



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.

**

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Ray Sanchez

Running for Council District number

7

In which primary

Democratic

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

Democrat

Age

42

Education

Wesleyan University

Occupation/Employer

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Campaign Contact Information

Website

<https://www.raysanchez4cd7.com/>

Twitter

<https://twitter.com/raysanchezcd7>

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized 'R' or similar character.

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.

Yes, this is greatly important to me. I was very proud of our constituent services unit when I worked in the Office of Bronx Borough President. We had a robust operation, and I was happy to support them during the seven years I worked in government. Hence, I understand the importance of a good outreach program. It is important to report all constituent needs into 311-online and then follow up with City agency personnel. It is essential to have the appropriate documentation for 311 to leverage government resources and work with agencies. I can add a personal touch from almost a decade of experience working in this area. It needs to benefit constituents directly. I would emulate a similar constituent service operation to the one in the Bronx Borough President's office. We had a good process of tracking, following up, and documenting. City agencies are essential in the response for following up. Additionally, I would look for nonprofit organizations as partners to refer constituents. For example, our staff worked with section 80 vouchers. I would partner with catholic organizations and other agencies that I have connections with from my previous work. I worked with the Osborne Association to help with reentry. I have many connections to ensure that the homeless receive the necessary follow-up from the city. We need to ensure that educational issues are addressed and follow up with the superintendent. I will have a direct line in the precinct to hear the concerns from the constituents.

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

I did not serve as an elected official, but I did partner with local government organizations, such as food pantries. I did pro bono government relations work for a commercial kitchen that partnered with a local non-profit to do a free meal delivery service for seniors. I also regularly volunteered for a food pantry that served over 400 people every day. Lastly, on several occasions, I delivered masks with bags of groceries to NYCHA residents with the Dominican Bar Association.

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

I have been a homeowner in the district for 15 years

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

I have a few in mind. One bill would target NYCEDC and HPD to require project labor agreements in their developments. Whether it is new or affordable projects, they should incorporate union workers and pay them a fair, livable, and prevailing wage. Too many projects in NYC have not been using union labor. The second is a piece of legislation to lower the fees charged by application platforms like Seamless/Grubhub, Uber Eats, and Postmates because they are gauging restaurant margins. It would also include community reinvestment requirements on these same companies to put some of their profits back into the community.

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?

That's a great question. My biggest concern is that NY1 reported 53% of primary voters are familiar with ranked-choice voting. Familiarity does not equal confidence or a real understanding. People will likely not put five names, "exhaust their ballot," and accidentally disenfranchise themselves. I would continue educating the voters about ranked-choice voting.

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?

I am supportive of ranked-choice voting. Runoff elections are incredibly expensive and have a low turnout. We still need to continue educating voters, so there are minimal "exhausted ballots." I helped organize a nonpartisan Zoom rank choice voting webinar on April 27th, with a variety of organizations, including bar associations and academics, such as the Brennan Center of Justice, to help educate voters.

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?

I would come from a few perspectives. I would include civil rights organizations, such as the Brennan Center of Justice, local chapters of the NAACP, Latino Justice LatinoJustice PRLDEF, and the Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund.

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

For the vast majority of City Council seats, the primary is the real election because the general election lacks real competition. However, I do not support moving to an open primary system. The City does not exist in a vacuum. Our local term limit laws create wonderful pressure on State elected officials. The 2018 blue wave had profound effects in Albany and across the state. The progressive movements started locally. It is important to maintain the party system downstate with the other legislative policy-making bodies.

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

I would support the appointment of the police commissioner being to the advice and consent of the City Council. Historically, there has been tokenism at the top of certain City agencies for appointments. The last four Police Commissioners have been white men of Irish descent going back to at least 1992. The next police commissioner needs to be the most qualified person for the job, representative of the makeup of the NYPD and the constituents of NYC.

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?

The trust in the police is at an all-time low. We are at a juncture where we don't trust the police to police themselves. From a management perspective, the commissioner should have the final say. We do not want to undermine his ability to run his organization. Having that said, we still need to have a mechanism to ensure that police misconduct receives the appropriate consequences. Recently, NYC repealed the shield on police records. We want to build off the success of the repeal of Section 50-A so that the CCRB can use that information/data and identify patterns of misconduct. We have to distinguish between isolated incidents versus perpetuated problems with the department. Having access to old records, we can analyze and locate the repeat offenders and ensure that they are not just getting slaps on the wrist. We have to identify patterns because if unchecked, the more likely the behavior will continue to occur.

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?

No

Comments

I am not convinced merging the three organizations will create greater efficiencies and outcomes. Local laws can be strengthened to improve the processes, information collection, and escalation of issues to the Inspector General. Moreover, we can better expand the enforcement powers of the Inspector General. We want to ensure the effectiveness of the Inspector General, but merging all three does not necessarily get us to that point. We need to look at how the information is being shared and moving forward to mandate change at the NYPD. I would want to flush out the relationship between the three departments to improve reporting and not have any silos. There needs to be a more streamlined process so that information is flowing directly to the Inspector General. The Inspector-General needs to hear from the CCRB and the Mayor's office to find deficiencies in the NYPD.

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

I absolutely support this. The NYPD is very uncooperative with oversight and sharing this information. Having this information allows CCRB to have fewer roadblocks in their oversight. They should have access to this information, but it needs to protect the privacy of the people involved. It has the power to incriminate and exonerate, and that should be the goal to get the information in a responsible way and hold the police accountable. The CCRB needs this information to be a check and balance to the police.

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 current debate around police is to defund. We need to audit the police. It is important to have money for counter-terrorism and community programs. However, abuse within the system has become rampant. Overmilization is a problem. Additionally, there is a disconnect between the allocation of funds and where that money is being spent. When you follow the money, you'll find the answers. I will work with the NYPD to reimagine policing in the City in an effort to reduce unnecessary overtime and capital spending within the department.

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?

No

Comments

We can not excessively weaken the power of the speaker and the legislature as a whole. Leadership will hold the bills for a variety of reasons, such as negotiating with the Mayor and other stakeholders. If the leadership has no powers to set the agenda of the body, then the positions of leadership begin to lose their meaning and value.

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

No

Comments

It is essential not to draft bills in a vacuum. Legislation is strengthened by multiple rounds of revisions and the committee process. Essential deliberation happens at the committee level. Bills need to be flushed out, vetted, thoroughly throughout, and reflect the reality of the intended target audiences, industries, and sectors. We want more vetting of a bill before it is introduced before the greater body, not less. 5-10-40 is an arbitrary number. At what time do you have too many committees? As the global center of finance, commerce, and media, it is essential to have rounds of debate in committee before the larger body.

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

No

Comments

I am wary of any unilateral law and rulemaking. Reality is rarely black and white. This question is written in a way that is too extreme and would create an outcome that is exhausting and endless. For example, the choice of speaker is an internal deliberation. Where do you draw the line? It is too absolute. It is overly broad and too hard to enforceable any interaction with a city council member will become a lobbying expense just way too broad. First, I enforced matters relating to lobbying rules. When I left the government, I had to comply with JCOPE as a registered lobbyist. From this experience, we have to be realistic. You cannot make all interactions reportable because it will handcuff communications. No one is going to talk to anyone. Dialogue is necessary, and there need to be different people engaging in the process. Reporting becomes overly burdensome that no one will want to deal with it. Only people who can afford to deal with it will do it. It is expensive.

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?

I would say that the council speaker should not have the power to impede another member. The speaker needs to have control of the chamber and facilitate discourse, but not rule with an iron fist. The residents of that member should not suffer because the council member and the speaker are in some sort of retaliatory battle with each other. An effective legislative chamber needs to have discourse, dialogue, and debate. However, the leadership of the chamber should not limit discussions or dissent in a manner that constituents would suffer from those actions. Any sort of negative consequences that the speakers want to impose on the member should be confined to the chamber and not have ramifications for the constituents. When you tie it to discretionary spending, that’s exactly what you are doing: preventing the member from providing services to his residents.

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?

The good news is that community boards are having meetings through Zoom and Webex. The pandemic is finite. As government operations return to normalcy, the goal should be to continue to supplement previous engagement and advocacy, whether it is community boards having zoom or constituent services being offered remotely through technology. We want to look at the practices during the pandemic to supplement public engagement with channels that were available before the pandemic, which is the best of both worlds. We need to combine the services from before the pandemic with things that worked during the pandemic, for after the pandemic, we can have a

more robust system to engage the public and provide them with the necessary resources.

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?

We are fortunate that the New York State budget received a \$12 billion infusion from Congress that will dramatically relieve/reduce the pressure to make cuts on the New York City budget, especially around education and some social welfare programs. The suppressed interest rate environment has not changed since 2008 because of the Federal Reserve action. We need to take advantage of that favorable monetary policy while we still have it because most economists forecast and expect inflation to increase quickly. We should take advantage of the low interest rates while we have them for issuing debt. Public finance markets are able to help us smartly use debt to fill parts of the budget shortfall. We have to fund essential services such as education, healthcare, sanitation, auditing the police, and a holistic approach by investing in preventative measures. Whether it is investing money in youth programs or preventative health programs, both will significantly reduce the cost of delivering services in the near and long term.

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.

A livable wage is good government reform tied to subsidies received by developers. If you are a developer receiving \$1,000,000, then your project should pay a livable wage to the workers. Tax dollars should benefit taxpayers, not developers who are getting rich off the public. That money is supposed to help the residents of that area. Money used to develop the public should be reinvested to benefit those citizens. I am incredibly proud to have worked on passing the New York City Living Wage Law in 2011.

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: I would support, attract and retain quality teachers by increasing their pay and decreasing class size; both are fundamental to my policy platform. I would also push for the creation of a new modern-day “StuyTown” to provide quality affordable housing for teachers and other essential workers. Whether it is the over-production of hotels and or high-end rentals, which was accelerated by and continued after Mayor Bloomberg, these relatively new properties should be converted to affordable housing with preferences for teachers and essential workers. The City did a recent article on this, see <https://www.thecity.nyc/housing/2020/6/25/21303923/hotels-could-become-affordable-housing-in-nyc>.

Second: Essential workers helped keep our City running in its darkest moments and have been a staple in our communities. I will support policies that push essential workers to the front of the housing market line by granting them “front line priority” to City subsidized homeownership opportunities. I will identify and work with nonprofit developers to support 100% Affordable Housing projects across the district and explore options for converting new rentals into Cooperative units.

Third: Lastly, I want to repurpose the glut of excess office space that will permeate over the next 2-10 years. For example, JPMorgan Chief Executive Jamie Dimon was quoted in Crain’s NY this week saying the pandemic will “significantly reduce our need for real estate” as “fewer workers return to the office after the scourge finally passes.” See <https://www.craigslist.com/commercial-real-estate/jpmorgan-says-pandemic-will-significantly-reduce-its-need-office-space>

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.