on my depth of experience and strong track record of progressive accomplishment in government, I expect to win with substantially more than 9,000 votes.

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

As of Saturday, March 12, we have raised \$78,138

How many individual donors do you have?

112

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

Independent Neighborhood Democrats
Assembly Member Joanne Simon
Former Assembly Member Joan Millman

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?

The New York Times endorsed me in three earlier elections (all of the election in which I have run and in which the Times made an endorsement). I note this because I believe that, like Citizens Union, the Times considers a candidate's position and record on issues of good government, ethics, transparency and support for fair and democratic election laws as an important factor in determining which candidates to endorse. I wish to be clear that I do not intend any implication about what the Times will do in this race (although of course I will seek their endorsement this time as well) -- I am simply noting the prior endorsements as relevant to Citizens Unions consideration. I would be proud to earn a "Preferred Candidate" designation from Citizens Union.

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 the New York State Legislature, and to issue our preference for the Primary and endorsement for the General Election.

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