



Saturday, April 24, 2021

Citizens Union 2021 Candidate Questionnaire - City Council

Dear Candidate,

Congratulations on your decision to run for New York City Council!

Citizens Union appreciates your commitment to serve the public.

In the following pages, you will find questions regarding your positions on various reform issues and your plans for office. The form includes five short sections: serving constituent, elections and voting, police accountability, council rules and procedures, 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 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 or candidates in this election cycle.

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Justin Krebs

Running for Council District number

39

In which primary

Democratic

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

Democrat

Age

43

Education

Harvard

Occupation/Employer

National Campaigns Director, MoveOn

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement**Campaign Contact Information****Website**

justin2021.org

Twitter

@justinmkrebs

Facebook

facebook.com/justin2021

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

SERVING CONSTITUENTS

1. For most New Yorkers, the most important thing that their council members do is provide constituent services. How would you run your office to serve your community needs? Please give specific examples.

This is a great question and one I wished I was asked more regularly. I'll prioritize truly accessible constituent services that puts language justice at its forefront. Good constituent services offices don't just solve problems, they are active players in the community, serving as a community champion and convener, and developing deep relationships with every person that walks through its office doors.

I'd also build off of Brad Lander's model of having an office that trains constituents to be organizers -- so that they often build power for solutions on their own.

My first job after college was in the Hillary Clinton campaign for Senate. My second was in her Senate office -- as a constituent liaison working on housing, Social Security and other issues. It is in my bones to respect constituents, listen to them, work with them--and has driven so much of the community work I've done since.

Last, while I'll be taking office in 2022, I'll prioritize learning from some of the lessons of the pandemic and have an office that's truly accessible both in-person, and remotely.

2. If you served as an elected official, what did you do to help your constituents during the Covid-19 pandemic? Please be specific.

While I was not an elected official at the time, during the pandemic I serve as part of the volunteer leadership team of local non-profit leaders that has established and expanded the Camp Friendship Food Pantry right here in Park Slope—where every week, we serve hundreds of families with deliveries and on-site distribution. It’s a massive effort of volunteer coordination, donations, and communication—that also shows the real need in every community as well as the breadth of support you can find if you bring folks together. And as National Campaigns Director at MoveOn, our team mobilized millions of members to demand COVID relief checks and real, substantive federal support.

3. How long have you lived in the district in which you are running for office?

9 years in my current home and three years a block outside the district prior

4. If elected, what is the first piece of legislation you would want to introduce?

I would reintroduce the parts of Brad Lander’s Essential Workers Bill of Rights that did not pass to empower workers across our city; I’d carry forward the commercial rent control laws; and I would introduce a truly robust Student Data Privacy Bill of rights.

VOTING AND ELECTIONS

5. How would you describe the relationship between the City Council and the New York City Board of Elections? How will you use your power as a council member to improve the operations of the NYC BOE?

The NYC BOE needs enough resources to be able to do its job effectively. I’ll champion real funding so we can count ballots more quickly, increase access to voting, and spend more on education and awareness around RCV. But the BOE also needs to be reinvented from the patronage relic it too often resembles. The City Council can influence this but it requires focus, not just immediately after a disaster or around an election but over the longer term.

6. 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?

Yes, and enthusiastically! We've seen so far in this campaign that Ranked Choice Voting increases cooperation between campaigns and can help to foster a real culture of positivity. Our elections should be decided by the issues, not by divisive campaigning.

I'm a friendly, positive, gregarious person to begin with—and RCV has made that authentic part of my personality into a strategic part of our campaign. I am incentivized to meet everyone, to visit every block, to connect with folks even if they've endorsed a rival.

One note: we have to see how this year plays out. We can't yet say what voter education needs to be done until we see how our efforts have landed. We'll want to do an honest post-mortem of this election to learn how to strengthen this system down the road.

The Board of Elections has started to do a good job of educating folks about it – including a substantial digital advertising buy targeting NYC voters. I'll continue to work with my campaign team to educate every single voter about what their ballot will look like in June and I'm excited for this election to be the first amongst many successful RCV elections.

7. The next City Council will appoint members to the city's redistricting commission and decide whether to approve or reject the commission's districting plans. In doing so, future council members will be responsible for shaping a fair political map for the coming decade. If elected, what would your approach be in proposing or voting to appoint commission members, and in considering proposed district maps?

We need principled thoughtful actors and fewer partisan players involved in our redistricting process. I believe that the next commission should be composed of demographic experts, and not people that are part of the democratic or republican political machine. I'll work to nominate individuals that truly represent the rich diversity of my district, who will prioritize drawing fair maps that minimize population deviation and do not go out of their way

to protect incumbents. I won't support a partisan political map; we need districts that truly reflect the character of each neighborhood.

8. 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 support allowing voters who are not registered within a party to vote in that primary, but do not support non-partisan primaries without further elaboration.

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.

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

Yes

Comments

Yes. I've mentioned this consistently over the past year – the City Council must have a role here to create more points of accountability.

10. 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?

I've also talked about this consistently for the past year--CCRB recommendations should be mandatory. There's a systematic failure to properly punish police officers in NYC--an unelected Police Commissioner, who is not selected with the advice and consent of the City Council, can consistently overrule the CCRBs recommendations. We need a

wholesale change to the system, starting with changing the way that the Police Commissioner is appointed.

11. 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?

Yes

Comments

Yes though I'd want to consult with more expert organizations on this including Citizens Union and the New York Civil Liberties Union And only if it is a means to increase oversight over police actions, rather than reducing the overall resources that are put towards police accountability.

12. Do you support giving 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

Yes. The CCRB should have full access to body camera footage, employment history, and disciplinary records.

13. 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.

The long term vision is to take on the carceral state: reduce the incarcerated population, invest heavily in alternatives to incarceration and in reacclimation and training programs for the formerly convicted, to break the schools-to-prison pipeline, to remove the over-policing of our schools and streets, and to understand that criminal justice is racial justice, economic justice, gender justice and family justice.

We need to rethink how law enforcement is serving our communities and that includes how we fund them – and we need to move funding from the police and fully fund community service programs in health, education, mental health, job training and more that address systemic challenges and inequities. Specific places to start would be to get police out of our schools, and to follow Lander’s proposal to move transit enforcement out from under the NYPD. A rule change should have residency requirements on law enforcement in line with other agencies, and police funding should be moved to health, education, mental health and job development programs. We need to look at successful models like the Fortune Society to develop the top-tier programs that support people who have been caught up in, and failed by, our criminal justice system.

I signed onto a letter to defund the police department by \$1 billion in June 2020 and worked within MoveOn to organizationally move towards these goals as well. I stand by that and would vote for budgets that moved \$2-3 billion more than that into education, health and mental health, and job development programs.

Beyond police reform, there are fights for civil rights and civil liberties across the city. In my years on the board of the New York Civil Liberties Union, I was proud to support the work and leadership of that organization—and now I want to continue it: From rights for students, reproductive rights, data privacy rights that are under attack by forces accelerating like never before, the right to protest—all of these are live-wire issues for the next City Council.

HOW CITY COUNCIL WORKS

One of the first items on the next City Council’s agenda will be adopting its rules of proceedings. Those rules will have a substantial effect on the ability of lawmakers to advance their goals, and can send a signal to New Yorkers about elected officials’ commitment to making the Council more representative, deliberative, accountable, and efficient. In the last decade, the Council took important steps to reform its rules, including a 2014 overhaul by then-Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and a 2018 administrative change by Speaker Corey Johnson. These reforms have made the body more democratic, given members a more meaningful role in the legislative process, ensured greater equity in the allocation of discretionary funding, and made drafting procedures more transparent. Still, more work is needed enable members to function more effectively and independently of the speaker, and to increase public participation.

14. Do you support allowing bills with strong support to go through the committee process and put to a vote on the floor without needing the permission of the speaker?

Yes

Comments

15. Do you support reducing the overall number of committees so members can participate more meaningfully in fewer issues?

No

Comments

No – This is an interesting issue. While council members should be focusing on issues that they care deeply about and have real expertise in, shrinking the number of committees could lead to a deprioritization of the issues that affect traditionally marginalized groups.

16. Do you support making all actions designed to influence any City Council outcome, including the choice of speaker, reportable as a lobbying expense?

Yes

Comments

Without a doubt. We need more transparency in city government, not less. New York City does a relatively good job showing voters where funding for independent expenditures comes from, we need to take that same approach to what happens after an election.

17. The Council Speaker controls the allocation of a large share of the Council's overall discretionary spending, and in 2020 it was reported that the Speaker used this power to "punish" council members who opposed the 2021 budget. How would you balance control and order in the council with reasonable dissent?

The council speaker shouldn't have sole power over district discretionary budgets, and no council member should be punished for voting with their conscience.

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

Now that millions of New Yorkers have become fully vaccinated, I think it's time that we can begin having socially distanced, in-person meetings and public hearings. But, I'm very cognizant of the way that remote meetings have actually increased equity in access to events for some folks who have problems with transportation, non traditional work schedules, and other reasons why in-person meetings just do not work for them. Going in-person is critical for increasing civic participation; but equally important is having a remote option for the millions of New Yorkers who are not yet vaccinated, or just do not find in-person meetings accessible.

The fact is you need multiple ways to engage. At MoveOn, we adhere to a philosophy of "big ears" – how to listen carefully and in a multi-channel way to our millions of members. I'd bring that same innovation to City Council, with a focus on language access and access across digital abilities.

MISCELLANEOUS

19. New York City has suffered an immensurable loss from the pandemic and its effects and the city's economy, social life, and culture. What is your path to recovery from this crisis?

Let's start the conversation with investment, not cuts. Yes, we're going to face challenges. But pitting two impacted groups or slashed services against each other is the wrong way to go about it. Let's name priorities from health to education to environmental justice to investing in the commons to workforce development – and make investments and choices from there. We are and we can be an abundant city – rich with resources, innovation and creativity when actually marshaled in a clear direction.

Our solutions for the pandemic aren't unique to the

pandemic – they are solutions to the problems that already existed before coronavirus that have now been exposed. This is a place where local elected officials have some direct power – to invest in childcare, healthcare, and other direct support for impacted workers. This means ensuring that schools both during and after the pandemic are serving all students and families, providing relief and support for small businesses so our main streets remain vital and are here to meet us on the other side, prioritizing food security for all, and branching into green infrastructure to take advantage of low interest rates and invest more heavily in strengthening our city and providing jobs to do so.

Small businesses, the cultural sector, and restaurants, bars and cafes are all part of the economic engine of our city—as it’s safe to reopen, these will be the basis of a ground-up economic recovery, allowing New Yorkers to spend dollars that go back into communities and into neighbors’ households and bring our city back to life.

This is also where we need to use our organizing power and our platforms to advocate to state and federal entities for real relief – from direct payments to programs that cancel/reduce rent to increasing revenue with fair progressive taxation. We need them to act, and we have to treat ourselves as organizers and emissaries, lifting up the voices of the impacted, centering the stories of workers and families and individuals hit hardest. We need to make sure all measures include undocumented workers. That we, as a city, track data of who is impacted – in their health, jobs, and community health – with explicit understanding of race and income. Then we need to direct solutions with that knowledge. And we need to make sure those most impacted are part of the discussions and planning for solutions.

20. 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.

Throughout my career, I've worked extensively in issues of voter engagement and getting big money out of politics. Over the past 6 years at MoveOn,

I've run the campaigns team which is currently fighting for the For The People Act, has pushed against the impact of Citizens United and those who abuse the decision, has campaign for voter access and against voter suppression again and again and has partnered with leading civil right and voting rights allies. And speaking of corruption, we were part of the movement that impeached Trump ... twice.

I was on the board of the New York Civil Liberties Union for 5 years, during which time we worked to expand voting rights, challenge unaccountable police power, and demand governmental transparency.

I've worked with Katrina vanden Heuval, Jim Hightower, Ben Cohen and other national leaders on getting big money out of politics, while developing projects with a range of good-government organizations. And I even served as a producer on an award winning documentary about youth voter participation.

21. 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.

First: Investing in what makes this a vibrant, livable city: Our small businesses, neighborhood main streets, arts, culture, nightlife, bike- and pedestrian-centered design, parks and open spaces.

Second: Investing in and integrating our schools in ways that engage parents, support teachers and recognize the individuality of students, while protecting their data privacy

Third: Ensuring New York is a leader in all ways in confronting the climate crisis

ADDITIONAL INFO

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

What else would you like us to know about yourself?

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 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.