



Candidate Questionnaire

Local Candidates Committee NYS Comptroller Election - Primary 2026

Name Adem Bunkeddeko

GENERAL INFORMATION

Age 38

Education Harvard Business School

Current job, position, or occupation

Candidate, NY State Comptroller

Other positions or roles

Executive Director, CORO NY
Empire State Development Corp
Bed Stuy Restoration Corp
Brooklyn Community Services
Working Families Party
Financial Analyst

Previous Offices, Campaigns and Community/Civic Involvement

Adem for Congress
Community Board 8

Campaign Contact Information

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GOALS AND PLANS

In addition to evaluating stances on the reform issues, Citizens Union considers the campaign goals articulated to voters, issues specific to the district, and the ability propose thoughtful solutions to represent constituents' interests.

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

My campaign is built around three priorities: lowering costs, enforcing accountability, and putting New York's financial power to work for everyday people.

First, I will lower costs by launching a forensic audit of the MTA and pushing for a fare freeze during the review, while advancing a targeted housing investment strategy within the pension fund to preserve and build affordable housing at scale.

Second, I will enforce accountability by transforming the Comptroller's office into an active watchdog. In my first 100 days, I will establish an Office of Constituent Services to make the office more accessible and initiate audits in high-impact areas to ensure public dollars are being used effectively and transparently.

Third, I will put New York's financial power to work by advancing a New York State Opportunity Trust Fund, using dormant public assets to support childcare, rent relief, and long-term wealth-building for New Yorkers.

This office will no longer sit on the sidelines. It will use its full authority to deliver real results on affordability, accountability, and economic justice.

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.

I have been engaged in good government and reform work throughout my career, starting as an organizer with the Working Families Party. In the aftermath of the Citizens United decision, I worked on efforts to advance clean and fair elections, including collecting signatures and building grassroots support for reforms that would ultimately contribute to major changes in New York's campaign finance system—such as early voting and public financing.

That experience shaped my belief that strong democratic institutions require active participation, transparency, and accountability. It also reinforced the importance of reducing the influence of big money in politics and expanding access to the ballot.

In my subsequent roles in government and the nonprofit sector, I have continued to focus on oversight, transparency, and equitable allocation of public resources. I have worked within systems where accountability is critical—whether overseeing the use of public and philanthropic funds, evaluating the effectiveness of economic development programs, or pushing for reforms when existing structures failed to deliver for the communities they were meant to serve.

As Comptroller, I would build on that foundation by using the office's audit, reporting, and contract review powers to strengthen transparency, enforce accountability, and ensure that public institutions are working in the interest of New Yorkers.

ETHICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN GOVERNMENT

3. The State Comptroller is tasked with reviewing government contracts and addressing potential cases of waste, fraud, or corruption. Please describe your approach to reviewing contracts, and what areas in State Government procurement you believe most need attention to such issues?

The Comptroller's office must function as an independent watchdog—not a rubber stamp. Contract review should be rigorous, evidence-based, and focused on cost, fairness, and long-term public value, with zero tolerance for waste, fraud, or backdoor deals.

As Comptroller, I would use both pre-audit and audit authority aggressively to bring transparency and accountability to how public dollars are spent. That includes targeted audits in high-risk areas like the MTA, housing tax credit programs, large technology and consulting contracts, and instances where public funds intersect with federal immigration enforcement. I would also scrutinize pension fund exposure to contractors whose business practices undermine New York's values.

I would strengthen pre-audit capacity by investing in modern data analytics and expanding staff expertise to flag cost overruns, conflicts of interest, and patterns of abuse before contracts are approved—not after the damage is done. I would also expand public-facing databases so New Yorkers can see who is getting

paid, for what, and if they're delivering.

The overuse of sole-source and no-bid contracts has weakened competition and opened the door to favoritism. Large technology and consulting contracts often come with vague scopes and ballooning costs, making accountability difficult. MWBE commitments are often treated as a box-checking exercise rather than a real economic opportunity. And complex public-private partnerships can obscure risk and shift long-term costs onto taxpayers.

Oversight without enforcement is meaningless. When waste, fraud, or abuse is identified, the Comptroller's office must act decisively—make findings public, refer cases for enforcement, and ensure real consequences.

4. The Governor has attempted to curtail the comptroller pre-audit authority by removing the types of contracts (depending on size and type) that would trigger a review. Governor Cuomo enacted similar measures. How would you ensure contract auditing power is permanent? How will you fight ongoing attempts to curtail the OSC power over contracts?

The Comptroller's pre-audit authority exists to serve as an independent check on executive power and protect taxpayers from waste, fraud, and abuse. That independence is not optional—it's rooted in the State Constitution, the Comptroller is a separate, co-equal officer accountable directly to the people. Efforts to curtail pre-audit authority weaken one of the most important safeguards in state government. I will not accept the erosion of that power.

I would work with reform-minded legislators and government organizations to codify and strengthen pre-audit authority in statute, making clear that it cannot be narrowed or bypassed unilaterally by the executive branch.

I am prepared to use legal action where necessary to challenge executive overreach that undermines the Comptroller's constitutional responsibilities. If the law is being stretched to avoid oversight, the office must respond.

I would expand transparency around procurement decisions—publishing clear data on contracts reviewed, flagged, and modified—so the public can see the real value of pre-audit authority in preventing misuse of funds and protecting taxpayer dollars.

Finally, I would use the office's full platform to defend institutional independence. The Comptroller must be willing to act as a check on both the Governor and the Legislature, regardless of political pressure. That means drawing clear lines, enforcing standards consistently, and making decisions based on evidence and the public interest—not politics.

Protecting the Comptroller's authority is about protecting democracy. I will be unwavering in defending the independence of the office and ensuring it remains a strong, effective watchdog for the people of New York.

5. What would be your auditing priorities? What agencies, authorities, and local governments would you audit first?

I will focus on areas where failures have the greatest impact on New Yorkers:

MTA - I will launch a forensic audit of the MTA, an independent accounting of how transit dollars are spent. For too long, riders have faced rising costs for worse service. This audit would examine cost drivers, capital spending, procurement practices, and debt obligations. The goal is enforce transparency, fiscal discipline, and accountability so that every dollar improves service, safety, and reliability. During this process, I would push for a fare freeze so riders don't absorb the cost of past mismanagement.

Immigration Enforcement - I will audit how state and local resources intersect with federal immigration enforcement. The Comptroller has a responsibility to ensure that public funds don't undermine state law or harm communities.

This includes auditing local governments that participate in federal 287(g) agreements or other forms of

cooperation with ICE to determine whether funds are being used improperly. Where misuse of funds are identified, I will make findings public and refer them for enforcement.

I will conduct a review of the pension fund to identify investments in companies that support detention, deportation, or surveillance infrastructure to establish a public Do Not Invest framework. I will pursue responsible divestment from these companies consistent with fiduciary duty.

High-Risk Spending Areas - I will focus on agencies and programs with a history of cost overruns, weak oversight, or high public impact, including housing and economic development programs, large technology and consulting contracts, and labor enforcement at the Department of Labor.

6. Do you support applying lower contribution limits to lobbyists and people doing business with the State or seeking contracts from the State? New York City imposes lower contribution limits for registered lobbyists and individuals doing business with the City, and has enacted a Doing Business Database to track such individuals.

Yes. When billions of dollars in public contracts and investments are at stake, pay-to-play politics cannot be tolerated.

I support lower contribution limits for lobbyists and those doing business with the State to ensure that public decisions are not influenced by campaign money. If you are seeking a contract or financial relationship with the State, you should not also be able to amplify your influence through large political contributions.

New York City has already shown this can work through its Doing Business Database and stricter limits. We should adopt a similar statewide system to bring transparency, accountability, and real enforcement to New York's political and contracting process.

Public trust depends on it.

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

I will establish a Community Services Office within the New York State Comptroller's Office to create a direct bridge between government operations and the public. This office would focus on community engagement, providing accessible channels for residents to raise concerns, report inefficiencies, and seek guidance on state services. By proactively gathering feedback and conducting outreach in communities, the office would help ensure that public funds are being used equitably and effectively. This initiative would reinforce public trust by making the Comptroller's Office more responsive, visible, and accountable to the people it serves.

BUDGET AND FISCAL HEALTH

7. Funding threats from the federal government and unclear economic prospects could have a dramatic effect on New York. How would you utilize the authority of the Comptroller's Office to ensure the fiscal health of our State?

Funding threats from the federal government and economic uncertainty require New York to be more disciplined, more transparent, and more proactive in managing its finances.

First, I would establish a New York State Opportunity Trust Fund to generate investment income from unclaimed funds. That revenue can help stabilize funding for priorities like childcare, housing, and basic services during periods of federal cuts or economic downturns—creating a more resilient, self-sustaining fiscal foundation without raising taxes on working families.

Second, I would use the Comptroller's audit and reporting authority to provide real-time, transparent analysis of how federal funding changes impact the State's budget, local governments, and essential services. That includes identifying fiscal risks early, highlighting gaps, and ensuring policymakers have the data needed to respond effectively.

Third, I would strengthen oversight of spending to ensure every public dollar is used efficiently and in line with the State's priorities. In times of fiscal pressure, eliminating waste, fraud, and inefficiency becomes even more critical.

Finally, I would be a clear and consistent voice for fair and sustainable revenue. The Comptroller's office can play a key role by analyzing tax policy, identifying loopholes, and making the case for reforms that ensure the wealthiest New Yorkers pay their fair share while protecting working families. Taken together, this approach ensures New York is not simply reacting to federal decisions, but proactively building a more resilient and equitable fiscal future.

8. Do you believe that the current balance of power between the governor and the legislature in the budget process is appropriate? What steps do you believe are necessary, if any, to change this balance?

No. New York's budget process is too often driven by closed-door negotiations, where major decisions are made by a small group of leaders with limited transparency or public input. That dynamic leads to rushed agreements, reduced scrutiny, and missed opportunities for meaningful legislative and public engagement.

While the Comptroller does not set the budget, the office plays a critical role in improving how it is developed and evaluated. I would use the Comptroller's authority and platform to provide independent, accessible analysis of budget proposals and their long-term fiscal impacts, giving both lawmakers and the public the information needed to make informed decisions.

I would also highlight the risks of overly centralized decision-making, including the use of off-budget actions and opaque funding mechanisms that obscure the true fiscal picture. Transparency must be the baseline, not an afterthought.

In addition, I would advocate for reforms that open up the process—earlier disclosure of budget proposals, clearer reporting on spending, and stronger opportunities for legislative review and public input before final decisions are made.

As a constitutionally independent officer, the Comptroller must be willing to hold both the executive and legislative branches accountable. I would use that independence to call out practices that undermine transparency or fiscal responsibility, regardless of where they originate.

*** In the box below, you may provide any additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve the fiscal health and budget in New York State government.**

I would establish a Council of Economic Advisors within the Comptroller's office, led by a Chief Economist, to provide independent, high-quality analysis of the short-, medium-, and long-term macroeconomic impacts of the State budget. This council would strengthen the State's fiscal planning by offering transparent forecasts, stress-testing budget assumptions, and identifying emerging risks before they become crises. It would also provide public, accessible analysis on issues such as revenue volatility, federal funding exposure, inflation, and long-term liabilities. By institutionalizing independent economic analysis, the Comptroller's office can help ensure that budget decisions are grounded in data, improve long-term fiscal discipline, and give policymakers and the public a clearer understanding of the trade-offs and consequences of fiscal policy choices.

PENSION FUNDS

9. Comptrollers implement various strategies for responsible investing, from divestment to shareholder advocacy and targeted investments. How do you, or how would you, propose to balance maximizing investment returns with broader social responsibility goals?

Balancing strong financial returns with broader social responsibility starts with rejecting the false choice between the two.

My approach is grounded in experience working within a double bottom line framework—where investments are expected to generate competitive, risk-adjusted returns while also delivering meaningful public impact.

The New York State pension fund is one of the largest in the world, the Comptroller serves as the people's chief investment steward, managing these assets independently. With scale comes both responsibility and opportunity. This office does not just participate in markets—it can help shape them. My guiding principle is simple: public money should build public prosperity.

That begins with fiduciary duty—delivering strong, returns to protect retirees. Within that mandate, we can align investments with long-term economic stability and shared growth. That means increasing exposure to sectors like affordable housing, clean energy, and infrastructure—investments that generate durable returns while strengthening communities and lowering costs for New Yorkers.

Our position as a major institutional investor should drive better corporate behavior through active shareholder engagement—pushing for stronger governance, transparency, and long-term value creation, and addressing practices that create systemic risk or harm workers and communities.

I would prioritize strategies that expand access to capital in underserved communities, including partnerships with diverse asset managers and community-based financial institutions, so that the benefits of investment are more broadly shared.

The goal is not to choose between returns and responsibility—it is to deliver both, in a way that strengthens the fund's long-term financial health and economic future of New York.

10. The OSC manages nearly \$300 billion in pension funds. How do you, or would you, ensure the highest levels of ethical conduct and transparency in the management of the funds?

Ensuring the highest levels of ethical conduct and transparency begins with a clear principle: New York's public dollars should never fund harm.

That requires both strong governance and disciplined investment standards. As Comptroller, I would establish a formal human rights and risk-screening framework to evaluate investments, ensuring that public funds are not allocated to entities or activities credibly linked to severe human rights abuses, systemic harm, or long-term financial risk.

This includes reviewing exposure to sovereign debt and companies whose business models depend on practices such as private incarceration, detention and deportation infrastructure, or activities that create material environmental and climate risk. Any actions would be taken consistent with fiduciary duty, using clear, transparent criteria and a defined review process.

Transparency is essential. I would expand public reporting on portfolio holdings, investment decisions, and risk assessments so New Yorkers can clearly see how their retirement funds are being managed and why.

At the same time, ethical investing must go hand in hand with strong financial performance. I would prioritize investments in areas such as affordable housing, clean energy, and infrastructure—sectors that generate stable, long-term returns while strengthening communities and the broader economy.

The goal is to ensure that New York's pension fund is managed with integrity, transparency, and discipline—delivering strong returns while aligning with the values and long-term interests of the people it serves.

***In the box below, you may provide any additional information on any actions that you have taken or plan to take to improve the fiscal health and budget in New York State government.**

I plan to create a Trust Fund for New York from the early \$20 billion in unclaimed funds currently sitting idle in the state's custody, money that rightfully belongs to New Yorkers but has not yet been claimed.

Instead of letting those dollars remain dormant, I see an opportunity to convert this passive asset into a powerful engine of broad-based prosperity.

Under this proposal, the principal would remain fully protected for rightful claimants at all times. But rather than allowing these funds to sit unused, they would be invested through a new New York State Opportunity Trust Fund, turning dormant balances into real opportunity and using investment returns to build lasting,

intergenerational benefits for families across the state.

Those earnings would support investments that provide long-term public benefit, including:

- Maternal health and early childhood care
- A seed account for every child born in New York, available for post-high school education, starting a business, a first-home down payment, or caring for a parent
- Rent relief for the most burdened households, building on the state's newly enacted Housing Access Voucher Program pilot and creating a sustainable long-term funding source to expand it statewide

Other states and countries already do this. Alaska's Permanent Fund transformed shared natural-resource wealth into annual dividends for residents. New York can take a similar step—using the value of dormant financial assets to build economic security and upward mobility for every community.

ADDITIONAL INFO

What else would you like us to know about yourself?

My lived experience is why I'm running for this office. My parents came to the United States from Uganda as refugees and built their lives through hard, often invisible labor—working as home health aides, paying taxes, and contributing to their communities. I grew up in a one-bedroom apartment with siblings and relatives moving in and out as our family supported one another navigating life in New York.

Because of my parents' sacrifice, I was able to access opportunity. But I also know that path is becoming harder for working families. New York is not just facing an affordability crisis—we are facing an opportunity crisis.

The Comptroller's office holds extraordinary financial authority. It should not sit on the sidelines while housing costs rise, transit struggles, and inequality deepens. Public money should build public prosperity.

I'm running to ensure that the financial power of this office is used to expand opportunity and deliver real results for working New Yorkers.