

2023 Primary Candidate Questionnaire - New York City Council

Citizens Union - Local Candidates Committee

Dear candidate,

Congratulations on your decision to run for a seat on the New York City Council! Citizens Union appreciates your commitment to serving the public.

This form includes six sections with questions about your positions on various reform issues and your plans for the office:

- Serving constituents
- Elections and voting
- Campaign finance
- Oversight of City Hall
- Police accountability
- City Council rules
- There are also questions about the candidate's bio and the campaign

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](#).

You can learn more about Citizens Union's policy agenda in our [issues section](#).

**

If you wish to be considered, please submit this questionnaire by Tuesday, March 14, 2023.

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** at the bottom of every page. Once you submit the questionnaire, you will receive a confirmation email with your responses. Citizens Union cannot see your answers unless you submit the form.

You can also download a blank questionnaire [here](#) and email it to us.

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Candidate info

Name	Isaiah Orlando Vega
Running for Council District number	37
In which primary	Republican
Age	21
Education	BA CUNY York College
Occupation	Self Employed

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Website vegalunaforcitycouncil.com

Twitter @VegaLunaForNY

Facebook Isaiah Vega-Luna For City Council

Affirmations

Have you completed the required campaign finance filings?

Have you qualified to receive matching campaign finance funds from the CFB?

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

(Please note: interviews are prerequisites for Citizens Union's endorsements)

SERVING CONSTITUENTS

1. For most New Yorkers, the most important thing their Council Members do is provide constituent services. How have you run your office (or for non-incumbents, how would you run your office) to serve your community's needs? Please give specific examples. What are the major problems in your district that require constituent services?

I would run my office 9-5 on weekdays with an 11-7 option on certain Saturdays if possible. Not everyone can visit the office on weekdays, so opening up the possibility on Saturdays can serve constituents who may have certain issues that they would like to speak about in person.

A constituent "mailbox" would also be available 24/7 where constituents can file a form or complaint in writing and can leave it in a metal container outside of the office so that it may be timely addressed during business hours.

Major problems include flooding, litter, housing/rent, and application assistance.

2. For incumbents: Which bill did you introduce, and most want to see passed? Why is that your top priority? For non-incumbents: If elected, what is the first piece of legislation you would introduce in the new year? Why is that your top priority?

The first piece of legislation I would introduce would be an improved version of the Jobs Survival Act, formerly known as Intro 0737-2018. Small businesses form the cornerstones of our City. 1 month leases that crush prospective small business owners, such as immigrant families, are causing the City to fail. With the right to renewal, the right to a fair lease, and the right to remain in business without sky-high rents or having to pay the landlord's property taxes, we can bring our City and our small businesses back. 15 year leases, lower property taxes, and a restoration of the middle class.

3. 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.

The Campaign Finance Board has been very transparent about the process of going about the Matching Funds Program. You can only match funds through small contributions, have a spending limit, and must keep yourself accountable to ensure you're following the law.

For voting and elections, I work alongside the Medical Freedom Alliance this year to help run 51 City

Council candidates so that all New Yorkers should have the option to vote Medical Freedom. While I am running as both a Republican and Conservative, I am also running as a Medical Freedom Party candidate.

4. What are your top three campaign promises or goals? Feel free to reference an answer to another question on this form rather than restate it.

First: Reinstate and Compensate Fired Unvaccinated Workers

Second: Save Small Businesses through a Revived and Improved Jobs Survival Act

Third: Restore Public Safety in our Streets via Police Reform, Cleaner Streets, and Addressing the Mental Health Crisis

ELECTIONS AND VOTING

5. How would you describe the relationship between the City Council and the New York City Board of Elections? How will you use (or have you used) your power as a Council Member to improve the operations of the NYC BOE?

It's hard to tell what relationship the City Council has with the Board of Elections, and I feel a greater transparency is needed in that regard if applicable. The operations of the Board of Elections needs to be freed from party leaders and operated independently under a nonpartisan agreement (ex: poll workers are chosen at random and not appointed by party District Leaders).

Citizens Union recently [published a report](#) about moving New York City's municipal elections to even-numbered years, so they would align with presidential or gubernatorial elections, showing this change could boost voter turnout, diversify the electorate, and save money.

6. What is your position on that proposal to move New York City's municipal elections to even-numbered years and on the overall concept?

I am supportive of New York City's municipal elections being moved to the midterm year of our election cycle. As the recent redistricting ballot measure has called for the City Council lines to be redrawn every census, it should be that it coincides with the midterm elections where redistricting is done as well. Logically, it makes sense, and it does save money.

7. Are you a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting? If so, how will you work to maintain this system and educate voters on how it works? If not, please elaborate on your position.

I am a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting and would even go as far to state I support the concept of Final Five Voting, where regardless of party affiliation, a choosing of five candidates in the primary could lead to them being faced off in the general election. Voters should be given an incentive to attend classes regarding Ranked Choice Voting, as many of them still have not grasped the concept.

8. New York City is one of few cities that maintains a closed primary system, in which only registered party members can vote in the election that typically decides who gets elected to office. Do you believe New York City should shift to a form of open primaries, allowing all registered voters to vote in the primary?

I believe the primary should be an open primary. Too many independents are denied the opportunity to vote in the primary because of the closed primary system.

*** In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve elections and voting or increase competition in New York City's political system. Or, if you ran out of room in the fields above, you may continue your answers below.**

The system's voter rolls must be updated regularly to ensure no duplicate voters are in the system.

The Matching Funds Program being established for state candidates is a big plus and would help for more local people wanting to get involved the opportunity to run.

A handbook or guide on how to run should be established to make it easier for people to get involved in politics, regardless of party affiliation.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

9. If you ran for office before, to what extent have Independent Expenditure entities (“Super-PACs”) spent money in your race? Was it done in your favor or opposition of your candidacy?

As this is my first race, I have no knowledge of Super-PACs having been involved in my race.

10. Individuals with business ties to city government and registered lobbyists can bypass their donation limits by “bundling” donations from other people, a loophole that can give insiders greater access to officeholders. Do you support banning bundling by people on the Doing Business with the City database?

I do support a ban on bundling by people in the City's Doing Business database. The loophole should be closed entirely.

OVERSIGHT OF CITY HALL

In the last year, media reports have exposed potential ethical issues within City Hall concerning [conflicts of interest](#) among [top officials](#), the use of [public resources for private matters](#), [appointments](#) of friends and relatives, and [loosening transparency measures](#).

12. How do you see your role as a Council Member in ensuring high ethical behavior standards and effective ethics oversight and enforcement?

I've seen many complaints with the City not enforcing codes or there being ethics violation and a lack of enforcement. As I am a first time office runner and political outsider, I don't see myself making friends with top officials, as I know none, but enforcing the rules where applicable, enforcing oversight in City agencies, and staying in my lane rather than intermingling in conflicts of interest.

POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY AND REFORM

13. Who do you think should have the final say on discipline in the New York Police Department? How would you ensure that penalties imposed on police officers are commensurate with the gravity of their wrongdoing?

A bipartisan committee of Councilmembers with the Mayor and the commanding officer should be established to ensure a police officer is properly punished. A punishment should not rest in the hands of a single individual, and it should be thoroughly debated. A standard of minimum punishments should be established based on the wrongdoing of the officer, and further punishments should be built from the base of such wrongdoing.

14. What changes should be made to the independent oversight bodies to ensure they can effectively hold police officers who commit wrongdoing accountable (the Civilian Complaint Review Board, Office of the Inspector General for the NYPD, the Commission to Combat Police Corruption)?

If there is a lack of funding, funding should be ensured if they are doing their job properly. If they are not doing their job properly, assess the issues and address them.

15. Under the 2021 police reform plan, the City committed to expanding programs that effectively shift responsibilities from the NYPD to other agencies in areas like mental health, homelessness outreach, school, and youth, while investing in alternative models for community-driven public safety, such as Cure Violence programs. What do you think about the progress of these efforts? How would you improve policing in the City's various communities?

For now, it seems as though there has been no progress in these efforts. People feel less safe now

than ever. Policies, such as cashless bail and Raise the Age, remain at the forefront of negating progress. Until such policies are repealed, we must keep police on the street to stop crime. Until the crime crisis is brought under control, then we can begin to shift the budget of the NYPD to these programs.

CITY COUNCIL RULES

16. In December 2022, Speaker Adams proposed changes to the Rules of the City Council that would have potentially rolled back positive reforms related to bill drafting services and the power of members and committee chairpersons, among other issues. Although this proposal has been pulled, additional work is needed to make the Council a more democratic, effective, and open legislative body. What reforms would you like to see in the Rules of the City Council?

In 2023, a Congressional Rules package was passed that greatly shifted the way Congress was run. Here are ideas from that package I would love to see implemented:

- Bill amendments are voted on one by one rather than being tagged on into an omnibus
- Members must be present to cast a vote, i.e. no voting by proxies
- Ensure members of the Council stay to witness public comments on bills rather than have them leave
- Same day voting, rather than dragging it out for weeks on end

PATH TO VICTORY

What is your win number (the number of votes needed to win this race)? 4,500

What are your current fundraising numbers? What are your fundraising goals? \$200, looking to raise at least \$1000

How many individual donors do you have? 4

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

Republican Party of Brooklyn
Conservative Party of Brooklyn
Medical Freedom Party

ADDITIONAL INFO

Is there anything else you would like us to know about you?

I will never be a politician, but if I am elected I will certainly be a public servant. At only 21 years old, I was asked by many people when I would run for office, and seeing the issues we face today I decided to run. No matter what happens, I will run until the very end, and let God decide what is right. Thank you for the opportunity to fill out this questionnaire, I hope to hear from you all soon.

Please review your answers by clicking PREVIEW ANSWERS below.

At the bottom of the preview page, you can

- **get a copy of your answers by clicking PRINT, and**
- **submit the questionnaire by clicking SUBMIT.**

IF YOU DO NOT CLICK SUBMIT, WE WON'T RECEIVE YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE.

Once you click SUBMIT, you will receive a confirmation email. *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