



Monday, May 24, 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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Scott M. Stringer

Running in what primary

Democratic

Age

Education

Occupation/Employer

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

Website

stringerformayor.com

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/scottmstringer>

Facebook

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?

New York City's next mayor will oversee a massive recovery effort, and we must reopen our economy in a fundamentally different way than we closed it.

This will require policy expertise, government managerial experience, coalition-building skills and political savvy, and a bold vision – with detailed, actionable plans – for a more just, equitable, and sustainable city.

Restaurants, small businesses, non-profit organizations, arts and cultural institutions – all have been devastated by the pandemic and are in dire need of immediate help. As mayor, I will leverage federal stimulus dollars to establish a \$1 billion NYC Recovery Now Fund to help small businesses get back on their feet swiftly through direct grants, with the vast majority going to the 85% of small businesses in hard-hit sectors. That's how we'll get the shelves restocked, back rent paid, and workers re-hired across this city.

As mayor, I would continue to use every lever at my disposal to confront these inequities and work to build a stronger, more inclusive economy. The immense financial and social disruption caused by COVID-19 serves as a stark reminder of how we need to rethink every element of government and do all that we can to make our communities stronger. As mayor, I will put forth a broad-based plan to lift up the economic and physical well-being of all our communities, many of which will be drawn from plans and priorities that I have already laid out as Comptroller since COVID-19 struck – all of which center working people and the need to address disparities in our city. They include detailed, comprehensive plans to save small businesses, protect frontline workers, keep children attached to childcare and our schools, protect the homeless, overhaul workforce training programs and provide free tuition to CUNY community colleges, and lift up minority and women-owned businesses.

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?

We need an all-levers approach to close next year's budget gap while minimizing the impact on city

services, taxpayers, and the amount of debt service the city will incur later on. We need a grand bargain in which everyone plays a part – but we also must prioritize New Yorkers most in need and ensure our budget is not balanced on the backs of workers.

As Comptroller, I've spent 7 ½ years pushing the Mayor and Council for budget efficiencies particularly in city agencies. My experience has uniquely given me a roadmap to order a 3% cut across all City agencies to save roughly \$1 billion, without layoffs or a hit to vital services, by cutting back bureaucratic spending and spending on outside consultants. The City can draw down approximately \$1 billion from our budgeted reserves and approximately half-a-billion dollars from the retiree health trust. To truly right-size spending and root out waste and inefficiency on an ongoing basis, I would return to the practice of routine Programs to Eliminate the Gap (PEGs), which the de Blasio Administration has abandoned.

We need massive amounts of help to support not just the city's ongoing COVID-19 response, but for transportation, public housing, education, health care, child care and paid family leave, affordable housing and more, and as mayor I will continue to fight for every dollar. To do that, we must create a more progressive tax system that raises taxes for those who have prospered during the pandemic and on companies that reaped huge profits from Republican tax cuts. It's common sense and only right.

In sum, by using each of the tools at our disposal in a limited and balanced fashion, we would avoid relying on any single one of them to an extent that would be harmful to the city. We cannot afford to impose the immense costs of austerity onto the working people that most need government services and support to survive.

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?

Emergency powers were always supposed to be temporary – and while I did not agree with the Mayor’s decision to invoke E.E.O. 101, Section 2, I understood the need to act swiftly to procure necessary life-saving goods and services in the earliest days of the pandemic. And when the time came for the end of emergency powers, I demanded emergency powers be rescinded. As Comptroller, I held the mayor accountable for executive overreach and I supported the legislature’s efforts to deliver transparency, accountability, and good government when it came to the Governor’s powers as well.

Throughout the pandemic, I expressed my concern about how the Mayor’s office was circumventing the Office of the Comptroller’s mandated oversight role of approving and registering contracts. The City entered into more than 1,238 contracts under Mayor de Blasio’s emergency powers, totaling more than \$5.2 billion in City-funded contracts since March 2020 – without the statutory oversight of the Comptroller’s Office.

<https://comptroller.nyc.gov/newsroom/comptroller-stringer-mayor-must-rescind-emergency-powers-and-restore-full-charter-mandated-oversight-of-contracts-and-procurement/>

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?

Improving civic engagement will be a core pillar of my mayoralty. I’ve long said that I believe in community-based planning and that as Mayor, I would prize my time in communities, speaking with New Yorkers one-on-one, in town hall meetings, and at community boards and other community events. I will be proactive in my engagement with New Yorkers and unafraid in my approach to open doors. That includes investing in ensuring that public meetings are truly public – streamed, well advertised, and truly accessible – and that engagement is prized versus tamped down. We’ll need to ramp up social media and the digital capacity throughout City government to do so.

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?

Ranked-Choice Voting is a groundbreaking reform that will breathe new life into our democracy. It has raised the level of discourse in this campaign – any person that wants to be mayor will have to talk to New Yorkers in all corners of the city and build a broad coalition to win this race. On top of expanding our democracy, ranked choice voting also avoids the need for costly run-off elections and saves taxpayer money. It's the fairest, most efficient way to bring about the true expression of the people's will.

That's exactly what I'm doing every day in my campaign, and I'll continue doing it all the way through Election Day.

As Mayor, I would work to ensure that every New Yorker is engaged in our local democracy, including by vastly expanding voter education efforts. I have been a vocal supporter of Ranked Choice Voting since it was first proposed as part of the most recent Charter Review process, and I believe that its overwhelming approval by the voters of New York City in the 2019 election and a lifelong advocate for voting rights (including as the original sponsor of the Same Day Registration Bill in Albany when I was a state legislator.)

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)

Yes

Comments

The Board of Elections has proven time and again that it is incapable of competently and effectively administering elections. This is due to the fact that it stands alone as a government agency that is constituted and staffed based on fealty to political parties. It should be dismantled and reconstituted

as a professional, non-partisan agency. Similarly, I understand that open primaries are another tool to lowering barriers to voting and expanding the franchise in New York City. I would be interested in exploring this, as well as other measures for engaging more New Yorkers in the primary process.

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?

The party-controlled, patronage-based New York City Board of Elections is endangering voters' rights. New Yorkers need independent election officials that work for them, not partisan interests. I know that ending gridlock and increasing accountability requires bold action. As a former state legislator, I am ready to partner with his colleagues in Albany to professionalize the Board of Elections and its operations, so that it works for voters, not political parties.

I will work to remove politics from appointments by partnering with Albany to remove the state constitutional requirement that commissioners to boards of election be nominated by political parties. I will fight to ensure that our election workers--from the BOE's Executive Director who manages the overall agency, to the technicians who maintain our voting machine technicians, to poll workers who help voters on Election Day--are hired based on experience and qualifications, not political connections or party-affiliation. To do so, Albany should amend state law to classify BOE employees as nonpolitical civil servants--not political appointees--just like almost every other New York City employee. And, I'll push to implement improved tactics to recruit and train new poll workers, ensuring diversity, strong training, flexible scheduling, and greater investment in outreach. As Comptroller, I have recommended that the BOE reevaluate its current training curriculum to put greater emphasis on Election Day protocols, handling affidavit ballots, and usage of scanners and tablets, as well as improve poll workers exams to more accurately measure proficiency--and, as Mayor, I will work to get this done.

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?

Too often redistricting is something that happens behind closed doors, and too often the primary goal is protecting incumbents. That will not happen under my administration, which will undertake redistricting with maximum transparency and with a goal of ensuring that we create an electoral map that fairly and honestly reflects the full diversity of our city, in every borough and in every neighborhood. The members I appoint will reflect that diversity and will bring to the table a range of expertise related to voting rights and electoral mechanics that will be non-partisan and professional. And they will be prepared to offer a rationale for every decision made, so that the public can have confidence that the process was undertaken with the singular goal of creating free and fair elections and ensuring that our elected representatives are truly reflective of their districts.

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?

There's nothing more sacred in our democracy than the right to vote and our tradition of civic engagement. I grew up with that understanding, watching my cousin Bella Abzug make waves across the country and my mother, Arlene Stringer-Cuevas break barriers as the first woman to represent Washington Heights in the City Council. That's why I've always stood with communities to support the expansion of voting rights — whether through early voting, same-day registration, online registration, no-excuse absentee voting, expansion of voting rights for formerly incarcerated individuals, expanded language access, consolidation of federal and state primaries, ranked-choice voting or otherwise.

A Stringer Administration will push for the policies we need to expand access to the ballot box, remove politics from our election administration, and make sure every single vote is counted.

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?

No

Comments

No. The reality is that special elections are too often used to circumvent the normal primary process in New York State, and once in office, history shows that incumbency itself is a very powerful advantage. I think winners of special elections should be required to face the electorate at the next possible election, whenever that is, to reduce the advantages of incumbency and give voters more of a say over who represents them.

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

Yes, I strongly support maintaining a Civics for All program and efforts to engage students in civic education and engagement.

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?

No

Comments

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 I wrote in an op-ed in the Daily News, we need real, independent oversight and real accountability when it comes to police discipline. The City should end the police commissioner's authority to treat CCRB investigations and recommendations as advisory. To do so, the powers of the CCRB's Administrative Prosecution Unit should be codified into law and those cases should no longer be prosecuted in front of NYPD Department of Trials judges appointed by the Police Commissioner. Instead, they should be heard by independent OATH judges whose determinations will be final. This would go a long way toward creating real accountability for police misconduct and ending a status quo where wrongdoing is swept aside.

Furthermore, to make the CCRB more effective, its jurisdiction and powers should be expanded beyond today's limited range. Allegations of biased policing and racial profiling should be investigated and prosecuted by the CCRB, as well as cases currently referred to the department's Internal Affairs Bureau – including failure to provide aid and failure to comply with body-worn camera guidance. The CCRB shouldn't have to rely on the NYPD to hand over evidence; it should have direct and unfettered access to body camera footage in order to carry out their investigations. And there must be real consequences for officers who skip interviews with CCRB investigators.

<https://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/ny-oped-how-to-police-the-police-20201120-zpxu7jhsbvcdlbrh5t76ovy3y-story.html>

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

Yes

Comments

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

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 worry that consolidation is a lot of work for not enough payoff. Though I'm not adamantly opposed, it is less of a priority than expanding the jurisdiction of the CCRB, giving it unfettered access to Body Worn Camera footage, and shifting disciplinary hearings to OATH.

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?

Yes

Comments

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.

This summer, in neighborhoods all across the city, we saw police officers, ostensibly charged with protecting the peace, using extreme force against peaceful protesters. While violence at the hands of law enforcement has been an undeniable reality for New Yorkers of color for decades, these images — on the heels of the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery — have sparked a citywide reckoning on police misconduct and the roots of systemic racism that we as a city and a society must confront.

In June, I was the first elected official in the city to present a tangible plan to begin scaling back the department's multi-billion dollar budget. My plan moves at least \$1 billion away from the NYPD over four years, and I believe additional cuts can and should be made. More recently, my office released a detailed blueprint outlining how the city needs to take a "public health first" approach to public safety, responding to homelessness, mental health crises, substance use, wellness checks, youth at risk of violence, and so many other challenges not with armed police officers but with wraparound services and deep investments in public health interventions. We need to take alternative approaches to building safety — through investments in community health, supportive housing, youth programming, and more.

We also need leadership that understands that the NYPD is not an autonomous agency and can no longer act with impunity. As mayor, I will appoint a police commissioner that shares my progressive values and is not afraid to make change. Beyond that, one of the most effective tools we have to prevent police violence is to reduce police interactions with New Yorkers, particularly in communities of color, and remove police from a broad array of frontline responses to which they are poorly suited, including in our schools.

We also need real, independent oversight to hold the department and individual officers accountable for

misconduct. The police should not police themselves, and the NYPD Commissioner should not be the sole arbiter of discipline. That is why I support stripping the NYPD of that role and empowering the CCRB and OATH to have final authority to impose discipline – and to investigate, prosecute, and hear a wider range of claims, including of racial profiling.

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’ve announced a few new initiatives that I would advance with the Mayor’s Fund and similar public-private partnerships including:

As Mayor, I will direct the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City, which raises private dollars for City priorities, to establish a new \$30 million grant program to develop on-the-ground solutions aimed at eliminating healthcare disparities and expanding access to preventative care.

As Mayor, I will establish a NYC Citizenship Fund, a public-private Fund to help tens of thousands of legal immigrants cover the ever-rising costs of the federal application to become a U.S. citizen. The Fund would be administered by the City as a 501(c) (3), akin to the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City or the Fund for Public Schools. A modest initial investment by the City into the fund could then leverage additional private, charitable funds from those interested in helping their fellow New Yorkers become citizens.

As Mayor, I would provide a free bike to every lower-income public high school student living or traveling to school outside of CitiBike territory as part of my “Bike-to-School” plan. I would work with private philanthropists and local foundations should step up and actively support the City’s Bike-to-School efforts. In conjunction with the Mayor’s Fund and bike manufacturers, they should provide a free bike to every low-income public high school student who commutes outside of Citi Bike territory.

I've also released a sweeping ethics agenda which includes major reforms to campaign finance such as enacting a total ban on campaign contributions and bundling from anyone doing business with or lobbying the City, and installing an Ethics Czar in City Hall with a mandate to ensure impeccably ethical behaviour at all levels of government. The first ever Ethics Czar, charged with monitoring operations at City Hall to enforce new ethics standards, would ensure transparency and accountability through City government and affiliated bodies. Unlike the Conflicts of Interest Board, the newly appointed Ethics Czar would be at the table for major decision points to make sure the public interest always comes first.

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 spent much of my 30-years in public service championing good government and ethical public service. To me, that's what being a progressive is all about.

As a member of the New York Assembly, I led the chamber's first-in-a-generation ethics reforms including efforts to end empty-seat voting — a bizarre practice that counted members as voting for bills even if they weren't in the chamber — and abolish rules that gave lobbyists special access to lawmakers. As Manhattan Borough President, I transformed the process for appointments to Manhattan Community Boards — ending patronage appointments and implementing an independent screening panel of civic leaders and good government groups to vet candidates. I also called for an end to the system of City Council member items that allows the Speaker to dole out funds to political friends and punish political enemies.

As Comptroller, I have relentlessly exposed waste and fraud by government and private actors alike. I have audited every agency and saved taxpayers millions. I have even audited the New York City Housing Authority more often than all other previous Comptrollers combined, exposing systemic failures to manage public resources and

deliver for residents. My audits and investigations uncovered dangerous conditions for children in our City's shelter system – from unsafe cribs, to vermin infestations – exposed the Rivington scandal, and the lead crisis. As the enforcer of the prevailing wage, I punished a record number of contractors who cheated workers out of their wages, barring companies who violate our labor laws from ever receiving another public contract, and returning tens of millions into the rightful hands of hardworking New Yorkers. And, as Comptroller, I brought sweeping transparency to the contracts systems with "CheckbookNYC" – successfully opening up NYCHA's books for the first time – and created the City's first-ever Chief Diversity Officer who has shed sunlight on the City's failure to engage equitably with minority and women owned businesses.

As Comptroller, I inherited several practices related to the NYPD's budget and transparency – first, the NYPD had refused for years to participate in the Comptroller Office's Checkbook NYC program, which since 2010 had tracked the contract spending of all other city agencies; and secondly, the NYPD for years had explicitly cloaked all "classified, confidential special expense" (SPEX) purchases from public review under an MOU that dated back to 2010 – and changed both of those policies. These reforms have fundamentally transformed the level of transparency that now exists around NYPD spending. In 2018, I forced the NYPD to provide all non-SPEX spending on Checkbook, providing a public-facing window into the vast majority of police spending for the first time in history. Two years later, in July 2020, I formally terminated the MOU allowing the NYPD to withhold its spending around previously classified equipment (drones included).

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

I have a vision to build a more just, affordable and progressive New York. In the last year, we've all watched our city and its families endure enormous pain, most of it in communities of color and immigrant communities. COVID-19 has exposed the long standing inequities that have divided our society and has finally forced us to reckon with simultaneous public health, economic, and social justice crises.

New York City's next mayor will oversee a massive recovery effort, and we must reopen our economy in a fundamentally different way than we closed it. This will require policy expertise, government managerial experience, coalition-building skills and political savvy, and a bold vision – with detailed, actionable plans – for a more just, equitable, and sustainable city. It is this very combination of skills, experiences, and vision that I bring – uniquely, I believe – to this race.

As Mayor, I'll bring our city forward starting on Day One. I've released bold and comprehensive plans that are ready to go – on everything from public housing, to public health and public safety – and I'm building a diverse, progressive coalition to get it done. I'm ready to take on this fight, for today's New Yorkers and the next generation, and fundamentally transform our city so that everyone has a fair shot.

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.