

Candidate Questionnaire - 2022 Primary

Dear Claire Valdez,

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Claire Valdez

Office Sought (New York State)

Assembly

District Number

37

In which primary

Democratic

What party line/s are you running under?

Democratic, WFP

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

Democratic, WFP

Age

34

Education

Bachelors

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

I've been a member of UAW Local 2110 for 5 years. Local 2110 is an amalgamated local that covers clerical workers like myself along with many museum workers, arts and culture workers, and academic workers. Since June 2022, I have been the unit chair of my shop of 500 administrative workers, call center workers, and cashiers, and I served on our last bargaining committee.

I have been a member of the union reform caucus, Unite All Workers for Democracy, for about 2 years. UAWD won direct democracy in the UAW and elected the militant reformers (President Shawn Fain, Region 9A Director Brandon Mancilla, and others), who are now in the midst of leading a historic Stand Up Strike against the country's most powerful automakers.

Finally, I am a member of and longtime leader in NYC-DSA. I joined in 2019, and have since served on my local branch Organizing Committee, on our chapter's Steering Committee, and as a leader in campaigns to re-elect Julia Salazar and to elect Samy Nemir Olivares. In DSA, I have also been a leader on our Tax the Rich, Union Power, and Care Not Cuts city budget campaigns.

Website claireforqueens.com

Twitter [@claireforqueens](https://twitter.com/claireforqueens)

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

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, appearing to read "Claire Walden", with a long, sweeping flourish extending from the end.

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)?

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?

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

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?

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.

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 believe the partisan nature of BOE hiring unfairly disadvantages candidates that aren't supported by the party establishments. I don't have a specific proposal, but I'm interested in finding ways to reform the BOE.

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

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

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?

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

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 only part I object to in question 12 is eliminating the Legislature's veto power. I believe elected officials should still be able to exercise that power as a last resort.

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.

No

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?

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 think the IRC should ideally do it, but we need to find a way to ensure there isn't the redistricting chaos we've seen this cycle.

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 only part I object to in question 12 is eliminating the Legislature's veto power. I believe elected officials should still be able to exercise that power as a last resort.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Do you support further reducing campaign contribution limits?

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?

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: Workers' Rights: Becoming a union member changed my life, but few of my neighbors in Queens are currently able to enjoy the security and solidarity that a union can bring. Workers who aren't protected by a union—especially immigrant workers, tipped and gig workers, and workers of color—are most at risk of retaliation and exploitation on the job. I would prioritize winning workers the fundamental right to just cause, the ability to fight back against wage theft, the end of tipped minimum wage, and a higher minimum wage across the board. The inability of public sector workers to withhold their labor is also a massive impediment to organizing working class New Yorkers; I would prioritize amending the Taylor Law so all workers are able to use their most powerful weapon: the strike.

Second: Housing as a human right: For far too long, real estate has had a stranglehold on New York City, and the result has been the violent eviction and displacement of our Black and brown neighbors, the working poor, and anyone unable to keep up with skyrocketing rents and landlord harassment. AD-37 is no exception to this. In Ridgewood, we are seeing rampant speculation and gentrification threaten the displacement of families who have lived in this neighborhood for generations. We must decommodify housing if we are truly to make it a human right. That means moving toward social housing: passing legislation like the Social Housing Development Authority, Good Cause Eviction, universal rent control, TOPA, and supporting tenants organizing their buildings.

Third: Environmental justice and climate resilience: From flooding, to toxic air, to outrageous Con-Ed rate hikes, Queens faces climate chaos not in the distant future, but now. We must transition to a just, renewable future—and we can do so while creating good, union jobs. We must ensure the proper implementation of the Build Public Renewables Act; take public control over our utilities; use taxes on the rich to fund a Green New Deal for schools, housing, and transit; and ensure workers and tenants have access to the benefits of the transition to a renewable economy.

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?

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

I would like to introduce a bill to inform unemployment to allow academic workers like cafeteria workers, adjuncts, and others who get laid off between semesters to apply for unemployment insurance.

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.

I personally haven't worked specifically on these issues, but I have been on electoral campaign teams for candidates who have refused contributions from shady PACs and who have fought for police accountability.

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

5

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

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?

We're currently estimating our win number to be 4,500.

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

We've raised \$84,000, and are planning to raise \$88,000 before this next filing deadline as well as hopefully max out on in-district contribution matching.

How many individual donors do you have?

958

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

All the electeds listed on our website, as well as Asm. Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, Comptroller Brad Lander, Councilmember Jen Gutierrez, Councilmember Chi Osse, and Councilmember Sandy Nurse.

All the orgs listed on our website, as well as Sunrise and CUFFH.

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?

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

Responses to the questionnaire will be one of several factors Citizens Union uses to evaluate candidates running for the New York State Legislature, and to issue our preference for the Primary and endorsement for the General Election.

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