

Name: Robert E. Cornegy, Jr.

Seeking office: Brooklyn Borough President

Democratic Primary

Age: 55

Education: MA and BA in Organizational Management

Occupation/Employer: Member, New York City Council

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement: District Leader/State
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Have you completed the required campaign finance filings? YES

Have you qualified to receive matching campaign finance funds from the CFB? YES

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

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'RC' followed by a stylized flourish.

1. The role of borough presidents often changes depending on the office holder. How would you use the office of the borough president to impact city policies affecting the borough? What is the vision of your office?

I would use the office to provide boroughwide leadership as we begin to emerge from a global pandemic coupled with a devastating economic crisis. My vision of the borough president's office is for all persons of the borough to see the office as one of advocacy, resources, and hope that brighter days are ahead of us.

2. The city charter was recently amended to establish an independent, minimum budget for borough presidents. If elected, how will you utilize this new protected status to better serve your borough?

Budget resources are investment resources, and I will invest in the people of Brooklyn. An investment that improves healthcare and access to quality affordable housing. An investment in safer neighborhoods, cleaner streets, and real, responsible economic development at a time when Brooklyn desperately needs these priorities addressed. Dedicating resources and ideas to build Green initiatives, especially in parts of the borough that are challenged with limited open space and need Green Job training and opportunities. Most of all, I will invest in making Brooklyn a haven for all walks of life. Brooklyn will be a place where people are safe and feel safe and can enjoy a quality of life that only Brooklyn can deliver.

3. The charter requires borough presidents to directly engage with city agencies through a borough service cabinet to coordinate service delivery and issues. Yet the nature, level, and quality of collaboration with agencies varies. How will you work with city agencies to ensure meaningful engagement?

As a council member who has chaired multiple committees, I know from hard experience the challenges of working with agencies. But I also believe in relationship building. By working with agencies as true partners, we can use that meaningful engagement to improve quality of life. That said, my time as a committee chair has also taught me the power and responsibility of checks and balances in government. Relationship building therefore has to go hand-in-hand with accountability. My engagement with agencies would focus on clear takeaways that are tangible and measurable.

4. Do you support empowering borough presidents to require the appearance of borough commissioner of city agencies for the monthly interagency "cabinet" meetings led by the borough presidents?

YES

5. 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?

First, I'd ensure that hearings are not held exclusively in Borough Hall. Government needs to "take it the people," so hearings would be held throughout Brooklyn, directly where people live and work, and emphasize local issues that impact specific communities. I'd also make sure my community engagement staff does more than attend community board meetings. My team will actually get to know local issues firsthand by interacting with active community stakeholders and the local influencers who have a pulse on local level issues. We can incorporate this knowledge into hearings and other policymaking. I will also communicate information and updates through the borough's newsletter, social media campaigns, community boards and more. My goal is to let Brooklyn know that the Office of the Borough President hears them.

6. 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?

Of the many I am considering, one idea that stands out the most is establishing resources that focus on violence as a public health issue. As a public health issue, resources would be used to first launch a study complete with epidemiology, that also includes race, ethnicity, economics, health, language, cultural factors and much more; the study results would then be looked at for prevention, intervention, and treatment. The current COVID crisis offers a roadmap into how these resources could be meted out.

7. 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. The pandemic has cast further disruption to the process. What reforms to ULURP do you support?

I will push for reforms that allow more input from community boards. And I will provide more resources to boards, specifically investments to have urban planning experts available to support the work of the boards and help them navigate the process in a more informed way. As projects come before my desk as borough president, I will depoliticize the process by ranking projects not on their size or the lobbying effort but rather on levels of affordability, local job improvements, tangible community benefits, clear environmental mitigations, and more. More community input on ULURP is needed, but the process of community development as a whole needs to be reviewed. Projects that don't truly develop the community will not receive my support.

8. 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?

I would first go to the community boards. Each board provides an annual list of needed capital improvement projects. Some of these projects have languished on these lists for years, even longer. That is a clear sign that the administration isn't giving communities input. I'd look at these lists from the boards, talk with them, learn why these are important. The combined lists--the ones generated by our many boards--would be the voice of the entire borough to set priorities.

9. If elected, would you post on your website all applications received by your office for capital and expense discretionary funds, as well as groups which ultimately received funding?

YES

10. 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. Using the planning resources available, how would you use the office to help community boards fulfill their charter mandated responsibilities to provide feedback on land use proposals, while enabling the boards to make decisions independent of the borough president's office?

Land use training is a clear area we need to reevaluate. Terms limits on boards is now the rule, and with that comes the loss of vital, institutional knowledge. That loss needs to be mitigated, and through training my office would provide that. But training in other areas is also important. I'd use the resources provided to help the boards understand the interrelationships between housing, jobs, public safety, education, healthcare, arts, senior services, open space and more.

11. 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, 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, and how would you assure that appointments represent the diversity of the borough's neighborhoods?

My appointments would be based on persons with real knowledge combined with diversity and equal representation. While many candidates promise this, I'd go one step further. Getting

access to needed experience is a roadblock for many, particularly in communities that are lower income, often synonymous with communities of color. I'd therefore look to create mentoring programs, with a focus on younger adults, to gain access to needed information and experience. I'd be grooming the next set of appointments, in essence the next generation of leaders, with a focus on increasing diversity.

12. Do you support granting the borough presidents the ability to make an additional appointment to the Board of Standards and Appeals, who would only vote on matters affecting that borough?

YES

14. What experience have you had, if any, with good government and reform issues? (e.g. voting and elections, campaign finance, ethics, police accountability, government transparency and oversight). If you've worked to advance these goals, we'd love to hear about it.

The Eric Garner Anti-Chokehold Act, the original legislation to make police chokeholds illegal; voted to repeal qualified immunity so cops who use excessive force are held accountable; and, the Kalief Browder Bill, which provides necessary counseling services for inmates detained at Riker's Island.

15. 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.

1) Quality affordable housing

2) Economic development with an emphasis on creating more jobs that pay family-sustaining wages

3) Quality accessible affordable healthcare, including mental health

16. If you have not addressed this already, in what major ways would your priorities as borough president differ from the incumbent?

The incumbent and I see eye to eye on many issues. We will be at different phases of crisis response. The incumbent is managing at a time where we are still responding to the pandemic but potentially at the beginning of the end of it. My priorities will be on continuing the current borough president's response while also focusing what happens next. I've often said we can walk and chew gum at the same time; as the incoming borough president, I'm committed to these dual priorities.

What else would you like us to know about yourself?

I am the world's tallest elected official, as established by the Guinness Book of World Records.