

2026 General Candidate Questionnaire

Attorney General of New York

Citizens Union – Local Candidates Committee

Responses of Saritha Komatireddy

General Information

Name	Saritha Komatireddy
District	Statewide (Attorney General of New York)
Party	Republican; running on the Republican and Conservative Party lines
Age	42
Education	A.B., Harvard College; J.D., Harvard Law School (Bluebook Chair, Harvard Law Review)
Current job, position, or occupation	Partner, Holtzman Vogel (complex federal investigations, litigation and appeals); Lecturer in Law, Columbia Law School
Other current appointed or elected positions	None
Previous jobs or appointed/elected positions	Assistant U.S. Attorney and Supervisor, Eastern District of New York, 2013–2025 (Chief of International Narcotics and Money Laundering; Deputy Chief of Appeals; Deputy Chief of General Crimes; National Security and Cybercrime Section); Chief of Staff, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, 2023–2024; Counsel, National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil

	Spill and Offshore Drilling; Associate, Kellogg, Huber, Hansen, Todd, Evans & Figel; Law Clerk to Judge Brett M. Kavanaugh, U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit; Adjunct Professor, George Washington University Law School
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General

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

First, restore public safety by putting prosecutors back at the center of the office. The Attorney General employs roughly 700 lawyers, the great majority of them assigned to civil work; today more staff are assigned to investigate police officers than to prosecute

criminals. On Day One I will restructure the office so that at least half of its attorneys work on crime, rebuild the criminal bureaus with career prosecutors, and direct the Organized Crime Task Force and the office's Executive Law authorities at repeat offenders, gun and fentanyl traffickers, and hate crimes. The office will back up district attorneys, sheriffs and police departments.

Second, get the severely mentally ill and addicted off the streets and into the humane treatment they need. I will create an Office of Civil Commitment staffed by law enforcement professionals and physicians; redirect New York's roughly \$3 billion in opioid settlement money from subsidizing drug use toward residential treatment, and use the Charities Bureau to audit every homeless shelter in the state, where spending now runs about \$81,000 per homeless person with little to show for it.

Third, root out fraud and public corruption. Medicaid fraud recoveries fell from \$168 million in 2019 to \$31 million in 2024 while the unit's budget grew 57 percent. I will assign 20 additional criminal prosecutors to the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit, revive civil enforcement under the False Claims Act, pursue EBT skimming and benefit theft, and bring public-corruption cases the federal government declines, regardless of party.

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

My career has been spent on the enforcement side. As a federal prosecutor I investigated and tried foreign public corruption cases, including the conviction of Genaro García Luna, the most senior Mexican law enforcement official ever convicted in the U.S., for taking cartel bribes to protect shipments of cocaine. That case was, in the end, about what happens when the people entrusted with law enforcement are for sale.

As Counsel to the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, I helped investigate an environmental disaster and regulatory failure: a federal agency that had been captured by the industry it was supposed to oversee. That work is the foundation of my view that oversight bodies must be independent and staffed by professionals.

As Chief of Staff of the Drug Enforcement Administration, a 10,000-person agency, I was responsible for aligning components of government bureaucracy towards a common mission to accomplish results for the American people. I understand what real police accountability looks like from inside a law enforcement agency, and I believe it is compatible with, not opposed to, supporting officers.

I clerked on the D.C. Circuit, the court that hears most challenges to federal agency action, and I have taught computer crime at Columbia Law School for approximately a decade. In this campaign I chose to participate in New York's public matching funds program and have qualified for it.

3. How do you intend to recruit or attract high-quality lawyers to work in the attorney general's office?

The office's difficulty attracting and keeping serious litigators is a product of what it has been asked to do. An Attorney General who bills taxpayers nearly \$20 million for outside counsel is telling her own staff that the important work goes elsewhere. I will end that practice and reinvest the money in the people already inside the building.

I will rebuild the criminal bureaus so that assistant attorneys general try cases and argue appeals, which is what ambitious lawyers want; recruit directly from the U.S. Attorney's Offices, district attorney's offices, clerkships and the public-interest bar, where I have spent my career and know the talent; pair junior attorneys with experienced trial supervisors, as the Eastern District does; and push for loan-repayment assistance so public-service lawyers can afford to stay.

I will recruit personally. I have taught at Columbia Law School for more than ten years and mentored dozens of young prosecutors. Lawyers join offices led by people who have done the job and who will stand behind them when a case gets hard. That is the office I intend to run.

4. New York has had a history of working cooperatively with attorneys general from other states engaging in multistate investigations and multistate lawsuits. What is your view of that?

Multistate work is one of the office's most valuable tools when it is used for New Yorkers. Consumer fraud, antitrust, and data-privacy cases often fit the same pattern, and I will pursue them with any attorney general, of either party, who is serious about the work.

My reservations are practical, not ideological. First, New York should be a working partner, not a signatory added to a press release. Second, cases should be chosen because they protect New Yorkers, not because they align with a national political coalition; that habit has hardened in both parties and it erodes public confidence in every state's attorney general. Third, recovered money must reach the people it was meant for. Opioid settlement funds being spent on needles and drug-use supplies rather than treatment is a failure of the second half of the job.

The test I will apply to any multistate matter is simple: does it protect New Yorkers, is our office doing substantive work, and will the result be used as intended.

Ethics & Corruption

5. What are your thoughts on striking the appropriate balance between the Attorney General's role as the lawyer representing the state and its officials, and as an independently elected government official?

The Executive Law makes the Attorney General counsel to the State and its agencies. My client in that role is the State of New York, meaning its people, not any individual officeholder. The two roles come into tension in predictable ways, and the answer to each is the same: follow the law rather than the politics.

That means defending duly enacted statutes in court even if I would have voted against them. It means telling a governor or agency head “no” when what they want to do is unlawful, and doing so privately and early rather than publicly and late. It also means declining to lend the office's authority to a state official whose conduct is itself under legitimate scrutiny; where the office cannot ethically represent an official, it should say

so and secure independent counsel through a transparent process, not through no-bid contracts.

Independence is a responsibility. An independently elected Attorney General has no mandate to substitute personal or partisan priorities for the statutory ones. The office exists to prosecute crime, recover public money, oversee charities and protect consumers. I have been a professional lawyer for the government under three presidents and more than ten U.S. Attorneys of both parties. I know how to represent a client regardless of politics.

6. Citizens Union believes that all New Yorkers deserve to be represented by officials who work for the public interest and honor the public trust. We seek to endorse a candidate who will demonstrate that she/he will honor the full commitment of the oath of office and always represent the public interest above all else. Please tell us how you will conduct (and for incumbents, have conducted) the duties of this office, recognizing the political aspect of running for office, so as to maintain the public trust.

I will treat the office as a law enforcement agency, not a platform. Specifically:

I will not use the office's resources to pursue personal grievances or to build a national profile. New Yorkers deserve an Attorney General who is doing this job for the full four years, and I have said publicly that I intend to.

I will publish every outside counsel contract, its cost and the reason the work could not be done in-house, and I will not ask taxpayers to fund my personal legal expenses.

I will adopt a written recusal policy on Day One, and I will make it public.

I will report annually on what the office has actually done: cases brought, convictions obtained, money recovered and returned, shelters audited, referrals accepted and declined.

I will keep my campaign commitments consistent with my professional judgment. I have criticized the incumbent's priorities, and I have done so on the record, on the merits. I will not personalize disagreements with the governor, the Legislature or district attorneys when I am in office; the office works when it cooperates.

Finally, I have spent my career under the Department of Justice's ethics rules, where the standard is not whether something is legal but whether it would embarrass the institution. That is the standard I will bring to Albany.

7. How would you address fraud and public misconduct of elected officials? Do you believe that greater responsibility should be given to the office to investigate corruption and how would you achieve that? Are there statutory changes you recommend that would expand the Attorney General's role?

New York's Attorney General already has original jurisdiction over public corruption cases. I will use that authority, and staff the Public Integrity Bureau with career criminal prosecutors.

I would also support extending the False Claims Act's reach to public-benefit corporations and authorities, where a great deal of state spending now occurs with little oversight. I would also like to see every state agency required to report to the Attorney General any credible allegation of fraud above a threshold, so the office is not dependent on whistleblowers finding it.

Corruption cases are built the way any case is: documents, cooperators, patience. I have done it against ISIS, *al Qaeda*, and cartel-bought officials. I will do it in Albany.

Elections & Campaign Finance

8. Given the federal government's proposed involvement in the state administration of federal elections, what would you do to ensure that federal elections in New York State are free and fair and have trusted outcomes?

The Constitution assigns the administration of elections, including federal elections, to the states. New York's elections are run by the State Board of Elections and 62 county boards under state law, and my job as Attorney General is to defend that authority when it is challenged and to enforce the law within it.

That cuts in both directions. Where the federal government requires what federal law actually provides, for example accurate voter-roll maintenance under the National Voter

Registration Act and the Help America Vote Act, New York should comply and should not need a lawsuit to do so. Where a federal directive exceeds what Congress has authorized or intrudes on the state's constitutional role, I will challenge it in court, as any Attorney General should against any administration. The right posture is lawful cooperation and firm resistance, decided case by case on the law rather than by who occupies the White House.

Within New York, trusted outcomes depend on enforcement. I will prosecute election fraud, voter intimidation and interference with election workers from any source, and I will support the boards of elections with legal resources. I have said plainly that I will accept the results of this election and that allegations of impropriety should be examined on the facts and the law. Public confidence is built by professionals doing the work in the open, not by pre-judging outcomes in either direction.

9. What do you think the role of Attorney General should be in enforcing election and campaign finance laws? Would you publicly ask the governor to empower you with greater authority to oversee public corruption and enforce related laws, particularly in those areas?

My reading is that the Office of the New York State Attorney General already has this authority under Executive Law § 63(3,4). Previous governors have granted referrals of this kind, and there is no good reason for the state's chief legal officer to require permission each time to investigate the misuse of public office.

My standard will be the one I applied as a federal prosecutor: the same rules for every candidate, every party and every donor.

10. Do you support measures to limit the role of money in elections and politics, such as substantially reducing contribution limits and/or requiring Independent Expenditure entities (Super PACs) to disclose their top three donors on ads?

As a prosecutor, my instinct on money in politics is the same as on money anywhere else: follow it, and make it visible. Therefore, I support disclosure without hesitation, so long as it is consistent with the federal and state constitutions.

On contribution limits, I chose to participate in New York's small-donor public matching program, which caps what participants can accept from qualifying contributors and rewards small contributions. I would support lowering statutory limits further, provided the change applies evenly and does not simply shift money into less transparent channels.

11. Are you a public campaign finance participant? If not, please explain why.

Yes. My campaign is a participant in New York State's public campaign finance program and has qualified for matching funds.

12. Do you believe there is a conflict of interest in raising funds from companies you may regulate and have to take action against? Are there parameters you set or you believe should be established in statute to limit potential conflicts of interest?

My personal reputation is my most cherished professional asset. (At 35, I was the youngest American in history nominated to a federal judgeship. I was painstakingly vetted and approved for the bench, as I was for various national security clearances throughout my career in public service.) As a top federal prosecutor who jailed Mexico's highest ranking government official, I understand the critical importance of integrity in law enforcement and scrupulously followed the ethical rules applicable to my federal office, which prohibited financial entanglements with subjects and targets of investigation. I understand that the norms of elected office are different and that for various reasons (including to preserve independence) New York has chosen to have an elected Attorney General instead of an appointed one. I will do nothing to compromise my integrity as Attorney General.

13. Do you accept contributions from individuals or their spouses who work for you?

I believe Americans have a Constitutional right to donate to whomever they believe is doing an excellent job, but employees of any public officer should do so blindly. No one in public service should ever feel pressured to donate, or to expect favorable

professional treatment for doing so.

Legislative Priorities

14. What, if any, would be your top legislative priorities to pursue should you be elected to the Office of Attorney General? What specific solutions would you put forward?

I have already advocated for legislation in three areas:

Repeat offenders - Restore judicial discretion to consider dangerousness at arraignment. The man who firebombed houses of worship in Brooklyn and Queens this summer had two prior arrests for violent threats and was released both times. No other state denies judges that consideration. (PROTECT Act)

Transit crimes - Strengthen penalties for crimes that take place in mass transit and for pushing an individual onto train tracks. (Ride Safe, Ride Secure)

Murder of children - Require a life sentence for any adult convicted of intentionally or recklessly murdering a child. (Jacob's Law)

15. What, if any, are the key social issues of the state that you would address should you be elected to the Office of Attorney General? How would you address them?

Homelessness and untreated mental illness - Homelessness is up 38 percent statewide since 2019 while spending has roughly tripled, and more than a dozen New Yorkers froze to death on sidewalks last winter. Leaving a psychotic person on a subway grate is not compassionate. My plan, which I call Love and Order, combines civil commitment for those who cannot care for themselves, residential treatment funded by opioid settlement money, and investigation of the shelter operators who have absorbed billions with worsening results.

Antisemitism and hate crimes - Antisemitic incidents in New York have roughly tripled and hate crimes have doubled in recent years. I have prosecuted terrorists who targeted Americans for their faith. I will assign hate-crime prosecutors to the office, declare a

state of emergency on antisemitism in New York City, prosecute hate crimes for district attorneys who lack resources or will, and pursue civil enforcement against institutions that tolerate harassment.

Fraud against the vulnerable - Elderly New Yorkers scammed out of savings, home-care patients used as billing vehicles in an \$11 billion Medicaid scheme, families whose food benefits are skimmed at the register. The Medicaid Fraud Control Unit and consumer bureaus exist for exactly this; I will make them work again.

Fentanyl and Other Illegal Narcotics - Overdose deaths have risen while state policy has drifted toward accommodating drug use rather than treating it. I ran the DEA's front office; I will bring the Organized Crime Task Force to bear on trafficking networks and close state-sanctioned injection sites. (They are illegal.)

16. Do you support opening New York City's closed primary system by holding an election for all candidates followed by a run-off among the top three candidates, allowing over 1 million unaffiliated voters who are currently locked out of the election to participate in the primary election?

As Attorney General I would not set these rules; the Legislature, the City Council and ultimately the voters would. My job would be to defend whatever system New Yorkers lawfully adopt and to enforce it evenhandedly.

17. Do you oppose S10637A, which dangerously embraces gerrymandering for state legislative offices as a permanent fix to redistricting?

Yes, I oppose it. In 2014 New Yorkers amended their constitution to ban partisan and incumbent-protecting gerrymandering and to create an independent commission. S10637A asks them to repeal that judgment. It strips the constitutional language prohibiting district lines drawn for party or incumbent advantage, applies that repeal to state Senate and Assembly seats where no national justification exists, hollows out the Independent Redistricting Commission, and allows maps to pass on a simple legislative majority.

The provision that concerns me most as a lawyer is the limit on the courts. The amendment would bar a court from drawing congressional districts unless the

Legislature has first failed to fix a violation and no other remedy exists. Judicial review is the only check that functioned in 2022, when the Court of Appeals struck down maps the Legislature had drawn in defiance of the 2014 amendment. Weakening that check is the point of the provision, and it is the reason to reject it.

Whatever one thinks of mid-decade redistricting elsewhere, the answer is not for New York to abandon its own reform. If the amendment passes second reading in 2027, I will oppose it publicly before the referendum, and as Attorney General I will defend the independence of the commission and the courts' authority to enforce the constitution.

Additional Information

18. What else would you like us to know about yourself?

I was born in New York to parents who immigrated from India, and while my family moved elsewhere when I was growing up, I always wanted to return to New York to make my life here. I planned on a career in medicine until September 11, 2001, when I decided that the law and public safety were where I could do the most good. I spent twelve years as a federal prosecutor in Brooklyn, where I tried eight jury trials, argued fifteen appeals in the Second Circuit, and put leaders of *al Qaeda*, ISIS and the Sinaloa cartel in prison. I was chief of staff of the DEA under a Democratic administration and was nominated to the federal bench by a Republican one. I have worked for three presidents of both parties and been a professional under each of them.

I live in Manhattan with my husband and our four children, two sets of twins. I am the only prosecutor in this race and the only statewide candidate who has campaigned in all 62 counties. What I hear everywhere is the same: people want the basic promises of government kept.

I am asking for Citizens Union's support because I believe the office has drifted from its purpose and that restoring it is a reform project as much as a law enforcement one. If New York isn't safe, nothing else matters.

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