



Friday, May 21, 2021

Citizens Union 2021 Candidate Questionnaire - New York City Mayor

Dear Candidate,

In the following pages, you will find questions regarding your positions on various reform issues and your plans for office. The form includes four sections: the pandemic and city government, elections and voting, police accountability, and miscellaneous.

Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for city offices, and to issue our preference for the June primary. Read more about the method, principles, and criteria of the candidate evaluation process [here](#).

**

If you wish to be considered, please submit the questionnaire by April 17 and no later than 48 before your interview.

If you seek our support, we will also need to schedule an interview with you as part of the evaluation process.

**

If you cannot complete the questionnaire in one sitting, you can click Save and Continue Later at the bottom of every page.

Once you submit the questionnaire, you will receive a confirmation email with a PDF file containing your responses. Citizens Union will not be able to see your answers unless you submit the form. We plan to make responses to this questionnaire public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).

For any questions, please email candidates@citizensunion.org

We thank you very much for your response.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Your Info

Name

Kathryn Garcia

Running in what primary

Democratic

Age

51

Education

B.A., University of Wisconsin

Occupation/Employer**Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement**

Commissioner, NYC Department of Sanitation; interim chair and CEO of NYC Housing Authority; Food Czar for New York's COVID-19 emergency response

Website

<https://www.kgfornyc.com>

Twitter

@KGforNYC

Facebook

@KGforNYC

Affirmations

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

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

Signature

THE PANDEMIC AND CITY GOVERNMENT

1. If elected, you will start your term as New York City (hopefully) begins to reopen its businesses, offices, and institutions. How will you utilize the mayor's office to help rebuild the economic base of NYC?

The key to our recovery is to provide the necessary support and day to day quality of life investments—clean parks, safe transit, reliable childcare, access to fresh healthy foods—that allow all New Yorkers to thrive. My Administration will prioritize supplying the most vulnerable New Yorkers with meaningful economic relief and pathways for economic mobility. First, we will provide free childcare for working families, allowing guardians, especially women, to get back to work. Second, we will unlock barriers for small businesses by increasing access to credit, streamlining all laws and regulations governing restaurants and nightlife establishments, and cutting red tape for all permit and licensing processes. Third, we will create job pipelines into both the public and private sector for justice involved youth, CUNY colleges, and trade schools. We will guarantee graduates of our trade schools City employment, work with the private sector to offer 10,000 paid internships to high school students, and subsidize wages for youth who face barriers to employment. Lastly, for housing we will focus City investment where it's needed most and create 50,000 units of deeply affordable housing (<30% AMI).

While it has been a dark year for New York City, that thing that makes us New York hasn't gone away.

The people who started those restaurants, theaters, salons, bodegas, dance clubs, gyms, and museums – all their creative talent is still here. They just need help. That's why the core of our recovery plan is meaningful economic relief and job pathways for the most vulnerable New Yorkers. I have proposed a robust Reopen to Stay Open Plan that has three key focus areas:

Create a single small business City Permit. Any new business with less than 100 employees will be able to fill out just one simple, streamlined permit to get up and running. You will be able to apply for that City Permit on your smartphone. Any new or returning business that applies for a City Permit will

get a response within 1 month of submitting the application. A Garcia administration will also launch CrowdfunderNYC, a fund that provides zero interest microloans to small businesses with 20 employees or fewer, starting with anchor investments from the City's pension fund and support from the private sector. We will reimagine how the City uses public space to give local businesses and art organizations a bigger footprint in their communities—by reforming our concessions and public art permitting process to unlock hundreds of thousands of square feet of public space for arts and culture.

2. New York City is facing an economic and fiscal crisis. How would you ensure the fiscal health and integrity of city spending, while providing New Yorkers with valuable city services?

My priorities to restore our economic health will be: refinancing the debt, working with unions to find productivity savings, reducing redundancy that has proliferated under the current administration, and eliminating bureaucracy including in the capital projects construction process. When I was at DEP, I identified and implemented more than \$100 million in recurring annual savings over four years – that's nearly 10% of the utility's operating budget, without a single layoff. We identified opportunities to right-size maintenance practices, more efficiently deploy field staff and use DEP's buying power to negotiate better rates for products used to deliver clean, safe and healthy NYC drinking water. And all of this work happened in partnership with frontline workers and their union representatives – and resulted in no layoffs. I will take this approach throughout the City, including moving millions of dollars out of the administrative functions of DOE to funnel more dollars into classrooms where they belong. I will also pursue state legislation to create a new Citywide capital projects authority that can use innovative project delivery methods and select the best value contractors to bring our costs down and deliver benefits more quickly. We cannot continue to accept the highest capital construction costs in the entire world and projects that take years.

On investments, I will move quickly on multiple fronts to focus on healing the housing crisis and addressing the urgency of climate change. My first priorities are to reverse cuts to the curbside

composting program so we can meet our zero waste targets, fund the implementation of existing resilience plans, and reduce building emissions by investing in energy efficiency and clean energy projects at NYCHA and other City-subsidized affordable housing.

Climate action and resiliency is embedded directly across all my policy proposals from education to transportation. My plan to green schoolyards, renovate parks to add more trees and plantings, and install green roofs will reduce the urban heat island effect, cut air pollution and asthma, capture stormwater, bring down energy costs, and improve New Yorkers well-being. Adapting to climate change is how we will grow our economy. By expanding job training and readiness programs for NYCHA residents that lead directly to employment in renewable energy - such as more funding for successful programs like Green City Force - we will prepare the city's most vulnerable residents for quality jobs while building the ecosystem necessary to support a green industry.

3. In March 2020, Mayor de Blasio issued a state of emergency in New York City (as did Governor Cuomo in NY State) to remove any legal and regulatory barriers to fight the coronavirus pandemic. Do you have any concerns regarding the use of emergency powers by the Mayor during this crisis? How do you think city government can maintain public accountability standards at this time?

An individual cannot govern effectively if she loses the trust of her constituents or employees. As mayor, I will prioritize transparency, holding it alongside competence and reliability as pillars of my administration. Measurements, data, and transparency in that information are central to how I will govern. I've shown this commitment to transparency throughout my career. The PlowNYC website allows anyone to see realtime data to track the progress of DSNY snow activities during a storm - keeping the Department accountable and allowing residents to remain informed. I will take the same approach to governing as mayor and share data, reports, and projections.

4. The ability of citizens and advocates to make their voices heard in City Hall has been severely curtailed since city government shifted to work

remotely. The next Mayor will need to decide how to adapt to the new reality. How would you propose to improve community engagement and public participation while using remote technology (in public hearings, meetings, etc.), particularly to ensure equity in participation?

I will move decisions closer to the communities most affected by important issues in coordination with local community based organizations. The fight against climate change provides a particularly illustrative example. Creating, staffing, and funding resilience districts in the city's most vulnerable communities will establish the infrastructure needed to keep communities better connected to the work that will affect their lives and the lives of future generations. Through the resilience districts, the city will shift on the spectrum of public participation from a de facto process of informing or in some cases consulting residents of plans/projects/policies that have already largely been determined to a city agency standard of involvement and collaboration.

But sharing data and involving the community in the process will not be enough to build trust in government within vulnerable communities, or to promote equity in participation. Actions and holding agency leadership and staff accountable will also be necessary. That means publicly appointing one person to be the lead for each project, and then holding them accountable. For example, one reason I've cited that vaccine rollout was so disastrous and inequitable was that a single person was not put in charge of it. We cannot have equity in public participation if the relevant chain of command is not clear to every community and every individual.

VOTING AND ELECTIONS REFORM

5. Do you consider yourself a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting? How will you work to maintain this system and educate voters on how it works?

I am a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting. It's a great way to reward campaigns with broad appeal, such as mine. Our supporter base is strong in all five boroughs—as shown by our grassroots coalition of contributors from every borough. It

also allows voters to support smaller-name candidates without worry that they are wasting their votes—by completing their ranked ballot, they can ensure their preferences can still make a difference, even if their preferred candidate does not win. We need to continue to focus on outreach—I know RCV is a process that voters will be happy with once they adjust; but we have to ensure that our education efforts reach all New Yorkers. We cannot afford to further exacerbate unevenness in voter turnout by neglecting to connect with all voters on the details of RCV.

6. Now that New York City has implemented Ranked Choice Voting, do you support moving to an Open Primary system (eliminating party primaries and establishing a non-partisan election system)

No

Comments

I do not support moving to an Open Primary system. Party voters should have the opportunity to nominate a consensus candidate to compete in the general.

7. How will you use your power as Mayor to improve the operations of the NYC Board of Elections and its accountability to the city?

My Administration will be driven by data, transparency, and input from all stakeholders. If you've seen my work, you know that I do not just make plans or reports- I execute and deliver. While the mayor has no direct authority over the BOE, it does have the ability to require better and more efficient use of the city funding BOE is provided, and require more transparency in reporting of their budget. The proper functioning of the Board of Elections is critical to our city—a loss of faith in their operations could snowball, effecting widespread doubt in our elected officials and their mandates. As mayor, I will set clear expectations for all agencies and administrative bodies and make clear that status quo administration will not be tolerated if it is not meeting the needs of New York.

8. The next mayor will appoint seven members to the city's redistricting commission. In doing so, the next mayor will have share the responsibility for shaping a fair political map for

the coming decade. If elected, what objectives will you have in appointing commission members?

In my appointees, I will prioritize individuals with a deep understanding of the city and its communities. To succeed on that committee, one must be willing to look to data to best understand the state of our geography and demographics, but it is equally important to know how districting decisions can affect the political voice of voters. Special care must be taken to avoid silencing smaller communities through unfair and insensitive redistricting.

9. Mayor de Blasio created a DemocracyNYC office, headed by a Chief Democracy Officer, tasked with increasing voter registration, improving voter access, promoting youth participation, and advancing democratic reforms. The Campaign Finance Board, the Board of Elections, and the Civic Engagement Commission share similar responsibilities. How would your administration organize its efforts to promote civic engagement and participation? How would that fit in your overall vision for the city?

Welcoming all New Yorkers to civic involvement will be a priority for me. I have one of the best voting records of any candidate running for mayor- but I also know that our democracy is often inaccessible for most. Barriers include time, financial means, language access, and accessibility for those with disabilities. It is up to government to fix these issues and make sure every New Yorker is able to participate and be civically engaged. I also believe in efficient and effective government, and that we must streamline redundancies in order to better serve New Yorkers- we can't expect our civic infrastructure to be accessible if it is complicated and divided into many different offices. We must prioritize making access to government simpler, particularly for those that are traditionally underrepresented in the civic process such as people of color, youth, and people with disabilities. We should use the same lens for everything from City Council hearings to Participatory Budgeting to poll sites.

10. Do you support allowing the winner of a special election for a city office (except the mayor) to serve the remainder of the unexpired term, instead of only filling the position until the next general election?

Yes

Comments

Yes—while special elections may represent deviations from the standard election schedule, there is no need to treat their results as anything less than legitimate. If we trust the winner of the special election to serve effectively in the role until the next general election, we should also trust them to complete the term.

11. The de Blasio administration launched a citywide civic education program, Civics for All, which included a new curriculum, training for teachers, and increased student voter registration drives. Do you support maintaining Civics for All and student voter registration drives at the same capacity?

Yes

Comments

There is tremendous value to both the students and the city when we get young people engaged with and informed about civic life. A generation of youth who know what government is and can do for them will be better equipped to advocate for the changes that will improve the lives of millions of young New Yorkers. As mayor I would keep Civics for All, but I would direct DOE to better integrate it into curricula throughout the year.

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

Citizens Union has been studying police accountability and performance in New York City for more than a decade. In our reports and advocacy efforts we have urged city government to strengthen the accountability of the New York Police Department to the public and create a more cohesive system of police oversight. Previous reports include: [2016 issue brief](#), [2013 position brief on Stop and Frisk](#), [2012 report on the CCRB](#), [2008 policy statement on police misconduct](#). Citizens Union's 2021 agenda for police reform, [published as a report](#) in March, calls for establishing a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, allowing the CCRB to appeal the Police Commissioner's decisions, making the appointment of Police Commissioner subject to advice and consent of the City Council, consolidating agencies with oversight authority, ending qualified immunity, and more.

12. Do you support appointing a Deputy Mayor for Public Safety, with the expertise and authority to monitor and supervise the Police Department on the Mayor's behalf?

No

13. Do you support making the appointment of the Police Commissioner subject to the advice and consent of the City Council?

Comments

I do not support making the appointment of the police commissioner subject to the consent of the City Council. A clear chain of command, one directly accountable to the electorate, is essential. As it now stands, the mayor appoints a police commissioner and has the right to replace that commissioner if he or she underperforms. While this system will not function properly if the mayor is unwilling to make the decision to replace an underperforming commissioner, further muddying the chain of command is not the solution. As mayor, I will set clear expectations for my commissioner, and will not tolerate somebody who fails to meet them.

14. Who do you think should have the final say on discipline in the police department? How would you ensure penalties are imposed on police officers that commensurate with the gravity of their wrongdoing?

As the only candidate that has managed a uniform, 96% male agency, I know what it takes to change the culture of a uniform workforce, work with labor unions that represent uniform officers and get results that work for the public and workers. As Sanitation Commissioner, I was tough but fair—and fired Sanitation Workers that crossed the line. That's what accountability looks like. Just like I held Sanitation Workers accountable for showing up on time to work, I will have a zero tolerance policy for police officers that don't follow the law.

When it comes to crime, you have to hold officers accountable for the measures you want to improve. In a Garcia administration, we'll be laser focused on crime metrics, not the number of arrests. We'll promote and celebrate officers that exemplify service and a "guardian culture. My police Commissioner would be strictly accountable to me

on discipline decisions, and I would hire someone I trust to have final authority on that decision. I would enforce clear and consistent consequences to restore public trust in our police officers.

15. Do you support allowing the Civilian Complaint Review Board's (CCRB) to initiate an investigations without having to wait for an individual complaint?

No

Comments

The Civilian Complaint Review Board must be effective and supported by the public to fulfill its mission—to ensure accountability of law enforcement. I support allowing the Civilian Complaint Review Board to initiate investigations without waiting for an individual complaint. We must be consistent in our discipline processes, and trust that police officers will understand misconduct will consistently result in investigations and discipline.

16. Do you support granting the CCRB prompt and full access to footage from body-worn cameras, police officers' employment history and disciplinary records and all other document and materials in the possession of the NYPD relevant to its investigations?

Yes

Comments

As part of a transparent and consistent discipline process, the CCRB should indeed have prompt and full footage from body-worn cameras, police officers' employment history and disciplinary records and all other documents and materials in the possession of the NYPD relevant to its investigations. We cannot be sure those investigations will reach accurate conclusions if the investigators do not have access to all available information, and we cannot ask New Yorkers to trust that police officers are being held accountable for all misconduct if we can't guarantee the misconduct will be identified. My commitment to clear expectations and zero tolerance for misbehavior will not tolerate an ineffective review process.

17. Do you support consolidating the three bodies that exercise oversight of the NYPD: the Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), the Inspector General for the Police Department, the Mayor's Commission to Combat Police Corruption?

No

Comments

I do not support consolidation. These three agencies have separate missions, and their independence from one another ensures they have the bandwidth to focus on their respective tasks.

18. Do you support moving the disciplinary hearings for police officers, like those for all other City employees, to be conducted before the independent administrative law judges of OATH (Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings) rather than within the NYPD?

No

Comments

I do not support moving police disciplinary hearings to be conducted before OATH judges. As I've already stated, a clear chain of command is necessary in overseeing this agency. With a police commissioner who is directly accountable to me on discipline issues, voters will be able to trust that police officers are being held accountable for their actions.

19. Feel free to add any other policy proposals you support in regards to police accountability, misconduct, and oversight, or to effective policing including functions, training, and community relations.

We can fundamentally change policing if we start viewing it as a service for communities. That means we must overcome the "us vs. them" mindset, change the culture from "warrior" to "guardian" and build trust with communities. A Garcia Administration would achieve that by:

Enforce clear, quick and consistent consequences, with zero tolerance for depraved acts.
Measure what we want to see. We should reimagine COMPSTAT to measure crime reduction, reduction

in aggressive policing, and community engagement. Then, we should use these metrics to reward and promote cops that prioritize a guardian mindset. Invest in anti-violence programs in communities led by credible messengers and cure violence programs.

Require NYC residency for new cops and increase community policing - we need every member of the NYPD to be fully bought into rebuilding the City and fully committed to the community they serve.

Increase the recruitment age from 21 to 25--the age at which you can rent a car - Police officers face the most challenging moments of the human condition; we need to make sure new recruits have life and job experiences that bring a mature perspective.

Embed qualified professionals that can help address non-violent situations, focusing on mental health and domestic violence. Each year we have tens of thousands of calls that don't require an armed professional--and we can use data and predictive analytics to make sure that we are sending a combined team of mental health professionals and police officers to the calls that are most likely to need that combination.

MISCELLANEOUS

20. How would you utilize city-affiliated nonprofit organizations such as the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City in raising private revenue to supplement city agencies and programs? How would you ensure that there is sufficient transparency and accountability of funding received through such entities?

I was proud at the Department of Sanitation to develop and launch the Sanitation Foundation, the official nonprofit organization that advocates for zero waste and the front line staff of the Department. We launched the Sanitation Foundation in partnership with a designer that repurposed Sanitation uniforms to show the importance of textile recycling. Nonprofit organizations do so much important outreach and engagement work that makes our city run, from Sanitation to social services.

I will fundamentally reorient the way the City works with nonprofits. The slowdown in procurement for services during the deBlasio administration has hurt our non-profit sector. City agencies are sitting

on contracts for months, there is no accountability for on time payments and contract registration is delayed at the Comptroller's office.

Meanwhile, our nonprofits have to take out loans just to backfill shortfalls in government funding. That is unacceptable. I have committed to support frontline service providers—and to ensure you can in turn support your workforce with livable wages—by paying services providers on time and including an indirect rate to support infrastructure upgrades and innovation. We have to provide our nonprofits with funding to continue to innovate. I'd like to see our City's nonprofits at the cutting edge of addressing our social issues and then present the government with evidence based programs that we can scale. This is a critical piece of our recovery; New York City relies on a healthy, dynamic nonprofit sector. We have known for years that nonprofits are underpaid, paid late, and held to metrics and definitions of success that can be untethered from the reality of lived experience. I will fix that.

21. 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.

I have always prided myself in staying true to the values of my campaign. As the leader of a uniform agency with a 98% male force and law enforcement division, I was tough but fair—and fired Sanitation Workers that crossed the line. When I began my run for mayor, I did not raise a single dollar until I had resigned as Sanitation Commissioner, Food Czar and Interim Chair of NYCHA—unlike other candidates who have been fundraising while receiving taxpayer funded salaries. I am not accepting contributions from police or correctional unions. If the person at the top of the leadership structure does not embody the ideals of ethical behavior, accountability, and hard work, it is no surprise when that leaks into the rest of the governing structure.

22. In light of everything we have discussed above, why do want to be mayor?

I'm running for Mayor because I love New York, and our City needs a crisis manager who will be ready

to get to work on day one to build back our City more sustainably and equitably than before. I believe our city needs someone that has dedicated their life to public service, not politics, to get us through this. We cannot afford another 4 years of planning without execution.

I have the most experience in city government and crisis management of any candidate running for Mayor. As Sanitation Commissioner, I led the world's largest municipal waste management, recycling, street cleaning and snow response agency. As the former Interim Chair of NYCHA, I worked to reduce and prevent lead exposure in children. As COO of the Department of Environmental Protection, I made sure all NYers had clean drinking water and led the response to emergencies such as Hurricane Sandy. Most recently, I delivered over 150 million meals to New Yorkers in need after the COVID-19 crisis exacerbated food insecurity in our city. After a career in public service, not politics, I deeply understand how city government works and doesn't work, and know that I am the best one to execute on how to fix it moving forward.

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

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.