

## Candidate Questionnaire Local Candidates Committee Queens Borough President Election 2020

Citizens Union appreciates your response to the following questionnaire related to policy issues facing Queens Borough and our interest in reforming city and state government. **Please return the questionnaire to us as soon as possible, and no later than February 19th.** Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for the Queens Borough President special election and to issue our preference for the Primary and endorsement for the General Election. Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.

If you seek our support, we will also need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process. We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues.

Thank you very much for your response.

### Biographical Information

Candidate Name: Anthony Miranda

Party Affiliation(s): Registered Democrat running on the QnsProgressives line

Age: 58

Education: Associate's degree from New York City College of Technology and a B.A. from John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Office Sought: Queens Borough President

Occupation/Employer: Civil Rights Activist / Executive Chair of the National Latino Officers Association / Retired Administration for Children's Services Police Chief / Retired NYPD Sergeant / Small Business Owner

Previous Offices, Campaigns, and Community/Civic Involvement: Previous campaign: 2001 for City Council in Brooklyn, 2004 for Assembly in Brooklyn and 2010 for Assembly in Queens; for community involvement see [Civil Rights Advocate resume](#)

*(Please feel free to affix any additional information such as a résumé, campaign brochure, or issue statements.)*

### Campaign Contact Information

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## Affirmations

Have you completed the required campaign finance filings? **YES**

Are you willing to be interviewed by CU's Local Candidates Committee? **YES**

*(Please note: interviews are prerequisites of being considered for Citizens Union endorsements.)*

11. How would you use the office of the borough president to impact city policies affecting the borough/what is the vision of your office?

Queens is the second most populous borough. On its own, it would be the 4th largest city in the US. We need people who are willing to stand up and advocate, on behalf of the people of this county while planning for the future. This needs to be done without being in the way of the political establishment. By running I continue my civil rights advocacy work and expand it into an elected position.

We have to move away from politics as usual and into an era where we are elected by and represent everyday residents. This is not a campaign just about winning an office, but about using the existing bully pulpit of said office to amplify the needs of Queens community. We do this best by first listening to the community itself, all of it, not just certain segments. Queens has many large issues that the office of Borough President will not solve alone. We can work together with the community, the elected representatives, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations to come up with and plan out solutions.

12. If elected to the position, you will fill a vacancy for a 9-month period. The U.S. Census will be held during that time, and you would be sworn-in right in the middle of it. How would you work to ensure a complete and accurate count for the Borough of Queens?

We will work with city and state initiatives to get residents counted. We will also work with immigrant rights groups and service providers in order to ensure that any questions asked will not deter people from participating. This census must be prioritized by every level of our government, including the office of QBP and the Queens Community Boards, and we will work immediately to support these efforts and ensure we are represented fully.

13. Developers argue ULURP should be streamlined while community groups and advocates believe more opportunities for input should be provided or that voting thresholds should be changed for application approval. Others note that the ULURP process does not integrate the need to plan for post 9/11 security issues in development. What reforms to ULURP do you support?

We will always side with and look at the needs of community groups and advocates first. They have the best understanding of the community as they work at the grassroots level to do research and collect data on what our communities need, and what the government can do to fill those needs. The ULURP process should allow for more opportunities for these groups to have input. If the community boards also request more of a plan for security, then we will support this as well. Our goal is to maintain the democratic nature of the ULURP process, and community input for changes to the process are also important.

14. Queens has increasingly become a destination for new development projects, which has both economic potential and risks, like gentrification and rising cost of living. As the city explores rezoning

plans across Queens, the Borough President has a key role in assessing and advising on such projects. What neighborhoods do you think should or should not be re-zoned? How would you balance the various demands around re-zoning plans?

We believe the rezonings that have occurred in lower and middle-income neighborhoods have been predatory, as they have exacerbated housing displacement and gentrification. We will instead promote rezoning and making habitable sparsely populated areas in Queens, such as areas formerly or still used for industry. The needs of Queens residents come before the needs of developers and real estate interests. Rezoning is necessary to create new affordable housing, but as we need to consider the needs of the existing communities and the ones we are creating when doing them.

15. The borough presidents make recommendations to the mayor on capital projects as part of the budget process. All of the boroughs combined additionally receive 5 percent of the appropriations in the mayor's capital budget divided between the boroughs based on formulas related to land size and population. What would be your priorities for capital projects in the borough?

Capital projects for the borough should prioritize community land trusts, along with funding for modernizing Queens public schools, including primary, secondary and CUNY higher education. We will also prioritize funding for hospitals and trauma centers in Queens, along with expanding access to mental health and addiction services within the borough. Finally, we will look into the costs of making every train station in Queens ADA compliant, and advocate for this.

16. The Amazon deal faced intense criticism from people and organizations both for and against it. What are your feelings around the Amazon deal and if you had been Queens Borough president when it was announced, how would you have responded?

The Amazon deal was a gross miscalculation by the city and state government. Giving a company with billions of dollars in profit, from which they pay \$0 in federal taxes, \$3 billion in state incentives was absolutely unnecessary and a waste of taxpayer money. An Amazon HQ in Queens would have only brought rent hikes, displacement, and 25,000 mainly non-union low wage jobs. In the end, the headquarters was not wanted by the community and Amazon now has an office in the city without having to spend taxpayer dollars. Multi Billion-dollar companies don't need taxpayer money. We need them to pay their fair share and considering the shape our infrastructure and MTA are in, they should've never been offered the incentive to begin with.

We would have supported the efforts of community groups like Queens Barrios Unidos and NoHQ2 who successfully fought against Amazon's government-subsidized headquarters in Long Island City. Their work and the work of organizations like them will continue to organize solidarity amongst workers that would've otherwise been subject to Amazon's exploitative practices. We will push to end the government practice of giving large corporations tax breaks for coming into our communities by coordinating the efforts of our elected Queens representatives and look to move them toward promoting worker-owned and small business ownership and support. Breaks such as the one offered to Amazon are what we need to be offering our small business and worker-owned business establishments.

17. Borough presidents are charged with establishing a planning office that, among other functions, provides training and technical assistance to community boards on land use issues. The recently formed civic engagement commission is also tasked with providing professional assistance to community boards, in consultation and coordination with borough presidents. How would you use the

office to help community boards fulfill their charter mandated responsibilities in providing feedback on land use proposals?

We can use the Civic Engagement Commission to help community board members understand how we can spend capital appropriations given to us by the city. If our community members have a better understanding of how their position and our office work, then they can work with us and the rest of our community to better use the ULURP process, and ensure land proposals benefit the community and promote community ownership.

18. Borough presidents are charged with making hundreds of appointments. What criteria would you use for appointments to positions appointed by the borough president (the Panel on Educational Policy, the City Planning Commission, community boards, etc.)? What processes would you put in place for advertising open positions and recruiting qualified candidates that represent the diversity of New York City?

Individual roles should be filled by people with related experience. For example, someone on the Panel on Educational Policy should have experience in teaching and knows what Queens's classrooms and schools are lacking. They should be able to research what initiatives have been pushed in other school districts and what has been shown to work. First, we can reach out to our advocacy network to find people that have been serving the Queens community and know what its needs are. Next, we can advertise through public means like social media, and let the community apply and pick those with the most experience.

19. More specifically, Queens is the most diverse county in the United States, but recent data published by the Borough President's office (as mandated by the Charter) shows significant disparities between the borough's community boards and the demographics of the districts they represent. How would you address this issue to ensure community boards are reflecting their communities?

When appointing Community Board members, we will vet candidates by looking into their involvement in the communities they hope to serve. We will also encourage people currently taking activist and organizing roles to join their community boards to ensure the needs of those they are serving are being met and to ensure the actions and suggestions made by the boards align with the needs of their communities. We know many of the people already involved in these roles, they better represent the demographics of the districts they serve and work to make better.

20. Borough presidents can hold hearings on any matter of public interest and are charged with establishing a borough-wide complaint program to report public complaints to better service delivery by agencies. How would you use these powers and the position of the office to amplify the concerns of borough residents? What issues might you focus on to improve agency performance or draw public attention to?

The QBP has oversight on contracts impacting the borough and the ability to call public hearings on issues impacting the borough these along with the bully pulpit are tools we can use to ensure that the city, state, and federal government actors involved in such efforts are held accountable to the residents.

The first thing we should focus on is the recent Queens Bus Redesign, which paralyzes the bus network that Queens residents rely on. The final proposal of this plan is due in the spring, and we want Queens residents to know that this plan is not the only solution to

fixing our problems. If we organize and fight for more, we can eventually get more train lines that connect Queens neighborhoods to each other and the rest of New York City, and a fare-less and free MTA.

21. The borough presidents have the authority to introduce legislation yet few borough presidents in recent years have exercised this authority. Would you utilize this power, and, if so, what legislation would you introduce?

We would introduce legislation that keeps Sunnyside Yard under public control, with either permanent public ownership or partial ownership to community land trusts.

## I. CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS

What are your top five campaign promises you are making to the voters during this campaign for this position? If elected, Citizens Union will use these promises to evaluate your performance while in office, as well as to evaluate your candidacy in the future.

### TOP FIVE 2020 CAMPAIGN PROMISES OR GOALS

#### 1. WORKER AND SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCACY

- [Support for Small Businesses](#) - address inequalities by uplifting the work of the Department of Small Business Services (SBS), expansion of credit eligibility and access, encourage small business ownership by sharing programs that make the process less intimidating
- [Support for Worker-Owned Businesses](#) (Worker Cooperatives) via the SBS Worker Cooperative Business Development Initiative (WCBDI) in this way bring and create more worker-owned businesses to employ residents
- [Advocate for NYC Workers and Public Projects](#) - encourage unionized or worker-owned city contracts
- Expanding Worker Protections - support all efforts to unionize workers

#### 2. TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- [Reform and Regulation for Taxi and Ride-Sharing Companies](#) (Uber/Lyft/Via) - a long-term transformation of the system making it better for riders AND drivers.
- [Push for the Transformation of Public Transportation and the MTA](#) - We will advocate reducing fares back to their original prices (which can continually be adjusted for inflation). We want to expand eligibility for NYC's Fair Fares program, while also looking to support efforts to make the MTA fare-less/free. We want to expand service throughout Queens, including more direct connections to boroughs besides Manhattan, advocate for the proper allocation of funds from the state to bring the system up to 21st Century standards while planning for it to be part of the future. Finally, we are looking to decrease car use and plan a system that is part of the Green New Deal
- [Plan for safe Sidewalks, Bike Lanes, Roads, Highways](#) - make Queens more accessible and safe for pedestrians and cyclists, and advocate transforming our infrastructure to make this a reality
- [Look for ways to establish High-Speed Internet for All](#) - advocate for the installation of the high-speed fiber-optic internet infrastructure, and providing truly affordable

high-speed internet service, using existing methods while fighting for a High-speed internet service treated as a public utility for everyone's use

### 3. EDUCATION

- Specialized Schools - support efforts to expand the criteria used for access and to move away from a need for said schools by expanding offerings within Queens
- Student Hunger and Homelessness - advocate for funding for more social workers and guidance counselors that can guide and support students through DHS bureaucracy, along with opening food pantries at all schools in the NYC area. Coordinate efforts with federal Queens electeds to fight against the attacks against the Free School Lunch Program, and instead ensure the program is available all year round
- Ending the School to Prison Pipeline - support divestment from this system by reducing if not eliminating the sense that students are walking into a prison-like environment. Increase support for mental health conflict resolution and learning. Support efforts to ban all suspensions and expulsions for students below the Third Grade. Invest in a universal youth jobs program, college access programs reduced-fare MetroCards/ free unlimited MetroCards for students to open opportunities for them at every corner of the city
- Advocate expanding Before and Afterschool Childcare to support parents working long hours and to ensure their children are in a safe and stimulating environment
- Funding for the City University of New York (CUNY) and Technical Schools - become a voice for CUNY, technical schools, their students and faculty to fight to increase funding from the city and state to ensure that a high-quality college and technical education is available for Queens and NYC residents.

### 4. CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE NYC GREEN NEW DEAL

- OneNYC 2050- We will use the office of the Queens Borough President to ensure that the rollout of NYC's Green New Deal reaches every Queens resident and makes our borough more equitable socially, economically, and in its quality of life.
- Investing in Climate-Resilient Infrastructure - New York City is planning to invest \$20 billion in a resilience plan to address the growing threat of coastal storms, sea-level rise, extreme heat, and increased precipitation with projects and programs across the city. We will use the Borough President's office to ensure that this plan is executed equitably, to guarantee that working and middle-class neighborhoods have their homes, public spaces, and nearby public transportation made climate-resilient.
- Public Transportation and the MTA - We need municipal control of the MTA and as an immediate measure, Borough Presidents should be able to appoint positions on the existing MTA board. We will also advocate for direct annual investments from both the city and state to update our transit system, pay for ongoing infrastructure maintenance and increase ridership. We will push to expand eligibility for NYC's Fair Fares program, and in the long term, make MTA rides to be fare-less and free. Queen's' residents shouldn't have to go through Manhattan to Brooklyn or the Bronx; we will advocate for more train lines that connect Queens neighborhoods to each other and the rest of New York City. Our goal will be to decrease car use in the city to combat climate change by reducing traffic congestion and carbon emissions while increasing the borough's air quality and making us less reliant on fossil fuels.

- Transforming Public Utilities - A transition to renewable energy sources must also begin the process of making public utilities publicly owned. If taxpayers are paying to update our energy infrastructure and system (as they already are), then we should have ownership of those structures. Making our utilities public will reduce their cost, and leave more money in the pockets of New Yorkers, rather than lining the pockets of private investors. We will also advocate for a ban on utility shut-offs. Utility shut-offs can be a life and death matter, as people have frozen to death, died in fire, and have suffocated to death due to their oxygen machines being shut off. All public utilities are basic human needs.

### 5. HOUSING IS A RIGHT

- Expanding Public Housing- It will cost \$31.8 billion to remedy the conditions and restore the New York City Housing Authority's infrastructure to good working order, as its residents are plagued with leaky roofs, mold, broken elevators and faulty heating systems. We support the efforts of Queens' Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders to pass The Green New Deal for Public Housing Act, which would commit up to \$180 billion over 10 years to upgrade 1.2 million federally administered homes, including NYCHA.
- Housing, not Warehousing! Bringing Affordable Housing to Queens and Solving the Homelessness Crisis - New York City spent \$1.8 billion in 2018 on operating its shelter system. In the next ten years, the city will allocate another \$650 million in capital funding allocated to upgrade and expand the system. In 2015, Picture the Homeless found that Queens had enough vacant lots and buildings to house almost 33,000 people. In New York City these vacancies can house almost 200,000 people, which is more than enough to house every homeless person in New York City. Working with NYC's Housing Not Warehousing Act, we will work in a coalition with housing rights advocates and elected officials to ensure the creation of affordable housing. The funding for shelters can and must be moved into housing, especially city tax levy funds and capital funding for shelters. We will advocate to ensure empty units and spaces are converted to affordable housing and expand the rent stabilization system to cover all New York apartments so no tenant is suddenly evicted from their homes. We will work to end the shelter system as we know it. No one should be homeless or struggling to pay their rent in one of the richest cities in the world.
- Promoting Community Land Trusts, Homeownership and Tenant Protections - We will work with the city to prioritize community land trusts, HDFCs, and low and middle-income families and parties to benefit from empty land and foreclosed and city-owned properties that can be developed by New York City Economic Development Corporation. We will advocate to expand the rent stabilization system to cover all New York apartments so no tenant is suddenly evicted from their homes. We will work to end predatory rezonings by the city, which has targeted low and middle-income neighborhoods and exacerbated displacement and gentrification. We will instead promote rezoning and making habitable sparsely populated areas in Queens, such as areas formerly or still used for industry.

Please return to Citizens Union, Local Candidates Committee, 299 Broadway, Suite 700 New York, NY 10007 Via email to [candidates@citizensunion.org](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org) or fax to 212.227.0345 • Call us at 212-227-0342 with questions.