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# Xavier Santiago

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Submitter

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Name Xavier Santiago

Office Sought (New York State) **Assembly**

District Number 68

In which primary **Democratic**

What party line/s are you running under? Democract

Age 45

Education BA English/Theater Comp Sci.

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement Chair Community Board 11

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Have you completed the required campaign finance filings?

Are you participating in the State Public Campaign Finance Program?

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

Signature



What are your top three campaign promises or goals, and what action will you take to achieve them if elected?

First: 1. Public Safety – East Harlem is the canary in the coal mine. After extensive meetings with DA Bragg's Office, some proposals would bring balance to criminal justice reform. If elected, I would advocate for Discovery Reform adjustments to complete the work of criminal justice reform. Many of these recommendations are supported by multiple entities. Sections of discovery legislation require unrelated paperwork for each case, which prevents expeditious trials and at worse dismissals and declines to prosecute. For example, an individual who was guilty of domestic violence was released due to a missing cab receipt even though it had no bearing on the case. The defense attorney in this case agreed that the individual was guilty but the judge was left with no alternative but to dismiss the case.

Second: 2. 421a Relief Program and 421a - Rev 2.0. Gov Hochul recently called for a renewal of 421a; however, there are questions about a potential rollout. First, we should implement a relief program for those exiting the current program. Within East Harlem, many of the co-operatives founded 20 years ago are sunseting and will experience a significant property tax burden. Many of these homeowners are retired working-class individuals and now live off of social security and/or their pensions. With the

current rate of inflation combined with the net average pension being 60% of the last year's wage, many homeowners will be displaced. I would advocate for either an individual enrollment program or a building-wide extension of the tax abatement. The second legislation I would advocate for includes a new rollout of the 421a with a limiter on super wealthy developments. The original intent of 421a was to spur affordable homeownership. Unfortunately, many developers took advantage of these programs. The version I have worked on would place guard rails against this exploitation and generate greater socio-economic diversification of new housing stock.

Third: 3. As a junior elected representative, the pragmatist in me knows that reform of our healthcare system and vocational job training programs would most readily pass. Although several healthcare initiatives are under consideration, if they did not pass, I would fight for parity with Medicare reimbursement rates and anti-discrimination legislation as it pertains to doctor-authorized care. For instance, many insurers limit the amount of scans ordered by doctors, even though they are medically necessary. Insurers have placed outside intermediaries/contractors to execute the disapproval of each request. These artificial firewalls prevent individuals from receiving the care they deserve. My legislation would focus on preventing insurers from obfuscating the process.

If elected, what is the first piece of legislation you would want to introduce? If you are an incumbent, what legislation have you passed which you are most proud of?

As a pragmatist, I am under no illusions that the above priorities may not be achieved in the first term with the current political environment. Therefore, the first piece of legislation, which is my fourth priority, I would present would be a youth-centered vocational job training program. As I put myself through college, I worked in electrical/plumbing construction and retail. There were once vocational programs in our high schools across the nation. Many of those programs were discontinued. My proposed legislation would create a pipeline of trades school training paired with apprentice programs with participating tradesmen. This program would be paid for by the state to educate the youth and supplement the apprentice program. For example, a master plumber would be able to apprentice a high schooler who could earn revenue and school credit for the trade. Math and science components would be incorporated into the training so that the student would grasp the real-world necessity of their classes.

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

Having organized and coordinated with multiple elected representatives in our district as Chair and Vice-Chair of Community Board 11, the most significant issue faced by constituent services is navigating the bureaucratic agencies of both the city and state. During the past two years, even more people have turned to me as the incumbent's office has limited hours and a lack of understanding of how the city and state agencies interact. With our community being one of the lowest AMLs in the state, it is necessary to help constituents with assistance programs, recertification with NYCHA, and public safety concerns to name a few.

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.

Regrettably, I have experienced first-hand difficulties with election reform. We have worked with several District Leaders to bring balance with registration and record keeping; however, more legislation is required to further our goals.

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

16 years

1. Do you support moving city elections from odd-numbered years to even-numbered years, and will you vote in favor of legislation that enacts that change?

Yes

2. Do you support restarting

Yes

the constitutional amendment process to enact same-day voter registration in New York?

3. Do you support improving voter participation in CUNY and SUNY colleges by requiring schools to develop and implement a student voter engagement action plan?

Yes

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

Yes

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

Yes

6. Do you support requiring election commissioners and top BOE staff undergo mandatory training developed by the State Board of Elections?

Yes

7. 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.

The turnout in the 68th District has been abysmal for many cycles. Combining local elections with statewide would propel more voters to turn out as the return on the investment of time is worth more. Although this will inevitably affect consultants' earnings year to year, their potential clients will remain the same. Ultimately, the greater a population turns out to participate, the better it is for our democracy.

One of the grievances I hear the most is that voters believe they can register on the day of voting. Even changing parties remains limited and stalls participation. If we desire a truly engaged constituency, then we should restart the constitutional amendment process for same-day voting as well as other electoral reforms.

My primary focus is to make it easier for voters to register to vote with a party and not limit their ability to switch. Many independents and former Republicans opined on the difficulty of switching parties. I would propose legislation that would facilitate an extension of the deadline to register to vote and/or switch parties. Moreover, the BOE should be equally accountable to all candidates in the petitioning process. I would advocate for legislation to impact each of these aspects.

Unfortunately, we have witnessed a multitude of issues in our local elections that would be corrected with the training of independent commissioners and top BOE staff. Certain candidates were allowed to stay on the ballot despite not possessing the requisite amount of signatures (i.e. non-qualifying signatures were included). We have also witnessed the removal of individuals from the party rolls. Personally, my name was removed from the Democratic rolls and I was forced to pull up every record from the very first year voted. As a result, they acknowledged their mistake but still denied my participation in a primary. The subsequent year, they rectified my registration. Ironically, they removed me but not my wife on the claim that I had not voted when in fact I had. Properly trained staff would prevent such occurrences. Legislation should be presented to remedy these issues.

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

See above.

8. Will you support fully funding new state public campaign finance program in the upcoming budget process?

Yes

9. Do you commit to opposing any attempt to undermine the State Public Campaign Finance

Yes

Program by changing its rules to benefit large donors?

10. Do you support requiring campaigns to disclose a contributor's employer in campaign finance reports, as is done in NYC?

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.

The disclosure is helpful for transparency; however, many large institutions possess stricter protocols that prevent contributions to normal state and local campaigns. Those participating in the Campaign Finance program already must provide the employer's information above a certain contribution amount.

11. 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)

The Independent Redistricting Commission is the most appropriate body to assess our district maps. Nothing reaffirms this position more than the lawsuit from the new maps issued by the Legislature, which resulted in a loss of seats in Congress. Allowing a review by the Legislature is helpful when partisan politics can be set aside. Unfortunately, this last iteration fell short of that ideal. Representative democracy works best when all voters are engaged. The IRC should be afforded an oversight mechanism to prevent subsequent partisan redrawing.

12. Do you support changing the constitutional redistricting process to reduce the influence of legislators over map-making process, make the redistricting commission less partisan and more diverse, and eliminate the Legislature's veto power over final maps?

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.

The IRC placed an incredible amount of discerning, thoughtful effort into our maps that were fair, balanced, and equitable. The Legislature's veto and subsequent State Senate and Congressional maps issued were akin to Republican efforts in other parts of the country but without the analytical mathematics. As stated above, an oversight mechanism should be granted to the IRC to counter a veto.

To offer context in support of a truly independent IRC, it is important to examine what happened with the Senate Seats covering East Harlem and the Upper East Side. Sen. Gianaris (who oversaw the process) redrew maps that consolidated Queens and then took a segment of East Harlem and Yorkville. This massive overstep flew in the face of the IRC's proposals. It possessed neither demographic nor geographical context for justification. An independent IRC with an override mechanism would bring balance to partisan politics and create an equitable district map.

13. Do you support establishing an independent ethics agency with commissioners not chosen by the elected officials they oversee, which would have oversight powers over the executive and the legislature (also replaces the Legislative Ethics Commission)?

Yes

14. Do you support requiring lobbyists to report their contributions and fundraising activity?

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

During my many years as an observer and advocate, we have made strides with our ethics agencies. Unfortunately, more accountability is necessary. Electeds should not be selecting the commissioners who oversee them. A truly independent commission would ensure that all elected representatives are beyond reproach.

Reporting of lobbyist contributions affords greater transparency for the

to advance your positions on ethics issues.

state. Although the optics could imply potential influence, the reporting allows both parties to explain why someone desired to support a candidate. In certain instances, electeds and lobbyists may have pre-existing relationships. The reporting allows transparency whilst still allowing someone to express their constitutional rights by supporting a desired candidate.

Thank you for taking the time to review my answer. I look forward to the interview process and expanding on my positions and ideally generating a more proactive and healthy democracy.

15. Do you support giving the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board access to certain sealed and confidential records in matters involving potential police discipline?

Yes

16. Do you support transferring disciplinary hearings involving police officers from the NYPD to the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH)?

Yes

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

First and foremost, I believe in the accountability of all agencies serving the city and state. The public has struggled with NYPD and other agencies for years. Although East Harlem has healthy relationships with the 23rd, 25th Precincts and PSA5, not all of NYC has been so lucky. All agencies should be accountable to the public for their actions. Case in point, DOHMH has caused irreparable harm due to policy decisions from the past two administrations. Unfortunately, there is no oversight mechanism for accountability. For a more just and equitable city and state, public trust must be restored. As a producer, we bring competing interests (investors, unions, talent, crew, distributors, studios, city/state agencies, etc.) to negotiations that often become diametrically opposed at their peak, yet we find agreements to roll out a successful project. If elected, I will gladly play an integral role in bringing all parties to the table to create successful solutions and restore public trust in our NYPD and other agencies.

17. Do you support maintaining the Commission on Judicial Nomination, which recommends candidates for the Court of Appeals to the Governor?

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.

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

4500+

I have personally been meeting with constituents for years. Many constituents desire a change from the incumbent. Our campaign raised over \$50,000 by the January filing date. We continue to raise funds and are participating in the Campaign Finance program. As expressed in this questionnaire, we must motivate turnout by removing the barriers. I'm traveling door-to-door to meet our neighbors and educate them about the election and the necessity to participate. Every week I participate in group meetings and coffee clutches to get out the word. We will continue to do so as the campaign builds momentum. Mailers, virtual as well as meet and greets at subway stops are part of the plan. With an endorsement from Citizens Union, we would build on our grassroots approach by showing solidarity of purpose to bring common sense to Albany.

What are your current fundraising numbers? What are your fundraising goals?

\$52,000. Our goal is to raise \$175,000 by election day

How many individual donors do you have? **83 and growing**

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

Our endorsements will be released in the coming weeks.

Please stand by.

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



**Xavier\_Santiago\_Producer\_Resume.pdf**  
242.55 KB

What else would you like us to know about yourself?

Thank you for the opportunity to review my questionnaire. I'm deeply humbled and honored to take part in the process. I am a pragmatic individual who has been blessed to see both sides of the socio-economic coin. Despite the adversity my family and I have experienced in life, rather than become bitter, I have channeled these experiences into finding tenable pathways for success for others. During the past fifteen years, I have served the community of East Harlem as a leader on the city board and at large. Using my experience living in the UK, I built bridges with our friends across the pond to create improvements for our city and state. As a community so disadvantaged for years, it is my sincerest hope to bring balance and equity back to the 68th Assembly District and create a brighter future for the community's children. I humbly look forward to the interview process and allowing the interview committee to see a different type of candidate.

Preview Before Submit

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