



Candidate Questionnaire

Local Candidates Committee - NYS Legislative
Election - 2020 General

Monday, September 14, 2020

Dear candidate,

Congratulations on your decision to run for office in the New York State Legislature!

In the following pages, you will find questions regarding your positions on various reform measures, campaign promises, and ethics in public office.

Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for the New York State Legislature, and to issue our endorsement for the General Election.

This is a document confirming your responses to the Citizens Union questionnaire.

We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues. If you seek our support, we will also 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 in this election cycle.

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Citizens Union is a nonpartisan democratic reform and good government group dedicated to making democracy work for all New Yorkers. Citizens Union serves as a civic watchdog, combating corruption and fighting for political reform. We have been evaluating candidates for public office in New York City since 1911, and our comprehensive Voter Directory has been a source of reliable information for New Yorkers for over a century.

You can read Citizens Union's [principles and criteria for our candidate evaluation process here](#).

We thank you very much for your response.

Your Info

Name

Rebecca A Seawright

Office Sought (New York State)

Assembly

District Number

76

Email

teamrebecca2020@gmail.com

Biographical Information

Party Affiliation(s)

Lifelong Democrat, running on the Rise and Unite Party Line

Age

58

Education

Juris Doctor

Occupation/Employer

NYS Assembly Member

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Member of the Assembly 2015-Present

Campaign Contact Information

Campaign Manager Name

Devin Wellspeak

Campaign Manager Email

devinwellspeak@gmail.com

Additional Staff Contact

Phone Number

Address

Website

<http://rebeccaseawright.com/>

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/Rebecca76AD>

Facebook

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

If elected, which legislative conference will you join (e.g., Republican, Democrat, other)?

Democrat

Affirmations

Have you completed the required campaign finance filings?

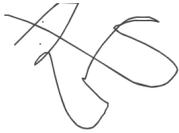
Yes No

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

Yes No

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

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'AS' or similar, written in a cursive style.

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

Please state whether you support or oppose the following reform measures. If you wish to elaborate on your answers, you may do so in the provided space at the bottom of this page.

Ethics

1. Replace the Joint Commission on Public Ethics and the Legislative Ethics Commission with an effective and independent enforcement body (S594A/A1282A).

Support Oppose

2. Limit outside compensation earned by state legislators and statewide officials to 25% of their salaries and eliminate stipends.

Support Oppose

Elections and Voting

3. Do you support or oppose the following changes to the state’s current registration and voting system?

	Support	Oppose
a. No-excuse absentee voting (second passage of constitutional amendment)	✓	-
b. Election Day voter registration (second passage of constitutional amendment)	✓	-
c. Re-enfranchisement of people on parole automatically through legislation, without requiring a Certificate of Good Conduct or Relief	✓	-
d. Mandating poll sites on college campuses	✓	-

4. Reform the special election process, utilizing a nonpartisan special election for state legislative seats and eliminate delays in filling vacancies.

Support Oppose

5. Reduce the vote threshold to become a registered party back to 50,000 votes and keep the gubernatorial election as the qualifying election, and reduce the petition requirement for independent candidates back to 15,000 signatures.

Support Oppose

Campaign Finance

6. Amend the state's public campaign financing system, approved in the 2021 budget, by

	Support	Oppose
a. Drastically reduce campaign contribution limits	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Set even lower contribution limits for registered lobbyists and those who do business with the state	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Move the campaign finance matching program to be administered by an independent, nonpartisan body outside of the NY Board of Election	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Simplify the matching system by making both in- and out-of-district donations eligible and by eliminating the three different tiers for matching	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Budget Process

7. Require full disclosure of grants and contracts issued by the state, including the budget lines from which the spending is made and reporting on the results of each grant or contract over a certain amount.

Support Oppose

Election Administration

8. Provide for effective online disclosure and itemization of spending from elected officials' lump sum appropriations, including reporting on potential conflicts of interest and how the funds are spent.

Support Oppose

9. Restructure the state Board of Elections to abolish the strict two-party division of governance and operation and put in place professional, nonpartisan administration.

Support Oppose

Home Rule

10. Empower the attorney general to investigate and prosecute election law malfeasance and cases of public corruption.

Support Oppose

11. Local Board of Elections are largely funded by their county. Given the many changes to election administration introduced in New York recently, the state should provide additional funding to county BOEs.

Support Oppose

Court Reform

12. Make mayoral control of city schools permanent, with a governance system that provides for accountability, transparency, parent engagement, and democratic participation.

Support Oppose

Redistricting

13. Simplify and consolidate New York State’s court system by passing the Chief Judge’s proposed constitutional amendment to modernize the courts.

Support Oppose

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.

RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Government under the COVID-19 outbreak

14. Maintain the current redistricting process, supported by voters through a 2014 constitutional amendment, and particularly the elements that provide minority parties a voice in the process, allow the Independent Redistricting Commission to play a central role, and takes redistricting power away from the hands of incumbent lawmakers.

Support Oppose

15. Provide public access to observe and participate in government proceedings, in meetings that would be public under the New York Open Meetings Law, via live and recorded video available on government websites.

Support Oppose

16. The Legislature stopped holding regular meetings soon after the COVID-19 outbreak, and later reconvened in July and August for short sessions that dealt with urgent matters. Should the Legislature return to its regular, pre-COVID calendar next session?

Yes No

17. The ability of citizens and advocates to make their voices heard in Albany has been severely curtailed since the Legislature shifted to work remotely. How can the Legislature remain open and accessible for New Yorkers who seek to engage their representatives?

The legislature needs to adapt to current gathering limitations caused by the pandemic and move the NYS government into the 21st century to make sure the act of governing can be done remotely. I have already held 24 consecutive weekly virtual town halls to stay engaged with my constituents. I strongly believe in transparency and keeping open access to the residents of my district.

We also need to make sure that our laws are up-to-date with new technologies. That is why I introduced legislation to address individuals disturbing virtual calls commonly referred to as “zoom bombing.”

Serving the public under the COVID-19 outbreak

18. What are your concerns regarding the use of emergency powers during this crisis, and how do you think NY government can maintain public accountability standards at this time?

Our state legislators are the closest proxy for constituents in our democracy. Legislators need to have equal bargaining power to make sure that the residents of their districts are being properly represented. That is why I am cosponsor of the Budget Equity Act (S8198A/A9100), that would amend the New York State Constitution to allow the Legislature to play an equal role with the Governor in shaping the state budget.

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.

19. What are the biggest challenges in your district in dealing with the coronavirus outbreak?

My district already suffers from extraordinarily high cost of living and rents. As a result of the pandemic, many families are struggling to pay rent, and small businesses are closing. We need to support rent relief to make sure our families and small businesses survive the economic fallout from the pandemic.

20. What are the appropriate roles of city, state, and federal governments in a crisis such as this?

I believe that we need assistance at the federal level to make sure our city continues to function, I fully support the HEROES act that was passed by the House of Representatives. Given the current circumstances, in the absence of federal support, the city and state must take it upon themselves to generate the income to properly provide for its residents. That is why I support the millionaire and billionaire taxes, so we do not cut any services to New Yorkers.

21. How will you help your future constituents, residents and businesses, access potential funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, or any other future government relief funds?

As an elected official, constituent services is the most important part of my job. Over the course of this crisis, my office has helped hundreds of constituents apply for unemployment and small business loans. Assisting constituents navigating aid, and government relief is my priority. Additionally, I hold weekly virtual town halls to keep my constituents up to date on different issues that affect our community.

CAMPAIGN PROMISES MADE TO VOTERS

What are the top five promises you are making to the voters during the campaign?

Campaign Promise 1

Given the currently public health crisis, all of my top campaign promises are focused on protecting the health and livelihood of my constituents. I promise to keep constituent services at the forefront of my work. My office is dedicated to making sure the residents of the 76th Assembly District have access to the resources they deserve.

Campaign Promise 2

I promise to fight for affordable housing and protecting tenants rights. Rising rents has not only put a huge financial strain on my constituents but also small businesses. I promise to do everything i can to make sure the small businesses are able to survive this economic crisis.

Campaign Promise 3

I promise to stay committed to promoting human and equal rights. Women's rights and LGBTQ equality, and racial justice will remain at the heart of my work in Albany. My sponsorship of and cosponsorship of successful legislation is a matter of public record.

Campaign Promise 4

I promise to continue to fight to fully fund our public schools and universities, increase financial aid, and reduce tuition.

Campaign Promise 5

I promise to fight for environmental protections that not only protect the planet but the everyday health and safety of New Yorkers. I have been a leader on legislation to protect air quality and waterways.

Additional material

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

ETHICAL REPRESENTATION OF CONSTITUENTS

Citizens Union believes that all New Yorkers deserve to be represented by officials who work for the public interest and honor the public trust. With the corruption conviction of recent legislative leaders, we seek to endorse a candidate who will demonstrate that they will honor the full commitment of the oath of office, and always represent the public interest above all else.

Please tell us how you have and would continue to conduct the political affairs of this office in an upright manner, and maintain the public trust.

Transparency is at the forefront of my policy agenda. I have been a full time legislator since I began in 2015. I sponsored legislation that enacts reforms at all levels, including election reform, criminal justice reform, environmental reform, and human rights advances. I intend to support increased transparency in government, I was the lead sponsor of the first statewide inventory of women in public policy positions, which has now become state law. I am the lead sponsor of legislation to establish LGBTQ curriculum throughout the state. I have been unafraid to take strong positions, that advance the cause of social justice and against corruption, throughout my career in public service. Most fortunately, I bring the perspective of a public school and university parent, to all of the issues that are concern to our community. I have demonstrated my commitment to civic engagement in all of my actions as an elected official. As a former Assistant District Attorney, I am strongly committed to equal justice for all.

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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