



Tuesday, March 15, 2022

Candidate Questionnaire - 2022 Primary

Dear Kaegan Mays-Williams,
Congratulations on your decision to run for a seat on the New York Legislature! 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. Responses to these questions will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for office, 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 March 16.

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Name

Kaegan Mays-Williams

Office Sought (New York State)

Senate

District Number

21

In which primary

Democratic

What party line/s are you running under?

Democratic

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

Democratic

Age

40

Education

Law school

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Assistant District Attorney in Manhattan, LGBT Bar Association of New York Board, LGBT Bar Association of New York Judiciary Committee screening panel, policy and legislative Counsel at Everytown for Gun Safety

Website

[https://www.kaeganfor
nystatesenate.com](https://www.kaeganfor
nystatesenate.com)

Twitter <https://twitter.com/KaganForNY>

Facebook <https://twitter.com/KaganForNY>

AFFIRMATIONS

Have you completed the required campaign finance filings?

Yes

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

Yes

(Please note: interviews are prerequisites for Citizens Union preferences and endorsements)

Signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'K' followed by a long horizontal stroke that tapers to the right.

ETHICS

Do you support replacing Joint Commission on Public Ethics with an effective and independent enforcement body, whose members are not appointed directly by elected officials?

Yes

Do you support the new independent ethics oversight agency to also replace the Legislative Ethics Commission (LEC)?

Yes

Do you support allowing the new ethics body to investigate misconduct more effectively by simplifying its voting rules, giving it the authority to subpoena testimony and documents, empowering it to suspend or terminate public officials (not elected officials), and increasing its transparency?

Yes

Do you support significantly limiting outside compensation earned by state legislators and eliminate stipends, while increasing their pay?

Yes

Do you hold financial interest or serve as an officer on an entity that receives funding from the state? If you do, how will you manage this conflict of interest?

n/a

If needed, you may elaborate below on your positions on the previous questions. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.

n/a

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

Election Administration

How would you use your power as a legislator to improve election administration in New York? Feel free to add any policy proposals you support in regards to reforming the BOE.

I would advocate to ban county parties from being able to appoint Board of Elections employees and rehaul how New York State administers elections. Patronage has led to inept elections administration over the last few years that has made New York elections a national embarrassment. We need competent professionals running our Board of Elections and election administrators who believe in the enfranchisement of all New Yorkers.

Do you support removing the constitutional requirement in election administration that empowers the two major political parties to nominate and effectively control election boards?

Yes

Do you support reducing the party-based hiring in boards of elections to the minimum currently required by the constitution?

Yes

Do you support implementing an open, competitive, merit-based hiring process for all election administration staff and certain functions at polls?

Yes

If needed, you may elaborate below on your positions on the previous questions.

Voting Rights

Do you support re-passing the constitutional amendment to enact same-day voter registration, and putting it on the ballot in 2024?

Yes

Do you support re-passing the constitutional amendment to enact no-excuse absentee voting, and putting it on the ballot in 2024?

Yes

If needed, you may elaborate below on your positions on the previous questions. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.

It is utterly shameful that the amendments to enact same-day voter registration and no-excuse absentee voting didn't pass. There are several communities all over New York whose working schedules make early and Election Day voting prohibitive. There are tens of thousands of New Yorkers who can't make it to the polls even though they want to, and absentee voting would give these working class voters a voice. Voter turnout is so low – in part – because it can be just as hard to vote in New York as it is in Georgia. We need constitutional amendments which will expand access to the ballot box and enfranchise as many New Yorkers as possible.

Open and Competitive Elections

Do you support easing access to the ballot for parties and independent candidates, by returning to the pre-2020 voting and signature thresholds? That includes reducing the voting threshold to become a registered party back to 50,000 votes in a gubernatorial election, and the petition requirement for independent candidates back to 15,000 signatures.

Yes

Do you support reforming the process of filling vacancies in the state legislature by implementing nonpartisan special elections or holding a primary election at least thirty days in advance of the special election?

Yes

Who do you think should draw new district maps every decade in New York? (e.g., the current Independent Redistricting Commission, the Legislature/LATFOR, a new body)

An Independent Redistricting Commission is a good idea, however the members of the Commission should not be appointed by partisan, sitting legislators. The Independent Redistricting Commission should actually be independent, rather than a body of individuals whose allegiances offer the appearance of a conflict. As a candidate hoping to represent a diverse district, I know my South Asian neighbors in Kensington have been split over several districts. Groups with similar interests should have a seat at the table and during the next redistricting process.

If needed, you may elaborate below on your positions on the previous questions. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.

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CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Do you support further reducing campaign contribution limits?

Yes

Do you support setting even lower contribution limits for registered lobbyists and those who do business with the state?

Yes

Starting from the next election cycle, New York will have a public campaign finance program, offering matching funds on small donations for candidates who opt in. If you decide to run again in the next election, do you intend to participate in the program?

Yes

Do you support moving the campaign finance matching program to be administered by an independent, nonpartisan body outside of the State Board of Election?

Yes

If needed, you may elaborate below on your positions on the previous questions. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.

As an LGBTQ+ Black woman running for office, fundraising has been extremely challenging even though I have raised a competitive amount without matching funds. I would like candidates from marginalized communities to be able to run for office so that those communities can have a voice. Matching funds in NYC led to the election of the most diverse City Council in our city's history and a female majority of Council members for the first time. We should fight to have that level of representation in Albany as well, and matching funds would be an excellent way to help achieve this goal.

COURT REFORM

Do you support simplifying and consolidating New York State's court system - which includes 11 trial courts - by passing the Chief Judge's proposed constitutional amendment to modernize the courts?

Yes

If needed, you may elaborate below on your positions on the previous questions. You may also provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to advance your positions on these issues.

As a former trial attorney, I have observed both defendants and victims spend countless hours waiting in courtrooms. Despite the best efforts of some judges, attorneys and court staff, the antiquated systems and dearth of technology creates a terribly inefficient court system. It's time to modernize the courts.

GOALS, PLANS, AND REPRESENTATION

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: Fully fund sustainable gun violence prevention solutions. Gun violence is one of the top issues in my District, and during my time at Everytown for Gun Safety, I have advocated for life-saving, common sense gun violence legislation in 19 states and the District of Columbia. It's time to bring that knowledge and advocacy home to the community where I live with my family.

Second: Affordable childcare/eldercare and a living wage for caregivers. As a working mom, finding affordable, reliable, and trustworthy childcare has been one of the biggest challenges of the pandemic, so I know it's a struggle for working families across our District and our state. Because caregivers are so essential, they should be paid a living wage that reflects their value to both working families and to society. I would fight for childcare tax credits for working families and fund childcare facilities in the District and offer training, competitive wages, and benefits to childcare providers.

Third: A just COVID recovery for small businesses. Small businesses are integral to the neighborhoods within my District as the owners are not simply entrepreneurs, but also neighbors who employ other neighbors. Many women and minority small businesses in my District closed and continue to struggle to recover from COVID-19. We need to hold commercial landlords accountable for sky-high rents and provide tax credits to small businesses so they can offer higher wages and benefits (health care, childcare, paid sick and family leave) to employees.

If elected, what is the first piece of legislation you would want to introduce? If you are an incumbent, what is the first piece of legislation you would want to pass?

Legislation which permits Medicaid reimbursement for violence intervention services, as I advocated for in Connecticut in my capacity as policy and legislative Counsel at Everytown for Gun Safety last session.

In providing constituent service, what are the major needs of your district's constituents and how will you meet them?

We also need to provide more language access in our District office so that communities with limited English proficiency can access state services to help their families and communities. The members of my community have also been sharing that they do not currently have access to the sitting state senator as their calls often go unreturned.

I would hire a multi-lingual and diverse staff which represents many areas of the District, and ensure that resource materials are offered in the languages most

commonly spoken in my District.

I also envision running an office that sets an inclusive and welcoming tone for both staff and constituents. A state senator should ensure that they are a consistent presence and remember that they serve at the pleasure of their constituents. One of my goals is to rent out an office which contains enough space to reserve a meeting area for community based organizations and community members to create an environment which reinforces that the office is an open working space for all who are represented.

Community members and grassroots organizations will be a part of meetings where they hold either subject matter expertise or deep concern on any particular policy issue in order to inform the parameters of legislation. They will also be invited to town halls to discuss pending legislation or other pressing issues. I also plan to keep my community informed by investing in a strong constituent services office where the District is given consistent, periodic updates on what is happening in Albany.

I am most accountable to all of my constituents regardless of whether they can or did vote for me. I understand co-governance to be the principle of consistently reminding oneself that the office is but a conduit to delivering the services and policy needs of your community, while understanding that policy cannot be created in a vacuum, but must be informed by those who will be most impacted.

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

During my time as a Manhattan Assistant District Attorney, I worked in the Public Corruption Unit where I investigated and prosecuted several cases where public officials and/or employees either breached the ethical duties required for their positions or flagrantly broke the law by using their position to gain a personal advantage. As a former prosecutor, I understand that many members of the broader community feel a general distrust of authority, which is why I found it so important to work on rooting out those who have abused their power. Some examples of two of my larger investigations were: I have prosecuted corrupt members of the NYPD who falsely arrested, framed, and imprisoned a man who spent seven months in jail before their deception was uncovered; and I have also prosecuted a Human Resources Administration employee who used his access to the personal identifying information of his elderly clients to convert their EBT benefits into cash for his own personal use. Public servants need to have the public's trust, and anyone who uses their office for personal gain or abuses their

power must be held accountable.

How long have you lived in the district in which you are running?

Approximately 10 years

Have you lived in the district before this year's redistricting?

No, I was drawn into this District this year, however my neighborhood was egregiously gerrymandered in 2012. For the past 10 years, I was in SD 17, while my neighbors across the street were in SD 21, and my neighbor one block over was in SD 17, and the next block was in SD 21, and so forth. I didn't move - the arbitrary lines that defined my district changed.

For incumbents: If your district has changed significantly following this year's redistricting, how do you intend to run your office to serve the needs of the new constituents you now represent?

PATH TO VICTORY

What is your win number (the number of votes needed to win this race), and what is your plan to achieve that number?

21,994. Our campaign is focussed on a deep relational organizing model to connect with voters through a variety of methods including, door knocking, high traffic canvassing, phone banking and text banking.

What are your current fundraising numbers, if different than the last campaign finance filing?

\$116,249.62

How many individual donors do you have?

491

Please indicate any endorsements that your campaign has received, if applicable (you can also share a link to a list of endorsements)

Run for Something, Brooklyn Young Democrats, Samantha Adler - former SD 21 candidate and some that have not been officially announced as of March 15, 2022

ADDITIONAL INFO

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

 KMW-2021-0001_R7clieny.pdf	 resume .pdf
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What else would you like us to know about yourself?

If elected, I would be the first LGBTQ+ Black woman in the New York State Senate and one of the only few working mothers of young children.

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

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