

## 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](#).

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**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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org)

We thank you very much for your response.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Name

Stefano Forte

### Office Sought (New York State)

Senate

### District Number

11

### In which primary

### What party line/s are you running under?

Republican, Conservative, and Independence

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

Republican

### Age

24

### Education

BA in Political Science and Philosophy from St. Francis College

### Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Republican State Committeeman from Assembly District 25, President of the Queens chapter of the American Conservation Coalition, campaign consultant for Vickie Paladino for City Council, social media director for the New York Young Republican Club, Executive Director of the Queens Young Republican Club.

Website [Stef4Senate.com](http://Stef4Senate.com)

Twitter [Stef4Senate](http://Stef4Senate)

**Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/stefanolforte>

**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 "Stefano Forte".

# 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?**

There were many issues with JCOPE and hopefully the new CELG commission can remedy these issues. Making sure ethics rules are enforced fairly and evenly is important, CELG can hopefully bring that change and ensure that politics is taken out of the enforcement process. It is still early and we have to wait and see if the CELG appointment system holds up to legal scrutiny.

**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.**

I would reform the process of ballot qualification in the state, the current petitioning process makes it difficult for outside candidates to qualify for the ballot and allows for candidates to be thrown off of the ballot for arbitrary reasons. I would replace it with a nominal filing fee or significantly reduce the number of signatures necessary to qualify for the ballot.

To ensure that elections are administered more competently, I would work to ensure that merit based hiring is instituted and focus on curbing the current patronage system. It is important that there is a balance between party involvement and merit, the involvement of the parties helps ensure that matters are resolved in a bipartisan way and that one party is not favored over another when it comes to the two major parties. Empowering third parties is also important and we need to find room for them at the table as well. To do this I would push to have at least one third party commissioner in each county.

**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.

To reiterate my original stance, I believe that third party involvement is important. By

this I mean that two political parties should not be the only ones in control at the board, there must be third party officials making high level decisions even in terms of hiring.

## Voting Rights

**Do you support re-passing the constitutional amendment to enact same-day voter registration?**

No

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

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 these issues.

The two party dichotomy does not represent most voters, and many believe that both the Republican and Democrat parties have become too extreme. Third parties must have more of an opportunity to qualify and grow. I am proud to be endorsed by two third parties, the Independence and Conservative Parties. I am currently in litigation for one of my third party lines because my opponent wants to deny both myself and the Independence Party ballot access.

## 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)**

The Independent Redistricting Commission.

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.

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# 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.

While I agree with matching funds, I understand that it opens the door to corruption and greed. We must have an independent body ensuring that the taxpayers dollars are not being funneled into the pockets of greedy politicians and their friends.

Furthermore, I would support a program similar to the forward parties "Democracy Dollars" program that would give private citizens \$100 to spend on the campaigns of their choice. I believe this furthers the voters involvement in these campaigns and the democratic process.

# 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: Completely repeal cashless bail.

Second: Restore merit based education in our schools.

Third: Suspend the gas tax until the price of gas falls below \$3.00 per gallon again.

**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?**

A complete repeal of cashless bail.

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

The increase in crime has been felt throughout my district, this is especially true in the area covered by the 109 precinct. Part of my plan to solve this problem is to work with the police and other stakeholders to bring more officers into the area, this can be accomplished by creating an auxiliary unit in the NYPD's police academy, which is in one of the worst affected areas of the district.

My district also faces constant problems that are the result of crumbling infrastructure, I want to work with my constituents and government agencies to identify and address these issues.

The 11th Senate district is multi lingual and needs a Senate office that will reflect that, I will have office hours with liaisons that speak Mandarine, Spanish, Korean, Greek, and any other languages necessary to ensure that all voices are heard and that peoples needs are addressed.

**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 have had first hand experience with these issues and want to take them on in

Albany. I have been the victim of partisan government bureaucracy. My opponent has tried to weaponize the BOE against me multiple times, attempting to get me off of the ballot. While I have prevailed in both instances at the BOE, the unnecessary trouble created by bad objections led to a completely unnecessary legal battle that should have been avoidable.

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

I live in the current Senate District 11, and I intend to move into the newly drawn district 11.

**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?**

N/A

# 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 think we will need 35,000 votes to win. We have been knocking on doors, reaching out to communities throughout the district, connecting with voters on social media, and plan on sending mail and launching a digital marketing campaign to ensure we reach out to voters.

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

We have raised over \$80,000

**How many individual donors do you have?**

over 200

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

City Councilman Robert Holden, City Councilwoman Vickie Paladino, City Councilwoman Joann Ariola, City Councilman Joe Borelli, State Senator Robert Ortt, The Parent Party, The Independence Party, and Curtis Sliwa.

# 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 have been described as a new type of Republican because of my out of the box views, if elected this November, I will have the opportunity to serve as the youngest State Senator in history. I intend to fight for good government because I have been the victim of bad government myself and I understand what is at stake in this election.

**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.**

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