



## Candidate Evaluation Principles and Aims

Local Candidates Committee

New York City Elections 2021

### OUR VALUES AND AIMS

Citizens Union (CU) 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 work to ensure fair and open elections, honest and efficient government, and a civically-engaged public.

We are New Yorkers from diverse backgrounds and political beliefs, connected to our communities and united in our commitment to put the city's long-term interest ahead of all special interests. Principled and pragmatic, Citizens Union is an independent force for constructive reform, driving policy and educating the public to achieve accountable government in the City and State of New York.

In keeping with our mission, CU aims to promote a competitive and diverse political culture, a fair and open political process, and accountable and responsible governance. To that end, CU evaluates candidates for elected office and backs those who strongly support and can advance our agenda for reform.

### OUR CRITERIA

The following guidelines are used by the Local Candidates Committee and Citizens Union Board of Directors in the evaluation of candidates:

- Support for Citizens Union's reform agenda shall be the primary criteria used in deciding its support for a candidate.
- Evidence of ability to wage an effective and competitive campaign shall be considered, but shall not be determinative.
- Ability to advance CU's goals, if elected, shall be considered, but shall not be determinative. Incumbents will be held accountable for their record of reform in office and shall be judged accordingly on the basis of their demonstrated support for CU's issues.
- State, local, or community issues specific to the race's jurisdiction shall be considered, as will candidates' ability to grasp these issues and propose thoughtful solutions to represent their constituents' interests.
- Evaluation of the candidates and the decision to support a particular candidate shall be made without regard to political party and in a nonpartisan manner.

## OUR LEVELS OF SUPPORT FOR CANDIDATES

1. CU's terminology for expressing its support for a candidate shall be to "prefer" a supported candidate in a party primary election, and to "endorse" a supported candidate in a general election.
2. It is recognized that not all races will provide a clear-cut example of one candidate more closely aligned with CU's agenda. In such instances, a finding of "No Preference" or "No Endorsement" may be issued. Likewise, a "Dual Preference" designation may be offered to two qualified candidates, but not a "Dual Endorsement." A "Dual Preference" shall be used only as a last resort, and, in the case of such determination, CU shall explain its reasoning in its Voters Directory.
3. Citizens Union will inform its members and voters about its support for particular candidates through a) an issuance of a news release and b) publication of its voters directory in print and/or online.
4. Some candidates may receive Citizens Union's preference in a party primary election but not an endorsement in the general election. While these candidates are allowed to campaign with CU's primary preference, they have not been endorsed in the general election and may not use any of CU's logos or images during the general election campaign.

## OUR CANDIDATE INTERVIEW RULES AND PROCEDURES

1. Candidates will be contacted by the CU staff to arrange a time and place for their interview. Due to limited resources, not all races will be evaluated. CU will prioritize those races that are most competitive and relevant to our reform agenda. CU reserves the right to evaluate races at the organization's discretion.
2. Candidates must submit their questionnaire prior to their interview.
3. Candidates will be interviewed by assigned members of the CU Local Candidates Committee (LCC). Generally, there will be at least three interviewing LCC members and a CU staff member present during the interview.
4. Candidate interviews will last approximately thirty minutes.
5. No campaign staff or other individuals associated with the candidate will be allowed to participate in the CU interview, though one staff member may be present in the room.
6. No candidate may be considered for a preference or endorsement unless she/he has been interviewed during the election season by CU. This rule may be waived only in very exceptional cases approved by the Chair of the Local Candidates Committee.
7. The interview team presents recommendations for preferences and endorsements to the full Local Candidates Committee, which then votes upon and submits these results to the CU Board for final deliberation and approval.