

Candidate Questionnaire

Dear Candidate,

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 June 27, 2022.

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Andrew Gounardes

Office Sought (New York State)

Senate

District Number

26

In which primary

Democratic

What party line/s are you running under?

Democratic; Working Families Party

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

Democratic

Age

36

Education

BA from Hunter College, JD from George Washington Law

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Incumbent State Senator, District 22

Born and raised in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, Andrew knows firsthand the value of putting communities first. Following Superstorm Sandy, Andrew co-founded Bay Ridge Cares, an organization that prepared 25,000 hot meals for victims after the storm. As a member of the Riders Alliance, he organized and formed the Concerned R Train Riders to fight for better service and demand accessible subway stations in Southern Brooklyn. Andrew also worked with Bay Ridge Advocates for Keeping Everyone Safe (B.R.A.K.E.S.) and successfully pressured

lawmakers to allow speed cameras in school zones, a fight he continues to wage up in Albany. He is a past president of the Bay Ridge Historical Society and a former member of Community Board 10.

Andrew and his wife Melanie live in Bay Ridge, where they are raising their son Evan. Andrew is a graduate of local parochial and public schools, Hunter College - CUNY, and the George Washington University Law School. He is a founding member of the Hellenic-American Leadership Council.

Website <https://andrewgoundardes.com>

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

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/AndrewForNewYork>

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 'X' shape with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

ETHICS

What is your opinion on the recently passed ethics reform, which replaced JCOPE with a new ethics oversight agency called Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government? Did you support this policy?

While replacing JCOPE was sorely needed to restore confidence in the integrity of Albany, I don't believe that the Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government goes far enough to ensure the appropriate level of independent accountability. I was one of 12 Senators to sign a statement opposing the Governor's plan and was disappointed that we could not craft a more independent oversight body. I did end up voting for the budget that included the Governor's ethics reforms, but believe that we have more work to do to clean up Albany.

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

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?

No.

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 ethics issues.

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.

Just a few ideas to reforming election administration: amend the constitution to remove the party-parity requirement for BOE commissioners in favor of a non-partisan governing structure; implement and enforce anti-nepotism hiring standards for BOE staff positions; reform poll worker recruitment, including removing political party leadership preferences for poll worker placement and allowing CUNY and SUNY students to receive course credit for serving as poll workers (S9058 Gounardes); and improving language access at the ballot using technology and on-demand ballot printing.

This past year, the Senate voted on a number of BOE reforms, including mandatory training for election commissioners, increasing pay for poll workers and inspectors, and reforming certain practices of the NYC Board of Elections.

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?

Yes

Do you support re-passing the constitutional amendment to enact no-excuse absentee voting?

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.

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)

I do not have the full answer to this constitutional and public policy problem yet, but at a bare minimum, we need to either reform the current IRC - and the constitutional process it must follow - or create a new redistricting body & process that does not end in stalemate and does not allow for partisan drawing of district lines.

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.

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.

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.

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 the City University of New York and pass the New Deal for CUNY

Second: Combat sexual harassment in the workplace by banning NDAs and removing other practices that shield abusers

Third: Reinvest in public infrastructure to reimagine the BQE and create a fully reliable and accessible transit system

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?

S9293A - my legislation to extend anti-SLAPP protections to victims who file claims of workplace harassment or discrimination

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

The 26th District runs from Dyker Heights and Bay Ridge, up through Sunset Park and Gowanus, and then terminates at Brooklyn Heights and Vinegar Hill. There is a myriad of issues that concern these residents, but a few that span across neighborhoods and have a districtwide impact. Among the top issues of concern:

– transit accessibility and reliability - with the totality of the R line in Brooklyn, as well as the F,G,N,D,Q,A,C,2,3,4,and 5 trains all serving this district, and the plethora of bus lines, this is a district that requires a functioning and reliable transit system.

– climate change and waterfront resiliency - the coastal communities of Sunset Park, Red Hook, DUMBO, and Vinegar Hill are all scarred from the devastation of Superstorm Sandy; knowing that we are one-storm surge away from devastation yet again makes climate change and waterfront resiliency a top concern.

– BQE and trucking - more than half of the BQE's 17 miles is included in this district, from the Verrazzano Bridge to Sands Street, which makes the future of this corridor, including the structurally unsound cantilever, a significant concern. Any

proposals to address the BQE must take into account the explosive growth of trucking freight across the NYC region, including the proliferation of last-mile warehouse distribution centers across Sunset Park and Red Hook.

– street safety - as long as traffic fatalities continue to climb, there will always be a need to continue to curb reckless driving and making streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists.

My approach to constituent service is to meet the voters, hear their concerns, and bring my office to them-- to be as accessible as possible and include as many voices around the table as I can. Working together with community stakeholders will allow my office to proactively address the many long-standing challenges that this district has.

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.

Since my election in 2018, I have worked to introduce and support bills around government ethics and transparency, curbing workplace harassment and discrimination - including holding government officials accountable for their own malfeasance, reform antiquated election laws, and support public financing of elections.

Do you currently live in this district? How long have you lived in it?

Yes. I was born and raised here.

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?

Technically, I do not yet represent the new parts of the district that I am running to represent next year. As such, my office is still committed to serving my existing constituents as best as we can, while I work to introduce myself to new neighborhoods and new constituencies through my campaign's efforts.

Once re-elected, I plan to represent these new constituents the same way I do my current ones: with a laser focus on constituent services, thorough and accessible constituent communications, and a sincere commitment to meeting new people

and hearing from new voices.

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?

District 26 has some of the highest voter turnout in New York. We expect, while not 2020 or 2018 numbers, engagement will still be high. Following the statewide primary and an analysis of its turnout numbers, we will likely hone our goals a bit, but as of right now we are aiming for 53% of 44,000-50,000 voters, putting our win number in the 23,000-25,000 range. We expect the race in NY-10 will affect this.

We are pursuing an aggressive strategy utilizing a blanket digital media presence, mail, and an extremely robust direct voter contact/canvassing operation, which aims for two passes of our double-and-triple prime universes. Additionally, we are planning an intensive outreach campaign early on targeting likely absentee voters.

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

\$550,000

How many individual donors do you have?

700+

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

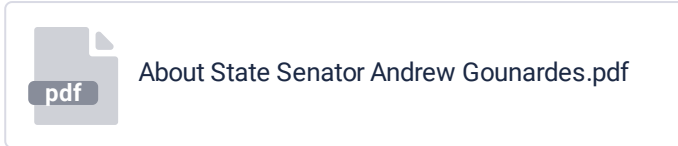
Electeds: CM Lincoln Restler, Comptroller Brad Lander, CM Justin Brannan, AM Peter Abbate, DL Joanne Seminara, DL Julio Pena, DL Chris McCreight, DL Doug Schneider, Senator Zellnor Myrie.

Organizations: NYIC Action Fund, NASW PAC, Bay Ridge Democrats, Jim Owles Club, IND, NYLCV, Working Families Party, Moms Demand Action Gun Sense Candidate Distinction

Unions: NYSUT, PSC, CWA District 1, LIUNA, TWU

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?

I hold myself to the highest ethical standards and am only in this office to work on behalf of my constituents. Maintaining and being worthy of the public trust is incredibly important to me, and I uphold my responsibility to act with integrity, ethics and for the good of the public every day.

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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