



For Immediate Release  
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Betsy Gotbaum  
212-227-0342, ext. 10

# **CITIZENS UNION ANNOUNCES CANDIDATE PREFERENCES IN SEPTEMBER 2018 PRIMARY ELECTIONS**

## **Good Government Group Issues Preference for Cuomo, Teachout, and Challengers in 8 Legislative Races**

Citizens Union Chair Randy Mastro and Executive Director Betsy Gotbaum today announced Citizens Union’s candidate preferences in 17 primary races for Governor, Attorney General, state Senate and Assembly.

After undertaking a rigorous evaluation of 35 candidates for state office, the good government group “preferred” Andrew Cuomo for Governor, Zephyr Teachout for Attorney General, and challengers in all but two legislative races with an incumbent running.

[Visit our website](#) to access Citizens Union’s online [Voters Directory](#), which has information about each candidate and the reasons for supporting them or not, as well as other information

about voting and elections in New York State.

As a nonpartisan government watchdog organization dedicated to improving democratic institutions in New York City and State, Citizens Union evaluates candidates based on their commitment to our reform agenda and their potential to advance these issues, as well as their ability to adequately represent their entire district. In alignment with Citizens Union's top priorities, candidates were asked about their commitment to voting and campaign finance reform, police accountability, ethics, and municipal home rule.

Citizens Union's nonpartisan candidate evaluations are among the most extensive and methodical in the state. Each candidate is given a comprehensive questionnaire, asking their positions on key reforms to state government, and is interviewed by a nonpartisan team of the organization's members. Each candidate per race is interviewed by the same team to ensure the integrity of each assessment and Citizens Union's Local Candidates Committee reviews each team's recommendation to support a candidate. In addition to information gathered through the questionnaires and interviews, hundreds of hours of research contribute to the final preference decision.

After careful consideration and extensive interviews with both candidates, Citizens Union has preferred **Andrew Cuomo** for the Democratic nomination for Governor, citing his extensive experience in New York State government and many of his accomplishments in office. In his interview, he committed to supporting a number of good government reforms in the areas of voting, economic development, and police accountability, among others. Nevertheless, Citizens Union has been critical of the Governor's shuttering the Moreland Commission in the midst of its investigation of public corruption, and for permitting a lack of transparency around billions of dollars in each year's state budget.

While acknowledging concerns, Citizens Union prefers Andrew Cuomo because of his considerable government experience with the expectation that he will honor his commitment to advance these reforms. Although Cynthia Nixon has demonstrated that she is passionate about serving New York State and spoke knowledgeably on the issues she supports, the organization is concerned that she does not have sufficient experience to undertake an executive role that is so consequential to all New Yorkers.

In the race for the Democratic nomination for Attorney General, Citizens Union evaluated all four candidates and considers each one to be highly qualified. **Zephyr Teachout** is the preferred candidate because she appears to be the one most enthusiastic and knowledgeable about good government reform, as well as the candidate with the most thoughtful plan to fight corruption in Albany. What she may lack in managerial experience, Citizens Union feels, is offset by her career-long commitment to democratic reform and her demonstrated independence from political and special interests.

In the state Senate, Citizens Union assessed the record and candidacy of 16 candidates running in nine primary races. These races include every seat held by a former member of the

Independent Democratic Conference (IDC), as well as challengers to Senators Martin Malavé Dilan and Simcha Felder. In contests for all but two of these seats, Citizens Union supports the challenger. In the rest, the organization takes a position of “no preference.”

Challenging IDC members, Citizens Union prefers **Alessandra Biaggi** (District 34), **Robert Jackson** (District 31), **Zellnor Myrie** (District 20), and **Jessica Ramos** (District 13). The organization made no preference in the Democratic primary in District 23 (held by Sen. Diane Savino), and in both the Democratic and Republican primaries in District 11 (held by Sen. Tony Avella). Citizens Union supports **Blake Morris** in his race against Felder (District 17), and **Julia Salazar** in her race against Dilan (District 18).

“In a state characterized by low voter turnout and non-competitive elections, it is inspiring to see a cohort of such spirited challengers to Senate incumbents, all running on platforms of government reform. It indicates that New Yorkers are getting civically engaged and we want to continue to encourage that,” said Betsy Gotbaum.

In the Assembly, Citizens Union evaluated candidates in three open seats: **Mathyde Frontus** (District 46), **Charles Fall** (District 61), and **Glenn Yost** (District 62). In another race – District 39 – Citizens Union preferred challenger **Catalina Cruz** over Ari Espinal, who gained the seat in a low-turnout special election earlier this year. In one other Assembly reelection bid, the organization preferred **Melissa Sklarz** (District 30) over Assembly Member Brian Barnwell. If elected, Sklarz will be the first transgender member of the legislature.

“Open seats have the potential to be the most competitive races and also typically attract the candidates with the least public recognition,” said Gotbaum. “That’s why it is so important for the electorate to have guidance on who is who, and which candidates have the greatest potential to advance reform.”

Citizens Union also evaluated candidates running for the Reform Party nomination for Attorney General. This is the first statewide primary for the Reform Party, which allows unaffiliated voters to cast a primary ballot. However, after reviewing two of the candidates, the organization determined that neither was waging a full campaign, and issued no preference.

Citizens Union Preferred Candidates in the 2018 Primaries:

**New York State**

Governor (D)	<b>Andrew Cuomo</b>
Attorney General (D)	<b>Zephyr Teachout</b>
Attorney General (Reform)	<b>No Preference</b>

**NYS Senate**

Senate District 11 (D)	<b>No Preference</b>
Senate District 11 (R)	<b>No Preference</b>
Senate District 13 (D)	<b>Jessica Ramos</b>

Senate District 17 (D)  
Senate District 18 (D)  
Senate District 20 (D)  
Senate District 23 (D)  
Senate District 31 (D)  
Senate District 34 (D)

**Blake Morris**  
**Julia Salazar**  
**Zellnor Myrie**  
**No Preference**  
**Robert Jackson**  
**Alessandra Biaggi**

**NYS Assembly**

Assembly District 30 (D)  
Assembly District 39 (D)  
Assembly District 46 (D)  
Assembly District 61 (D)  
Assembly District 62 (R)

**Melissa Sklarz**  
**Catalina Cruz**  
**Mathylde Frontus**  
**Charles Fall**  
**Glenn Yost**

Our mailing address is:

299 Broadway  
New York, NY 10007

212-227-0342