

Candidate Questionnaire

Dear Candidate,

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 June 27, 2022.

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Mike Corbett

Office Sought (New York State)

Senate

District Number

59

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)?

Democratic Conference

Age

40

Education

Hofstra University

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

District Leader - 74th Assembly District

Vice Chair - New York State Democratic Party

Eleanor Roosevelt Democratic Club (Member of 10 years)

Former Vice Chair - Young Democrats of America

Former President - New York State Young Democrats

Stonewall Democrats (Member of 5 Years)

Website www.mikecorbett.nyc

Twitter https://twitter.com/the_mikecorbett

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

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

What is your opinion on the recently passed ethics reform, which replaced JCOPE with a new ethics oversight agency called Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government? Did you support this policy?

When JCOPE was created a decade ago, the spirit of the joint commission was a welcome breath of fresh air in Albany, where corruption and disfunction permeated almost every inch of government. Sadly, JCOPE's structure simply masked the corruption in the name of getting Albany to work. This was a failure of the intent of this commission. Instead, we were left with a poor appointment process that allowed some elected to be shielded from accountability, abusing public and personal trust in the process, while others were punished sometimes for political reasons.

So I am hopeful in replacing JCOPE with the Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government. Of course, we must keep a close eye on the Commission as it actually begins to deal with issues of corruption. But already I believe the new selection system adds a level of oversight that was previously missing. Law deans' role in the vetting is an important layer that was previously missing, given that elected officials will still be able to appoint members to the commission.

Do you support the new independent ethics oversight agency to also replace the Legislative Ethics Commission (LEC)?

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 ethics issues.

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.

I am committed to working with elected officials as well as those working to reform the system to ensure that employment within the Board of Elections at both the city and state level is not based upon patronage but open application to allow these organizations to function as non-partisan groups.

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?

Yes

Do you support re-passing the constitutional amendment to enact no-excuse absentee voting?

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)

Instituting a system where the job of drafting of our district maps does not fall upon those seeking election within these perspective districts is crucial.

It is vital that the responsibility of drawing new district maps is given to a true, non-partisan group that is fully independent of partisan oversight or influence.

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: Workers Rights

Second: Housing, Health, and Human Services

Third: Environment

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?

The first piece of legislation I'd like to introduce would be centered around strengthening and protecting workers rights. I'm a Teamster running in a district where an Astoria Starbucks worker was fired after leading a unionization effort at their store. Trader Joe's workers across the river in Manhattan are also organizing and fear employer meddling. I want to pass legislation that requires employers to recognize when their employees successfully vote to unionize. If they don't – or meddle in elections – they will face stiff penalties that simply won't be the cost of doing business.

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

The 59th State Senate district was only first established this year after the court decision mandated that a special master redraw our state's district maps. This newly drawn district encompass a bulk of Manhattan's East Side, the western half of Queens, and a sliver of northwest Brooklyn. In bringing together these rather diverse communities, we have also brought together a rather diverse collection of district-wide issues.

I have worked in city government for over six and a half years. Working first for Council Member Costa Constantinides, whose district falls within my new state senate district, and, most recently, Eric Dinowitz, of the Bronx. I also am the only candidate running who resides within the Manhattan portion of the district, represent the overlapping Assembly district as District leader, and who has lived in the district in the same rent stabilized apartment my entire life.

I bring with me a repertoire of legislative and constituent service based experience. Moreover, I am actively building a team of experienced community leaders

comprised of union members, tenant presidents, community board members, elected officials, and community advocates who are ready to help build a district that will be part of the solution to the ongoing housing crisis, the fight against climate change, and addressing the rise in crime by taking a balanced approach to public safety.

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.

For more than four years I have been a district leader in the 74th Assembly District. My goal in that role is to make the electoral process more inclusive and voting more accessible. I have worked to ensure poll sites are adequately staffed, as that's a major barrier to many people casting a ballot. I am also vice chair of the New York State Democratic Party and have been vocal in bringing in more voices. In that capacity, I delivered seminars during the 2020 election season on how to become a DNC delegate.

In this capacity, I have also spoken out against corruption and abuses of power. When reports surfaced last year that Gov. Andrew Cuomo had harassed multiple female staffers, so I called for him to resign. Calling out a governor known for retaliation may have been a dangerous decision to my future, but it was the right one and I'm proud to have done it.

Lastly, I have been a public employee for nearly seven years. In the City Council, I helped organize my colleagues into a union to standardize a safe work environment for all 51 offices and the central staff. This is something that workers had mulled for some time, but became an imperative after reporters surfaced about what was happening in Andy King's office. I'm lucky to have worked for three honest Council Members who looked after their staff. But everyone is not that fortunate, which is why I felt called to use my experience in union organizing to help my colleagues feel safe at work, get fair pay, and stronger job security.

Do you currently live in this district? How long have you lived in it?

Yes. Although the district is brand new, i have lived in the same rent stabilized apartment, within the district, my entire life (over 40 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?

4000 is our win number. We have organized an incredible coalition of supporters from a variety of backgrounds with broad reaching support. Using this network to door knock, connect directly with prime and double prime voters, and mount a grassroots focused campaign is the key to our success.

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

Roughly \$50,000 on hand with over \$10,000 in additional pledges

How many individual donors do you have?

We have roughly 200 donors with the average donation amount around \$250

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

Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney

Eleanor Roosevelt Democratic Club

Gramercy Stuyvesant Independent Democrats

Teamster Local 814

Lesbian & Gay Democratic Club of Queens

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 running to represent the new State Senate District 59, where I have lived and worked my entire life. As a third-generation Teamster, I grew up on the picket lines; marching against non-union moving companies from a young age. I went on to spend 15 years with Local 814 and, at 24, became the youngest member of that union ever elected to its Executive Board.

Soon after, I turned my lifelong interest in politics into action by joining the Young Democrats of America (YDA). Over a decade, I went on to serve in several positions at the local, state, and national level, including Vice President of YDA from 2011-2013 and then President of the New York State Young Democrats from 2014 to 2017. In 2018, I was appointed as a Vice Chair of the New York State Democratic Party – a position I still serve in.

In 2015, I accepted a position as Director of Special Events for City Council Member Costa Constantinides, District 22. Over the next five and a half years, I spearheaded the district's participatory budgeting program that allowed Astoria residents to decide how to spend \$1 million in capital funds. Additionally, I organized events and rallies in support of public power, the Climate Mobilization Act, and Renewable Rikers. I then went on to serve as a top aide to Council Members Eric Dinowitz and Marjorie Velazquez.

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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