

Candidate Questionnaire - 2022 Primary

Dear Sarah Blas,

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public on our website, printed voters directory, and other appropriate venues (your contact information will not be published).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

Sarah Blas

Office Sought (New York State)

Senate

District Number

23

In which primary

Democratic

What party line/s are you running under?

Democratic

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

Democratic

Age

34

Education

Some College

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Community Education Council District 31

Staten Island Women Who March - Director of Health

House of Community Baitul Jamaat - Director of Health for

Staten Island Therapeutic Gardens - Founder

Website

sarahblasforsenate.com

Twitter

https://twitter.com/blas_sarah

Facebook

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

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 be "Sarah Blas", written in a cursive style.

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)?

Yes

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?

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 these issues.

No.

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 am willing to support legislation that will professionalize the BOE, just as other state offices are professionalized I see no reason that the BOE should function off of patronage.

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.

While I believe in professionalizing the BOE work force, in the spirit of equity, we must be mindful of creating a system that is not unnecessarily byzantine or onerous with educational or work requirements.

Voting Rights

Do you support re-passing the constitutional amendment to enact same-day voter registration, and putting it on the ballot in 2024?

Yes

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

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.

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)

I would like to work with more organizations like Citizens Union who support anti-gerrymandering measures. While Independent Redistricting Commissions can absolutely be that tool we need to create and reinforce new guidelines for such a commission that ensures timely, fair and collaborative redistricting.

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.

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.

I'm a firm believer in public financing of elections, it is an opportunity to enfranchise candidates like myself whose neighbors largely don't have the capital to host expensive fundraisers or to max out donations. I believe it is a way to level the playing field and eventually separate private funds/interests from the electoral 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: Housing - Protect NYCHA from privatization, expand fair market voucher programs and create new opportunities for comprehensive social housing at all income levels.

Second: Healthcare - ensure all New Yorkers have access to quality healthcare which integrates vision and dental

Third: Education - ensure that New York City schools get the funding they deserve and that every family has access to the resources and services they need like Wifi and expand access to our public higher education system.

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?

There are several bills I'd be happy to sponsor as my first piece of legislation including unnecessary barriers for NYCHA residents like myself or a bill that ensures the longevity of NYCHA as a fully public entity.

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

There are so many resources but a lack of engagement and transportation mean many people in my community face tremendous barriers in receiving services of any kind.

In particular:

Transportation: I am blind in my left eye, so I am unable to drive and transportation access is extremely important to New Yorkers like me. There is no subway on Staten Island bus service can be unreliable, some communities have no sidewalks, there is no ferry service between the Brooklyn and Staten Island portions of our district. This has to change I plan to ensure our state is investing in the infrastructure our community needs.

Housing - We must not only pass Right to Council, Housing Voucher Access and Just Cause we need to ensure we bring them directly to the people. I plan to do proactive community outreach (as I have before reaching office) through in person, mail and digital outreach.

Healthcare - I have a background in Public Health; I'm committed to bringing more healthcare resources to our district. South Brooklyn and the South Shore of Staten Island are underserved. We also need to ensure every community member knows what options are available to them regardless of income or status.
Education

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 do a Diversity Equity and Inclusion consulting including with some city agencies. I've had the opportunity to help city agencies reimagine what equitable hiring looks like and how we build and maintain work environments that are rich with diverse perspectives.

Within my community I have also worked facilitating a number of grants and special assistance programs including LRAP, ERAP and other emergency assistance.

I've taught my children to register voters and carry registration forms in my purse.

I've worked Staten Island Women Who March and was one of the primary organizers for marches calling for police accountability for the Garner family, Breonna Taylor and others harmed by police violence.

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

Almost my entire life (35 years)

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

Yes

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?

My win number is 6,951.

My team is undertaking a comprehensive voter engagement plan with consultants and other candidates who know the district well.

I have the ID's of several current and former candidates who share my values and have already began engaging those voters.

We strongly believe that organizing and engagement are the best ways to win this race and are raising the funds necessary to mount data informed targeted digital outreach, door knocking, registration and voter engagement. All of our current and future consultants have worked on races in the 23rd district.

I plan to leverage my organizing, legislative and connections to the Brooklyn Council of Churches to maximize outreach on the Brooklyn side of the district.

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

17,500

How many individual donors do you have?

110

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

Jim Owles Liberal Democratic Club

Citizen's Action

I'm on a slate with Brittany Ramos de Barros

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?

Cogovernance is one of my core values as a candidate and I really hope to cogovern with Citizens Union. I value the information and reform efforts of Citizens Union and look forward to speaking with your team/membership.

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

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