



## 2026 Special Election Candidate Questionnaire - New York City Council

Citizens Union - Local Candidates Committee

Congratulations on your decision to run for a seat on the New York City Council! Citizens Union appreciates your commitment to serving the public.

For over 125 years, Citizens Union (CU) has been devoted to holding our local government accountable with the highest ethical standards and fighting for political reforms that improve New York democracy (<https://citizensunion.org/issues/>). To promote a competitive and diverse political culture, a fair and open political process, and accountable and responsible government, we evaluate candidates running for office and back those who strongly support reform. Our evaluations are done through questionnaires, independent research, and interviews conducted by our Local Candidates Committee.

(<https://citizensunion.org/citizens-union-evaluation-process/>).

**As a prerequisite for receiving the support of Citizens Union, please complete the following questionnaire and submit your response by Sunday, March 29, 2026.** As you complete the form, you can click "Save" and return to the form later. Once you have completed the questionnaire and submitted your response to us, you will receive a copy of your submission. Your submission will be posted on our website (with the exception of contact info).

Upon receipt of your submission, we will reach out to you or your staff to schedule a virtual interview with members of our Local Candidate Committee. The interview will be recorded. Shortly thereafter, we will announce our support in key priority races to our members and on our website and other channels. 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.

Please feel free to reach out to Citizens Union with any questions or comments at [candidates@citizensunion.org](mailto:candidates@citizensunion.org).

Thank you very much. We look forward to your response.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Candidate info

**Name** Leslie Boghosian Murphy

**Education** Temple University Double B.A. Political Science & Communications

**Current job, elected office, or occupation** I am currently Chair of Manhattan Community Board 4. I also serve on the Port Authority Bus Terminal Advisory Council, the Hudson River Park Trust Advisory Council (Executive Committee), am a Launch Advisory Committee Member for New Yorkers United for Child Care.

**Other elected offices**

N/A

**Previous jobs or positions**

I am an Emmy Award-winning investigative journalist reporting for ESPN, CNN and the YES Network and a member of the SAG-AFTRA union.

## **Campaign contact information**

**Website** [lesliefornyc.com](http://lesliefornyc.com)

**Instagram** @Lkbmurphy

**Facebook** @leslie.campaign.71

## **INTRODUCTION**

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

My goals are clear cut, to help in creating a more equitable, affordable, cleaner, greener and safer District.

**Economic Security & Affordable Housing:**

The most effective path to affordability is a combination of building new units, preserving existing housing and utilizing underused public land. As a member of MCB 4's Land Use Committee, I helped shape the district's Affordable Housing Plan. I support transferring city-owned sites to HPD to accelerate development and identifying additional public land for housing, specifically for family-sized and working income units. I am also advancing mandatory Community Benefit Agreements in the land use process to ensure development delivers schools, infrastructure and real community investment. Additionally, through my work with New Yorkers United for Child Care, I support expanding universal, affordable childcare to strengthen economic stability for families.

**Public Safety & Community Investment:**

I support a balanced approach to public safety that includes prevention, mental health services and accountability. Using models like the Midtown Community Justice Center, I believe lower-level offenses should be addressed with services such as job training and counseling. I also support investments in afterschool programs and school-based support staff, along with community-informed policing strategies that build trust and address neighborhood concerns.

**Climate Justice & Quality of Life:**

I have led efforts to reduce pollution from the Manhattan Cruise Terminal, including securing electric shore power and an Environmental Community Fund for local reinvestment. I will continue advancing sustainable infrastructure, clean transportation and stronger environmental standards in development.

## **2. How long have you lived in the district in which you are running, and do you have any achievements or involvement in your district you are particularly proud of?**

I've lived here for 22 years with my husband and our 13 year old daughter. In my role as Community Board 4 Chair I am in daily contact with all our local elected officials, City agencies and community members addressing District issues across the board.

As a member of the PABT Advisory Council, Hudson River Park Trust Advisory Council and Co-Founder of Hell's Kitchen Neighborhood Coalition, I have taken the lead on the most important issues facing us right now.

Most recently, as an original member of the Launch Advisory Board for New Yorkers United for Child Care, I celebrated the announcement of free child care for all helping to deliver another big win for New Yorkers.

I am fighting to bring shore power to the Manhattan Cruise Terminal and make the city provide a plan to clean the dirty cruise ship air that has been choking us for decades. I helped negotiate a Community Fund with the City that every passenger coming off a cruise ship is subject to a \$1 fee and goes straight to the community, around \$800,000 every year in perpetuity.

And last year, I successfully led the charge to stop the three casino bids in our neighborhoods.

Currently, I am at the table for all the big projects advocating for the best interests of our district: PABT redevelopment, NYCHA FEC Redevelopment, Gateway, the Manhattan Cruise Terminal Master Plan and the Penn Station Redevelopment.

## **3. What experience have you had with good government and reform issues? (e.g., voting and election reform, campaign finance, ethics, police accountability, government transparency). If you've worked to advance these goals, we'd love to hear about it.**

Throughout my career, I have been deeply engaged in advancing transparency and accountability. As an investigative journalist, my work focused on uncovering wrongdoing and holding institutions accountable, shaping my commitment to ethical, transparent government. In my current role as Chair of CB4, I have prioritized open decision-making and public engagement, ensuring that members have a clear understanding of, and voice in, government processes.

This year, I created a NYCHA FEC Working Group to deliver transparency and accountability to both campus residents and the surrounding neighborhood regarding the NYCHA Redevelopment Project and move from Section 9 to Section 8 housing in our district. I formed the group to accomplish three goals:

1. Troubleshoot problems and secure full tenant rights under Section 9
2. Serve as a communication hub between residents, NYCHA, the electeds, City agencies and the community
3. Promote the Community Board's position/advocacy pushing the project in full view

I have also worked to strengthen accountability in land use and development. I have pushed for enforceable Community Benefit Agreements to ensure that large projects deliver on commitments to affordable housing, infrastructure and neighborhood resources. In negotiations related to the Manhattan Cruise Terminal, I helped secure an Environmental Community Fund that creates an ongoing, transparent mechanism for reinvestment and oversight.

I believe that strong systems, not just strong intentions, are what ensure ethical government. That means clear rules, transparency in decision-making, and consistent oversight. In the City Council, I will continue to strengthen these systems to build public trust.

## **4. What do you think the role of the City Council is in city government this term?**

The City Council's role this term is especially important in ensuring that the priorities of the Mamdani administration are implemented effectively, transparently and with accountability. While I share many of the administration's goals, the Council must serve as an independent partner that ensures these policies are delivered in a way that works on the ground. That means strong oversight of city agencies, careful monitoring of how funds are allocated and making sure programs achieve their intended outcomes.

My experience as Chair of Manhattan Community Board 4 has shown me that even well-intentioned policies can fall short without proper implementation and coordination. The Council must use hearings, data and community input to identify gaps early and push for improvements. The Council also plays a critical role in land use and budget decisions, ensuring that development reflects community needs and that public resources are used responsibly. At the same time, it must remain responsive to constituents, elevating local concerns and ensuring they are reflected in citywide decision-making.

## ELECTIONS AND VOTING

**5. New York City is one of few cities that maintains a closed primary system, in which only registered party members can vote in the primary election. Over one million independent (“unaffiliated”) voters are excluded from participating in the primary election, and their number is growing. Do you believe New York City should shift to a form of open primaries, allowing all registered voters to vote in one primary, where the top vote-getters, regardless of party affiliation, move on to the general election?**

Yes

**6. Do you support maintaining the use of Ranked Choice Voting in New York City elections?**

Yes

**Comments (optional)**

I am a supporter of Ranked Choice Voting. In fact, considering the dynamics of my particular race, educating voters on ranked choice voting is part of our outreach strategy and will strongly work to our advantage. As a candidate who has positive relationships with all the other candidates in my race, ranked choice voting will particularly serve our campaign well. I have already been involved in ranked choice education participating in workshops and local zooms promoting and explaining the system. As voters get more acclimated, the benefits will be more revealing.

**7. The New York City Board of Elections (NYC BOE) has been a source of frustration for voters and candidates for years. The City Council appoints NYC BOE members and has the power to appoint commissioners who are committed to reform, but the most recent commissioners have been appointed behind closed doors. Do you commit to press for a public hearing for BOE nominees and to only vote for individuals who are publicly committed to reducing party-based patronage and supporting open hiring practices?**

Yes

**\* In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve elections and voting in New York City.**

I would prioritize funding for voter education, particularly around Ranked Choice Voting, by partnering with community organizations to ensure voters understand how to participate effectively. I have already been involved in these efforts, participating in workshops and local outreach to help explain how the system works and answer questions from voters. Moving elections to even-numbered years may also produce great benefits.

I would also work to strengthen overall voter awareness and communication, especially for lower-visibility elections. I see firsthand how many residents do not even realize there is a special election on April 28th, which shows how much more we need to do to meet people where they are.

Expanding language access is also critical, especially for immigrant communities. I would support using technology to provide real-time translation tools, multilingual voter information, and clearer, more accessible communication so no one feels shut out or unsure about how to participate.

## CAMPAIGN FINANCE

**8. Individuals with business ties to city government and registered lobbyists can bypass their donation limits by “bundling” donations from other people. Do you support limiting bundling by people on the Doing Business with the City database?**

Yes

**9. Are you a supporter of the City’s public campaign matching funds program, and do you commit to protecting the independence of the program and ensuring that the Campaign Finance Board has sufficient resources to run the program?**

Yes

**\* In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve New York City’s campaign finance system.**

I strongly support New York City’s campaign finance system and its role in amplifying small donors and reducing the influence of large contributions. In my own campaign, I am participating in public matching funds and prioritizing grassroots fundraising to reflect broad community support.

I support strengthening transparency and enforcement, including clear and timely disclosure of contributions and expenditures so voters understand who is supporting candidates. I also believe we should make compliance more accessible for smaller campaigns while maintaining strong safeguards and expand public education so more New Yorkers understand how the system works and how small-dollar contributions can make an impact.

## ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT

**10. The recent pattern of indictments and resignations surrounding City Hall in the previous administration has exposed serious ethical problems in City Government. Please describe how you will maintain the highest ethical standards in office.**

As an Emmy Award–winning investigative journalist, my career was built on holding powerful institutions accountable and earning the public’s trust. That same commitment has guided my work as Chair of Manhattan Community Board 4, where I have led with openness, public engagement and a focus on doing what is right for the community. I am also a mother raising my family in this district, and the granddaughter of immigrants fleeing genocide who came to New York seeking safety and opportunity.

That background shapes my values and why I am running for City Council, to serve my neighbors, not to make deals or advance personal interests. I do not believe in transactional politics.

I never used a single step to build a pathway to elected office. Service to my community grew organically. In fact, my campaign is endorsed by the bulk of community leaders in our district. When I was recently elected MCB4 Chair, it was unanimously. This is a genuine reflection of my honest and earnest reputation in the community. My peers know me, have worked with me and have designated me the best person for the job.

In office, I will fully comply with all ethics rules and disclosure requirements, support strong enforcement, and ensure my office operates transparently. I will prioritize clear communication with constituents and maintain independence in all decision-making. Public trust must be earned through consistent actions. I am committed to upholding the highest ethical standards and serving with integrity every day.

**11. The ban on using City resources for electioneering has been eroding in recent years - particularly when the legislative and executive branches are on opposing sides of a ballot referendum. This activity is clearly prohibited by the City Charter, but no government agency has stepped in to regulate or put a stop to it. The City Council spent millions of dollars on mailers and a campaign opposing the housing ballot questions proposed by the 2025 Charter Revision Commission, after conducting a similar campaign in 2024. Do you support closing the loophole that allows public officials to violate the electioneering ban without facing consequences by empowering the Conflicts of Interest Board to enforce existing restrictions?**

Yes

**12. Incoming public servants must sever ties and divest from companies or other interests that have business dealings with the City, but they are not required to recuse themselves when working on matters involving their former business partners, clients, employer, etc. Do you support forbidding public servants to work on matters relating to their former business partners, clients, employers, and other interests for a set period of time?**

Yes

**13. Some campaign consultants also work as lobbyists. Do you support restricting campaign consultants from lobbying their former clients for a period of two years after their client has won elected office?**

Yes

**14. Do you support moving lobbying oversight and enforcement from the City Clerk's Office to another agency charged with ethics issues, like the Conflicts of Interest Board?**

Yes

**\* In the box below, you may provide additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve ethics standards in New York City government.**

As Chair of Manhattan Community Board 4, I have prioritized transparency through open meetings, public engagement, and clear decision-making processes. I have also demonstrated independence by standing up to powerful interests, including leading the "NO CASINOS" task force and pushing for stronger accountability in major projects.

In negotiations around the Manhattan Cruise Terminal, I secured an Environmental Community Fund to ensure ongoing community reinvestment. My background as an investigative journalist further informs my approach, with a focus on accountability and public trust.

I support strengthening independent oversight, consistent enforcement of ethics laws, and greater transparency in areas like land use and development. In office, I will ensure decisions are made in the public interest and that my office operates with openness and integrity.

## **POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY**

**15. Who do you think should have the final decision on discipline in the New York City Police Department? (i.e., Place the final decision with the Police Commissioner; the Civilian Complaint Review Board; the Mayor; the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety; or another individual or entity).**

Police disciplinary action should not be the responsibility of one entity, especially the NYPD themselves. We need a review board that takes representatives of all of the above entities to form a comprehensive understanding to address complaints and misconduct.

**Please provide any other info you would like us to know about you and your candidacy.**

I am the proud granddaughter of immigrants. All four of my grandparents fled the Armenian genocide and came to New York without knowing English, working difficult jobs to build a better life. That experience shaped my understanding of opportunity, responsibility, and the importance of strong, functioning public institutions.

My father attended City College when it was free, an opportunity he still calls life-changing, and later became a community college professor to give back to others. From my family, I learned the value of public education, accessible institutions and the role government can play in creating opportunity.

Those lessons have guided both my professional career and my public service. As an investigative journalist, I focused on accountability and truth. As Chair of Manhattan Community Board 4, I have worked to ensure transparency, community input and responsible decision-making in local government.

I am running for City Council to bring that same approach, grounded in integrity, independence, and public service, to this role. I share Citizens Union's commitment to ethical, transparent, and accountable government and I am dedicated to upholding those standards in office.